

Сов. секретно

РАССЕКРЕТНО  
№ 97/07  
22.10.97

ЗАПИСЬ БЕСЕДЫ

А.И.Микояна с Освальдо Дортикос, Эрнесто Гевара и Карлосом Рафаэлем Родригес

Вечером 5 ноября 1962 г.

После взаимных приветствий т.Дортикос сказал, что Фидель Кастро не смог прийти потому, что он себя плохо чувствует.

А.И.МИКОЯН выразил сожаление в связи с плохим самочувствием Ф.Кастро.

О.ДОРТИКОС. Мы проанализировали последнее предложение товарища Микояна относительно контроля погрузки стратегических ракет на палуби советских кораблей в кубинских портах. Наше мнение таково: принимая во внимание главным образом необходимость высоко держать моральный дух нашего народа и, кроме того, желая не допустить возникновения юридических споров в связи с вопросом об экстерриториальности кораблей, мы хотим дать окончательный ответ товарищу Микояну. Мы считаем, что принять это предложение невозможно. Мы вынуждены отказаться от этого, поскольку не допускаем в принципе инспекции ни на кубинской территории, ни в воздушном пространстве, ни в наших портах.

После того, как мы закончили обсуждение интересовавших нас вопросов, мы могли бы перейти к обсуждению наших задач в ближайшем будущем. Нам хотелось бы, чтобы новые шаги, которые нам предстоит сделать, были бы согласованы с Советским правительством. Мы считаем, что после выборов в США можно было бы выступить с совместным заявлением Советского правительства и правительства Кубы или с отдельными, но сделанными одновременно, заявлениями.

Односторонне Кубинское правительство заявит о том, что оно выступает против всякой проверки своей территории, воздушного пространства и портов в целях инспекции за демонтажом и вывозом "наступательного" оружия. Однако мы готовы рассмотреть предложения У Тана о возможности инспекции или проверки на кубинской территории при условии одновременной инспекции на территориях в США, Гватемале и в других странах Карибского бассейна над осуществлением договоренности по ликвидации конфликта в этом районе. Конечно, мы не в

**Memorandum of Conversation between Mikoyan and Cuban Leaders  
5 November 1962 (Evening)**

Copy

Top Secret

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

A.I. Mikoyan with Oswaldo Dorticos, Ernesto Guevara, and Carlos Rafael Rodriguez

Evening 5 November 1962

After mutual greetings, Com. Dorticos said that Fidel Castro had not been able to come because he is feeling poorly.

A.I. MIKOYAN expressed his sympathy in regard to the fact that F. Castro is feeling under the weather.

O. DORTICOS. We have analyzed Comrade Mikoyan's latest proposals regarding verification of the loading of the strategic missiles on the decks of Soviet ships in Cuban ports. Our opinion is this: keeping in mind chiefly the maintenance of the high moral spirit of our people and, besides that, wishing not to allow the outbreak of legal arguments in relation to the issue of the extraterritoriality of the ships, we want to give a conclusive answer to Comrade Mikoyan. We believe that it is impossible to accept that proposal. We must refuse it, since in principle we do not allow inspections, not on Cuban territory, nor in our airspace, nor in our ports.

After we have finished our consideration of the issues which concern us, we could move to a consideration of our tasks in the near future. We would like for the new steps which stand before us to be agreed with the Soviet government. We believe that after the elections in the USA it will be possible to make a joint statement of the Soviet government and the government of Cuba or to make separate, but simultaneous statements.

The Cuban government unilaterally will declare that it opposes any surveillance of its territory, airspace and ports aimed at inspection of the dismantling and removal of "offensive" weapons. However, we are ready to consider U Thant's proposal about the possibility of inspection or verification on Cuban territory under the condition of a simultaneous inspection on the territory of the USA, Guatemala and in other countries of the Caribbean basin upon the coming into force of an agreement on the liquidation of the conflict in this region. Of course, we have no right to oppose inspection on the open seas. That is not in our competence. We would like Comrade Mikoyan to understand why we oppose inspections in Cuba. It is not just a matter of thoughts of legal procedure. The political side of the issue also has great significance. Such is our position.

There are other issues of concern to us, but we would not want to mix them up with the current question. Therefore we would be glad to hear Comrade Mikoyan's opinion.

A.I. MIKOYAN. The variant which includes inspection on ships that are being loaded—that is my initiative. I have already told you that I had no authority to put forth that proposal. We understand your position. It seems to me that we have made our position clear to you. We are informing the CC CPSU and the Soviet government about your position on this issue. As far as a declaration is concerned, then I don't see the point for either you or we to make a declaration on the first point, especially since that has already been loudly declared by the Cuban leadership. Second, the publication of separate declarations would reveal the disagreements between us on this question, and that would be disadvantageous for both sides.

When I spoke about the necessity of thinking through our joint positions, I did not have inspections in mind. We must think about the entire complex of measures, both in the sphere of diplomacy and in all other spheres, so as to satisfy our common interests. Whether it will be in the form of a protocol or a declaration is not so important. The main thing is not the form, not the points; rather it is the position from which we can speak to U Thant and the UN. It follows that we should come to an agreement on our position, so as to make possible unity of actions. Concerning disagreements on the control issue, I don't see the point of making a declaration on that issue and continuing its consideration after the speech of comrade Fidel Castro. However, I have already spoken about that. I think that we will not make a declaration on that topic and we will respect each other's position, maintaining our own opinions on this issue.

Concerning the proposals about inspections in the USA and other countries of the Caribbean, this proposal accords with the plans of U Thant, we support it, and we can envisage it in the draft of the protocol which we will propose to the Americans. To this point it is mentioned there in a somewhat general form. I spoke about it with U Thant, since this question seemed interesting to us. Although the Americans may support such a proposal regarding to other countries, they will not allow observers at home. If you agree with this point in the draft of the protocol, then it could occupy a place in our joint proposals.

On the basis of a conversation with U Thant I came to the conclusion that a coordinated declaration will not satisfy the Americans and that they will call for declarations from each of the sides. However, form is not the main thing. It is necessary to coordinate our positions so that both our and your representatives in New York could act in a coordinated manner.

The draft of the document with which you are familiar is not limited to U Thant's plan, but it would still be possible to revise it. U Thant has said that it would be possible to make more concrete the part of the document in which the plan for the presence of the UN in the Caribbean Sea region is noted. U Thant, referring to such states like the USA, Cuba, and a range of other states of Central America, believes it would be possible to do

this. This could be done in the text. This issue of coordinated observation by representatives of the UN on the territory of the USA, Cuba, and other countries of Central America could be reflected in the protocol. In this case we would be starting from a common position. However, thus far we do not know your attitude to the given document.

Comrade Kuznetsov, who is located in New York, asked me to find out the opinion of our Cuban comrades. Not knowing your opinion, Comrade Kuznetsov has been deprived of opportunities to speak with U Thant and the Americans.

A.I. ALEKSEEV. This would give us the possibility to work out a common position in regard to other articles of the protocol as well.

O. DORTICOS. We reviewed the text of the protocol immediately after it was given to us, i.e., even before the conversation with Comrade Mikoyan. We have no fundamental objections. It seems to me that in the protocol there is one article about an inspection in Cuba. It would make sense to work out the issue of the conduct of a one-time observation both in Cuba and in the United States and in other countries of Central America. In view of the information which was given by Com. Mikoyan yesterday, we believe that we will not have any major objections to the document.

C.R. RODRIGUEZ. I have doubts whether the proposed formula regarding the fact that the USA is obliged to secure inspections in Central American countries is lawful.

E. GUEVARA. That formula really causes doubts.

A.I. MIKOYAN. It is still possible to do some serious editing work.

Despite the fact that the Americans may not accept the proposals contained in the document, it will be advantageous for us to have a common position and to link it with U Thant's plan. Even if the Americans will be against it. The inspection will not be unilateral, it will be multilateral, so it evidently doesn't bother you. Whether or not the document will be accepted, it can still have great significance.

The idea belongs to U Thant. It is possible to specify the list of countries which will be listed in this document. For example, Cuba, the USA, Guatemala and others. It seems to me that it makes sense to think over this issue. It would be an advantageous position. The Americans will be opponents of such a proposal, since they do not want to allow inspections on the territory of the USA. However, even our posing of this issue will have great political significance. It is difficult to say how this will end, but the struggle for acceptance of these proposals should bring us a victory.

In this way we see that the protocol does not prompt objections if does not speak about the necessity of striking articles about inspections of the dismantled weapons as

applied to Cuba. There, where it speaks about multilateral inspection, it seems to me that it would be necessary to name the countries. And what is your opinion, Comrades?

O. DORTICOS. I agree. Consequently we should strike article 13.

[Ed. note: Article 13 of the draft protocol read: "The Government of the Republic of Cuba agrees to allow onto the territory of Cuba confidential agents of the U.N. Security Council from the ranks of representatives of neutral states in order so that they can attest to the fulfillment of obligations vis-a-vis the dismantling and carrying away of the weapons mentioned in article 9 of the present Protocol." Draft Soviet-American-Cuban protocol (unofficial translation), 31 October 1962, Russian Foreign Ministry archives.]

C.R. RODRIGUEZ. And change article 10.

[Ed. note: Article 10 of the draft protocol read: "The Government of the USSR, taking into account the agreement of the Government of the Republic of Cuba, from its side agrees that confidential agents of the [UN] Security Council from the ranks of representatives of neutral states have attested to the fulfillment of obligations vis-a-vis the dismantling and carrying away of the weapons mentioned in Article 9 of the present Protocol." Draft Soviet-American-Cuban protocol (unofficial translation), 31 October 1962, Russian Foreign Ministry archives.]

A.I. MIKOYAN. In the 10th article something is said about Cuba?

E. GUEVARA. Yes. I would like to add that it seems to me that it makes sense to take into account the points which we made about the form. The document signed by the representatives of three countries cannot determine the list of countries in which observers from the UN or the Security Council should be present.

A.I. MIKOYAN. Maybe in this article references should be limited to the USA and Cuba, and stipulate that other countries can be included upon the agreement of their governments. So, for instance, from the direction of Guatemala they constantly will be threatening aggression. It would be advisable to point out that fact. It would be possible to ask the Security Council to set the list of countries. It could do this in article 15, there where U Thant's plan is mentioned. We could leave the article without changes or note that the countries are to be determined by the Security Council. It seems to me that it is important to preserve the reference to U Thant's plan.

C. RAFAEL RODRIGUEZ. It would be possible to make many editorial changes here. So, for example, in the 3rd article it is said that "the Government of the USA will restrain those who intend to undertake aggression against Cuba both from the territory of the USA and from the territory of the neighboring states of Cuba." This type of formulation seems to give the USA the right to determine the actions of other states.

A.I. MIKOYAN. What are you going to do about that? They are satellites. Maybe another editing will tie them even more. So far we have no other version, but it is possible to think about it. The 5th article contains clauses which have a similar nature. However, international law allows similar formulations.

[Ed. note: Article 5 of the draft protocol read: “The Government of the USA declares that the necessary measures will be taken to stop, both on the territory of the USA and on the territory of other countries of the Western hemisphere, any sort of underground activity against the Republic of Cuba, [including] shipments of weapons and explosive materials by air or sea, invasions by mercenaries, sending of spies and diversionists.” Draft Soviet-American-Cuban protocol (unofficial translation), 31 October 1962, Russian Foreign Ministry archives.]

C. RAFAEL RODRIGUEZ. That is so, if the governments of those countries will not object. However, Guatemala will oppose this proposal. The situation will change, and the USA will refuse its obligations.

A.I. MIKOYAN. In Kennedy’s message pretty much the same thought is expressed, but the use of a phrase like “I am sure, that other countries of the Western Hemisphere will not undertake aggressive actions...” Approximately in a form such as this. Comrade Carlos Rafael Rodriguez’s observation is just. But it is necessary to think up something. The Americans may say that this is an issue for each of these countries. Let’s take a look at the formulation in Kennedy’s message.

ALEKSEEV. In this message it is said that “I am sure that other countries of the Western Hemisphere will be ready to proceed in a similar manner.”

C. RAFAEL RODRIGUEZ. It would be possible to propose approximately this formulation: “The Security Council will undertake measures so as not to allow aggression against Cuba from the countries of the Caribbean, and also the use of weapons and the territory of these countries for the preparation of such aggression.” It also would make sense to note that the “USA will take upon itself the obligation that no preparations will be conducted on its territory or with the assistance of its weapons...” It would be possible to work out this variant.

A.I. MIKOYAN. Yes. This variant really is interesting. It is important to note that the USA acts not only from its own territory. This is a very important point for Cuba.

DORTICOS. It is necessary to work on the editing of this document. We are not prepared for this today. Here, it is necessary to think about the form, and also to work on the editing of this document, although we are essentially in agreement with this document and understand how important it is to achieve success. We can work a little bit together, significantly improving the formulation, but it makes sense to do it quicker.

ERNESTO GUEVARA. In essence we are in agreement with this document.

DORTICOS. Naturally, we have to overcome certain language difficulties, too. A more careful editing of the document evidently is necessary in both languages.

A.I. MIKOYAN. That is good. Our Ministry of Foreign Affairs is waiting for a communication about your attitude towards this document. Com. Kuznetsov also requested a clarification of your position on this issue. Now we could report about the principal agreement, excluding article 13, thoroughly editing article 5, and bearing changes in article 3 regarding the USA's position with respect to the countries of Central America. After our report about your fundamental agreement, the MFA and also our representative at the UN will be able to begin work. Maybe we could present our variant tomorrow.

C. RAFAEL RODRIGUEZ. The formulation of article 5 bothers me.

A.I. MIKOYAN. Yes. It encroaches on the sovereignty of the countries of Central America, but the governments of those countries are conducting a very bad policy.

DORTICOS. We will try to prepare our variant by tomorrow.

A.I. MIKOYAN. Working out this document, we are thinking about providing for the security of Cuba. It seems to me that it is not possible to limit the declaration about non-aggression to the United States only. The United States of America can push other countries towards aggression and provide help to them in aggression, while remaining on the sidelines itself. We have to oblige the United States to fulfill Kennedy's promise. Com. Carlos Rafael Rodriguez is entirely right. It is not of course a matter of these governments, rather, the important thing is in the essence of this issue. Kennedy on this issue came to meet us. We demanded that not only the USA would give its word about non-aggression, but its allies too. This is a compromise for them. We should use this compromise. It was not easy for the United States to make it.

ALEKSEEV. We should not miss this opportunity.

A.I. MIKOYAN. I am trying to evaluate the situation which flows from your positions. McCloy said that he gives his word that the camps will be liquidated, that there will be no preparations for aggression. This type of declaration has significance even in oral form. When the world knows, it will be uncomfortable for them not to fulfill their promises. I think that it would be useful for you, comrades, to think about issues of mutual tactics. Let's say that the USA will not agree to inspection on its territory. However, as it seems to me, it would be important to organize observation on the territory of Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, and certain other territories with the assistance of the UN representatives.

It seems to me that it would be important to arrange for inspection in the countries of Central America. Is Cuba interested in this? What are the positive and negative sides

of this type of proposal? I am in no way an authority on issues of Central American policy, but it seems to me that it would be important to secure the presence of the UN there, in order to mitigate the significance in this region of the OAS and the Organization of Central American States. Comrades, have you thought about this issue? It will be easier for you to decide, than for us. Could the following situation come to pass? They will say to us, that inspections of the Central American countries are possible, but they cannot be realized on the territory of the United States of America. Would you agree to that or, in your opinion, is that type of a resolution not interesting to you, if it does not extend to the USA? This would be important for us to know in order to work out a joint tactic. It is clear that the USA will figure on the list. Or perhaps an agreement can be reached on inspection in Central American countries, while the USA will be limited only by the declaration. You could give your answer to my questions not today, but tomorrow.

DORTICOS. If inspections of the USA will be excluded, then in the same way inspections of Cuban territory will be excluded too.

A.I. MIKOYAN. You could thoroughly consider this issue, and then inform us of your decision.

C. RAFAEL RODRIGUEZ. It would make sense to specify the terms of the multilateral inspections as they apply to Cuba. It should spell out the fulfillment of the obligation which the Soviet Union has accepted on itself, i.e. verification of the dismantling and evacuation of the Soviet missiles. As far as the rest of the countries are concerned, this inspection would refer to the areas where camps for the training of counter-revolutionary mercenaries for aggression against Cuba are set up. The inspection could be extended to part of Florida, not touching, naturally, Cape Canaveral. It is also necessary to organize an inspection of camps in Puerto Rico, on the island of Vieques and in certain other territories, i.e., the inspection will touch not the entire territory of the mentioned countries, but rather those regions where these camps exist.

A.I. MIKOYAN. It is immediately evident that Carlos Rafael Rodriguez is a great specialist on these issues. In this way we could drive the aggressors into a corner. It is important to find an appropriate formulation. This variation represents a big step forward. Maybe tomorrow [Soviet officials] Bazykin and Alekseev will meet with some of you and confer on editorial issues. It will be important to have this document immediately following the elections in the USA. We will take the initiative, and we will not allow the Americans to capture it. Perhaps the Security Council can be convened on the 7th or 8th of November.

ALEKSEEV. According to my information this will be done on the 6th.

DORTICOS objects.

GUEVARA objects.



A.I. MIKOYAN. U Thant told me that on 6 November the Security Council cannot be convened: we will argue. There are protocol issues here, and declarations, and procedures. We mustn't underestimate the importance of the struggle in the UN and the opinions of the member states.

DORTICOS. We believe that it is possible to act in the following way. Let us undertake a thorough revision of the document, and we will try to do it quicker. Right after we have prepared it, Comrades Bazykin and Alekseev can meet with our representatives in order to consider editorial issues.

There is information from Comrade [Carlos M.] Lechuga [Hevia], our new representative at the UN, regarding the fact that U Thant is inclined to put off the convening of the Security Council. It is possible that his session won't even be this week. U Thant is interested in holding bilateral meetings before convening the Security Council. Besides this, now we are entering a pretty complicated time: in the recent hours the USA has begun to create even more tension, not only in relation to the IL-28 bombers, but has also announced unlimited airborne surveillance.

This is dangerous. We will consider what to do under conditions of a renewal of provocations from the air.

A.I. MIKOYAN. You, Comrade Dorticos, possess trustworthy information. We told U Thant that it would be good if the Security Council were convened after the elections. I already said that when we withdraw the strategic missiles and present evidence of that fact, we will be able to begin to speak about something else.

Maybe tomorrow in the first half of the day the comrades will work on editing the document, and after lunch we will organize an exchange of opinions.

I would also like to propose that we not publish a report about every meeting. It seems to me that there is no point in doing this today, and in general it would make sense for us to come to an agreement about this.

DORTICOS agrees with Comrade Mikoyan's proposal.

A.I. MIKOYAN. When we complete the evacuation of the missiles, many issues will be seen in a different light. While we still have not withdrawn them, we must maintain a different line. For that, 5-6 days are necessary. It is necessary to hold the line; otherwise they will accuse us of treachery. After we complete the evacuation, we will be able to adamantly oppose overflights, the quarantine, verification by the Red Cross, violations of airspace. At that moment the correlation of forces will change.

It is necessary to get the UN on our side. We must achieve more than was promised in Kennedy's letter. We mustn't underestimate the value of diplomatic means of struggle. They are very important in periods when there is no war. It is important to

know how to use the diplomatic arts, displaying at the same time both firmness and flexibility.

E. GUEVARA. I would like to tell you, Comrade Mikoyan, that, sincerely speaking, as a consequence of the most recent events an extremely complicated situation has been created in Latin America. Many communists who represent other Latin American parties, and also revolutionary divisions like the Front for People's Action in Chile, are wavering. They are dismayed [*obeskurazheni*] by the actions of the Soviet Union. A number of divisions have broken up. New groups are springing up, factions are springing up. The thing is, we are deeply convinced of the possibility of seizing power in a number of Latin American countries, and practice shows that it is possible not only to seize it, but also to hold power in a range of countries, taking into account practical experience. Unfortunately, many Latin American groups believe that in the political acts of the Soviet Union during the recent events there are contained two serious errors. First, the exchange [the proposal to swap Soviet missiles in Cuba for U.S. missiles in Turkey—ed.], and second, the open concession. It seems to me that this bears objective witness to the fact that we can now expect the decline of the revolutionary movement in Latin America, which in the recent period had been greatly strengthened. I have expressed my personal opinion, but I have spoken entirely sincerely.

A.I. MIKOYAN. Of course, it is necessary to speak sincerely. It is better to go to sleep than to hear insincere speeches.

E. GUEVARA. I also think so. Cuba is a country in which the interests of both camps meet head on. Cuba is a peace-loving country. However, during the recent events the USA managed to present itself in the eyes of public opinion as a peace-loving country which was exposing aggression from the USSR, demonstrating courage and achieving the liquidation of the Soviet base in Cuba. The Americans managed to portray the existence of Soviet missiles in Cuba as a manifestation of aggressive intentions from the Soviet Union. The USA, by achieving the withdrawal of Soviet missiles from Cuba, in a way received the right to forbid other countries from making bases available. Not only many revolutionaries think this way, but also representatives of the Front of People's Action in Chile and the representatives of several democratic movements.

In this, in my opinion, lies the crux of the recent events. Even in the context of all our respect for the Soviet Union, we believe that the decisions made by the Soviet Union were a mistake. I am saying this not for discussion's sake, but so that you, Comrade Mikoyan, would be conversant with this point of view.

C. RAFAEL RODRIGUEZ. Even before your arrival, Comrade Mikoyan, immediately after the famous decision of the Soviet government was made, comrades from the editorial board of the newspaper "Popular" phoned me and requested an interview. They wanted urgently to receive our declaration regarding the situation which had developed, since the representatives of the "third force" were actively opposing Soviet policy. You know that group, it is deputy Trias. I gave an interview, not very long, since though I had been informed about the basic points in the speech of Fidel

Castro which should have taken place on November 1, I could not use them, and in conclusion I observed that the development of events in the coming days would show the significance of the decisions that had been made.

A.I. MIKOYAN. The meetings and conversations with Comrade Fidel Castro had for me very great significance. They helped me to understand more deeply the role of the psychological factor for the peoples of these countries.

E. GUEVARA. I think that the Soviet policy had two weak sides. You didn't understand the significance of the psychological factor for Cuban conditions. This thought was expressed in an original way by Fidel Castro: "The USA wanted to destroy us physically, but the Soviet Union with Khrushchev's letter destroyed us legally [*iuridicheski*]."

A.I. MIKOYAN. But we thought that you would be satisfied by our act. We did everything so that Cuba would not be destroyed. We see your readiness to die beautifully, but we believe that it isn't work dying beautifully.

E. GUEVARA. To a certain extent you are right. You offended our feelings by not consulting us. But the main danger is in the second weak side of the Soviet policy. The thing is, you as if recognized the right of the USA to violate international law. This is great damage done to your policy. This fact really worries us. It may cause difficulties for maintaining the unity of the socialist countries. It seems to us that there already are cracks in the unity of the socialist camp.

A.I. MIKOYAN. That issue worries us too. We are doing a lot to strengthen our unity, and with you, comrades, we will always be with you despite all the difficulties.

E. GUEVARA. To the last day?

A.I. MIKOYAN. Yes, let our enemies die. We must live and live. Live like communists. We are convinced of our victory. A maneuver is not the same as a defeat. Compare the situation of a year ago, and today. A year ago the presence of Soviet soldiers in Cuba would have provoked an explosion of indignation. Now, it is as if the right of Russians to be on this continent also is recognized. That is good. McCloy even told me jokingly during a conversation that the presence of Russian officers [in Cuba—ed.] calms him down. The Cubans could open fire without thinking, he observed. But Russians will think. Of course, there could be objections to this remark, but the psychological aspect is taken into consideration.

Sometimes, in order to take two steps forward, it is necessary to take a step back. I will not in any way teach you, though I am older. You may say: it is time to consign it to the archive, request that we resign.

Recently, I read Lenin. I want to tell you about this not for some sort of an analogy, but as an example of Leninist logic. When the Brest peace treaty was signed,

Bukharin was working in the International Committee of the Party. Although he was repressed, I consider him a good person. He tried, it happens, mistakenly, emotions had great significance for him. We were friends (not in 1918, at that time I was working in the Caucasus, but much later). And so the International Committee accepted a resolution in which it was stated that the concession in Brest was shameful. The point of Soviet power is lost. The comrades accepted the resolution as if rejecting Soviet power itself. Lenin wrote about this resolution: monstrous. How is it possible for such a thought even to occur to a communist? But you know, at that time we practically had no armed forces, but those comrades wanted to die heroically, rejecting Soviet power.

E. GUEVARA. Yes. I see that there is no analogy here, but great similarities.

A.I. MIKOYAN. There really is no analogy in this example. Imagine, Russia at that time was alone. We had no forces. There was some sympathy from the working class of other countries, but sympathy alone doesn't help much. Cuba is powerful. You have no war. You have the support of the socialist camp. It is true, your geographic situation is disadvantageous, communications are far extended. This is a weak position. The Americans can disrupt communications and not allow the delivery of fuel to Cuba. We could have brought 200 million people into the streets as a demonstration of protest. But this would not have garnered any fuel for you.

How can the blockade be disrupted? How can it be broken? We have at our disposal global rockets. Using them would lead to nuclear war. What do you say to this? Shall we die heroically? That is romance. Why should revolutionaries die[?] It is necessary to maneuver, develop the economy, culture, serve as an example of other peoples of the countries of Latin America and lead them to revolution. Lenin, in a complex situation even agreed to the conduct of the conference in the Prince Isles. Study Lenin. To die heroically—that's not enough. To live in shame is not permitted, but nor is it permitted to give to the enemy your own destruction. It is necessary to seek a way out in the art of diplomacy.

A barber comes to me in the residence with a pistol, and I ask him: "You want to shave me with a pistol? No, with a razor." Or, a correspondent from the newspaper "Oy" interviewed me, what a pleasant young man, also with a pistol. He has to take notes, but he lost his pencil. What can he write with a pistol? Do you understand me? If Kennedy maneuvers, dissimulates, conducts a flexible policy, why don't the Cuban comrades use that weapon[?] You won't manage to knock off the reaction with a pistol, the diplomatic art is necessary too.

I was very satisfied by the conversation with comrade Fidel Castro, but today I didn't even know what to say regarding his reaction. But I repeat that it was amazing. Maybe I spoke foolishly, but before that I thought for a long time. For me it has been morally difficult during these days. And today it was difficult for me to understand his reaction. Perhaps I let some clumsiness show, spoke in some kind of tone? No, I, it seems, gave no grounds. I said that it is necessary to help U Thant. It is necessary to keep U Thant on our side. Comrade Fidel asked an appropriate question, why not

conduct the verification on the open sea. But U Thant won't gain anything with the assistance of this type of verification. Today I became a victim of Fidel's good speech, evidently because I extemporaneously put forth my idea. An old man, I have the shortcomings of the young.

E. GUEVARA. One day before that we said that there would be no inspections. Comrade Mikoyan said that he had told McCloy that airborne inspections are inadmissible.

A.I. MIKOYAN. My proposal did not concern even the shore. The subject was verification of our ships. Ships are sovereign territory. The waters are yours, therefore we were trying to elucidate your point of view. We didn't touch the land. We were talking about the waters. The land had nothing to do with it. Evidently I was naive. I thought that this variant was possible. Our ambassador, a young person, told me secretly: "I think that the Cubans will accept this proposal." (To Alekseev): Don't you speak for them. You are not a Cuban.

C. RAFAEL RODRIGUEZ. I have been reading Lenin's works for a long time. In the present situation we need evaluations which correctly reflect the situation. It is not a matter of feelings. These are the objective conditions in Latin America.

In the first day of our conversations Comrade Mikoyan spoke about two types of struggle. I think that in certain conditions the last word belongs to the political struggle. In Latin America after these events a feeling of demoralization arose among the people. The nationalistic petit bourgeoisie lost their faith in the possibility of confronting imperialism. Diplomacy may change the situation. Many people believe that if Kennedy affirms his promises only orally, that will be equivalent to a defeat. But if pressure will be applied by the Soviet Union, if Cuba will act decisively, if we use U Thant and the neutral states to the necessary extent, if we insist on the acceptance of the demand re: verification of the enemy's territory, if we achieve acceptance of Fidel's five points, we will gain a significant victory.

An oral declaration of non-aggression definitely will create a feeling of a defeat.

A.I. MIKOYAN. I agree with Carlos Rafael Rodriguez. Comrade Guevara evaluated the past events in a pessimistic tone. I respect his opinion, but I do not agree with him. I will try during the next meeting to convince him, though I doubt my ability to do that. Comrade Carlos Rafael Rodriguez pointed out the directions of the future struggle. I like this way of framing the issue. Of course, it is foolish simply to believe Kennedy, it is necessary to bind him with obligations.

C. RAFAEL RODRIGUEZ. And with strategic missiles?

A.I. MIKOYAN. We cannot defend you with these missiles. I received the possibility to visit you, while others could not do that. We had to request the agreement of Canada, the USA of the overflight, and to overcome other difficulties. They told us,

for example, that we could not fly to Canada without lead [escort?—ed.] planes. We had to receive visas. What could we do? That is their right. Our Minister of Foreign Affairs phoned the State Department and asked: Will you give a visa to Mikoyan or not? Canada delayed giving an answer, the Canadian minister was absent, he was in New York. Other officials could not resolve that issue. Approval was granted at 1:30 a.m., and at 3 a.m. we took off. But somehow we started talking about me. If Cuba was located in Greece's place, we would have shown them.

I am satisfied by my meetings with you. The business side is important. Basically, we have come to an agreement on the protocol. Besides that, I must say that I thought that I understood the Cubans, and then I listened to Comrade Ché and understood that, no, I still don't know them.

ALEKSEEV: But Ché is an Argentinean.

A.I. MIKOYAN, to Ché: Let's meet and talk a little. I would like to exchange some thoughts with you. It is not a matter of who will be victorious over whom. We must try to help each other. I understood a lot. I understood how important the psychological factor is in Latin America. I am at your disposal. Every meeting is very useful for me. However you want it: one on one, two on each side, and so on. When I return to Moscow, I should have the right to say that I understood the Cubans, but I am afraid that when I return I will say that I don't know them, and in fact I will not know them.

Our stake in Cuba is huge in both a material and moral [sense], and also in a military regard. Think about it, are we really helping you out of [our] overabundance? Do we have something extra? We don't have enough for ourselves. No, we want to preserve the base of socialism in Latin America. You were born as heroes, before a revolutionary situation ripened in Latin America, but the camp of socialism still has not grown into its full capability to come to your assistance. We give you ships, weapons, people, fruits and vegetables. China is big, but for the time being it is

still a poor country. There will come a time when we will show our enemies. But we do not want to die beautifully. Socialism must live. Excuse the rhetoric. If you are not against it, let us continue our conversation tomorrow.

DORTICOS. We can meet, but we would like to know the opinion of the Soviet government and Comrade Mikoyan about what we will do about the agreement on military assistance.

A.I. MIKOYAN. Let's consider that. Think about a program of future work. I am free. I am prepared to visit you.

DORTICOS. Thank you. Tomorrow we will set the conditions with the ambassador.

A.I. MIKOYAN. I agree.

Ambassador A. Alekseev attended the conversation.

Recorded by: [signature] V. Tikhmenev

Com. A.I. Mikoyan has not looked over the transcript of the conversation.

*[Source: Russian Foreign Ministry archives, copy provided by National Security Archive, Washington, D.C. Translated by Mark H. Doctoroff. Published in Cold War International History Project Bulletin No. 5. (Bracketed explanatory notes are by the editor of the Bulletin.)]*