

Interview with Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin.

Question: I will start with the obvious first question. When and how did you know that there was a missile crisis, what we now call the missile crisis?

During the crisis, of course. (LAUGH) It's very natural. Crisis arise so you have it. So it's, answer very clear.

Question: and how...

Not, not before.

Question: You had not been told anything by Moscow at that point.

About the crisis, they didn't specifically knew themselves about the crisis too. So there was nobody who told me about it.

Question: And about the deployment?

Deployment? No, I didn't know anything. All the decision was taken secretly by my government. And it began in May, there was a decision, and by, initiated by Mr. Khrushchev, and then there was talk with Castro and there was Raul Castro coming, Che Guevara coming to Moscow, they negotiated. They didn't sign the specific agreement, there was not time. The crisis arrived. But there was agreement between them. Our diplomatic service was not, was not informed, including myself. And our ambassador to the United Nations, it was Mr. Zorin, he was our deputy foreign minister. I was simply told that in case somebody asked you about missiles, you just simply should answer, there is no offensive weaponry in Cuba. Solely defensive weaponry, period. No other details you shouldn't provide and you will not explain why, so on all the questions about missiles, we always answer, there is no offensive missiles, no offensive weapons in Cuba. This is our standard answer for all Soviet diplomats, including myself.

Question: And when you got that instruction, were you immediately suspicious?

Well you see, first of all I didn't know that there was a nuclear one. I didn't even suspect it, quite frankly. I thought it was missiles, the usual tips, so to speak. So I never knew specifically. Nobody, American counterparts asked me about nuclear missiles. They asked me about missiles. I said there are no offensive weapons in Cuba period. But nobody, I don't recall them asking me about the nuclear things.

Question: And they couldn't imagine it either...

Yes, probably it was, was the case. So I didn't think about it at all. So, missile, after all, you have missiles which could be used for really destructive purposes, if you speak logically. For instance, if somebody going to take Cuba so on the approaches on the sea, you could have missiles who could cover the sea, area between Florida, for instance, and Cuba. So the missiles do. But I didn't know that there

was a real missiles could cover half of territory of United States, plus was nuclear weapons. This we were not told.

Question: And had you been asked, or had you been informed about the deployment, what would your advice have been back to your government?

No, I think it was a foolish thing to do because it was very clear that it could be very great, serious crisis between my country and United States....To put nuclear missiles on a shore practically 90 miles of United states. I'm sure that nobody government of United states, in Kennedy ' s government will tolerate it, unless they want to be defeated in next election . And President Kennedy was very ambitious man, as I understood him quite well. And definitely he couldn't do it, tolerate them. So it was clear for me. But nobody consulted me in this case . The consult usually government all these things that they know much better than your ambassadors. (LAUGH)

Question: But....

I think your country the same, very rare exceptions. Though you have a very good ambassador Mr. Thompson. He was excellent ambassador.

Question: But he was not there...

Yeah, but he was then come to the United States.

Question: Many people have told us of conversations with Khrushchev where he said one version or another of we will put a hedgehog down the pants of the Americans. Did he ever think about what a person with a hedgehog down his pants would do?

I never have a chance really to discuss with him this Cuban crisis. of course he was in Moscow I was in Washington. So when I came back I have definitely knew that as defeat for him and I didn't want to raise question. (LAUGHTER)not to offend him. So I discuss with all his friends. Of course there was no problem for me to discuss with him anything. But I think it was, at that time I thought it was not necessary to discuss things when he had to swallow rather bitter pill. So I don 't know how you, but it's rather easy to imagine what kind of reaction is because he was very emotional man and...(LAUGH) You know, he was in United States, he was unopened.

Question: How did he make decisions?

He makes it himself plus he usually consult at the beginning at least. By the end it was one of the reason he was thrown out of the ruling position. But before, usually he took decision, then there is a meeting of the presidium of Central Committee and he said, well yesterday I was working in my garden and suddenly a good idea came to my mind. (LAUGH) And then very few object. Mikoyan was probably those who usually object if he feels it necessary. But in many cases he doesn't want to defy him. But afterwards when it's over, he came to him and said, well, Nikita he called him , probably it's not the way to do it this way. But great majority, they don't specifically object. Though at beginning he was not like a dictator like Stalin, no, so it was allowed to discuss anything you like. But secretary general is in such

position if he really wanted to do something at that time he could do it, especially with a man with such enormous energy as Khrushchev was. (LAUGH) Try to prove something. So that was a decision nothing more. But usually it's, decision is taken as a decision central Committee or, you know, the presidium.

Question: Tell me about when you were asked to come to the State Department by Dwean Rusk when he told you about the...

Well it was a rather, I mean put it this way. I was just saying goodbye to Mr. Gromyko, he was leaving United States after being, meeting with President Kennedy on 18th and after being on General Assembly. So on 22nd he was leaving La Guardia, or Kennedy -I think it was La Guardia, it was a special plane -and saying goodbye, he left, it was around 2:00, and then frankly planned to go someplace else just to spend this Sunday for my own in New York because it was a rather rare occasion when you have a chance to go to New York, you're tied up with your embassy. So I decided to go and wander. Suddenly there was an officer came to me and he said, he came and approached me on behalf of Dean Rusk, secretary of state, and dean Rusk asked me to visit him today, it means on that very Sunday at 6:00. As we had very good personal relationship with Secretary Rusk, sometimes we could always agree with him if he couldn't or I couldn't, say look here, could we postponed one day. So I just mentioned it, please inform him tomorrow morning because I'm too busy right now. He says, no, no, Mr. Ambassador, he specifically mentioned to me that he really would like to see you today at 6:00. It's important. I understood this because usually Rusk will not press you, so something important. My thinking was two things: Cuba or Berlin. But I was not quite sure it was Cuba. So when I came back around 5.....

Question: Why were you quite sure it was Cuba?

I wasn't...

Question: Oh you weren't....

No, no, no. I thought it was either Cuba or Berlin, those are my thoughts. But I was not sure of either. SO I come at 5:00, then I go back to the embassy. At 6 I was at his office and he gave me two papers. One paper was a letter to Khrushchev written by President Kennedy and second was a statement, TV statement which he was going to make at 7:00, President to, before the, on national TV. And he said, Mr . Ambassador, usually we speak with other on first

name, Dean and Anatoly. Here was very formal. Mr. Ambassador, because I begin to ask some questions. I said, look here, why you didn't raise these questions with Gromyko? Gromyko was only two days, he was with you and he was with the President. And you didn't raise any single word. Why? And now you make in public your president make public appearance before, very serious appearance and the same time a letter to Khrushchev. Why?, And Dean Rusk said, look here Mr. Ambassador, I was instructed by president at this particular time not to answer any questions and not to give any comments on these papers. Period. So I felt that was really serious. I saw it on papers in the hall, so it not necessary by his behavior. So it was really serious and I understood from my first glance on papers it was really serious crisis.

Question: And tell me more about your private reaction when you saw...

Well I didn't have a real big trouble on our country – both American said Russians. I didn't know all the detail yet, how really deep we are involved in this because Gromyko was in Washington and he didn't tell me at all . It's interesting when we have a little bit later on 1989 in Moscow there was a seminar, Soviet-American seminar on the Cuban Crisis. It was organized by your university and there was McNamara, several people from, other participants. But it was here in Moscow. So one of the participants, I guess it was Bundy asked me, he says, Mr . Ambassador, you didn't know? But I said, no, I didn't know. And from my side was Gromyko . (LAUGH) I said no, you ask Gromyko I didn't know. (LAUGH) Gromyko look at him, his face, he said Anatoly, he called me by my first name, you didn't know? I didn't know you didn't know. Why didn't you? You knew everything. From whom, I said to him, I could know. It's strange, he said, because our government have no secrets from you, period. Because, but this is a fact that I didn't know . He didn't understand. He was quiet and this was the whole thing. I was a little bit pleased with this though...I was in a very bad position towards your government because I was look as if I am deliberately deceive them. But Zorin, who was my counterpart at United Nations, was even worse because he denied everything publicly. I at least denied before Robert Kennedy, before Rusk this way. Though it was of course a very bad thing, what kind of trust ambassador could have with a government if he really lie to him the way then you give them.....telling them there is no, no, no, no. But Zorin was in that position, on television at that very moment because they didn't notify him nor me.He called me from New York City, do you know, Anatoly, anything? I said, I was his assistant before, years before when he was deputy foreign minister. I was his assistant in foreign ministry so we knew each other. So he called, any news? I said, no, except what you have. It's a stupid position and dangerous.

Question: Speak more about that, why is it dangerous?

Because if the ambassador don't know what kind of danger exists, you may mislead your own government, you may mislead the government you are accredited, because you handle the issue from your own presumptions and then you make conclusions which sometimes may influence the decision of your own government because your government they forgot, they forgot to tell you. They think they know everything. So you give recommendations, so they think...But I might give recommendation from a different presumptions because I didn't know. Though in two days it was clear for me very, it was not very difficult. But the beginning was. I think many things maybe could be prevented to a certain extent, to lessen the crisis.

Question: Well, and one of the things when Mickey and I met you in May we discussed, you know, trying to see documents and sort of thing from me and since then we have seen some of the documents. And one of the questions I was going to ask you but you have almost answered it is that one of the early cables back from Washington to Moscow suggested that, that your country, you suggested that your country show its resolve, maybe throw, you know, expell some theater troops or something like that.

No, but it was a real, the beginning of the Kennedy administration was not very smooth one. There were still, mainly it was Europe , Berlin, access to Berlin, they have a meeting in Vienna, Khrushchev and Kennedy in '61, it was not very good meeting. It raises some tensions . It was a good

chance really, and, but when Mikoyan recommended to Khrushchev handle different meeting in Vienna. Because he said it's a new, young president so we should try to find understanding. And Khrushchev probably thought that he could bully his way to press on a young, inexperienced president and that he was, he was wrong. And this is one, before he went to Vienna we discussed in the Politburo, on the Central Committee. And Mikoyan was the only one who said no, it's not the good tactic. You should try to find a solution but not try to press on him. So the result, there was, you know, there was not very good meeting, then there was Kennedy called up the 40 thousand troops additional sent to... So it was already, with Cuba it was the Bay of Pigs. So it's whole relationship by time was not very good, is the answer to your question.

Question: And so at ...

(tape change)

Question: So at, in the first few days after the announcement that the Americans had discovered the missiles, you at first suggested that your country consider ways to show its resolve.

No, I didn't say so consider. There was not to

consider a strong resolve. It was immediately change between the president and the chairman. So in that question there was no time to consider. There was actions. There was a quarantine and at the same time Khrushchev demand to raise the quarantine, and this kind of action. You have to go day by day. It was just rose in tension up till the very dayBut this is how it happened because one addresses the other and the answers, and the answers was going like this until they reach a stage on what we have to do. So it was a, several days, 26, 27, 28. But the exchange begin from 22nd. 22nd I was given the letter to Khrushchev which arrived (?) on 23rd, it was on 24th there was a D-Day, so to speak, when there was really the president day before announce that the, he was going to enforce quarantine on 24th at 2:00. So that was a day when, and our ships were going on, imaginary line, they were crossing. So everybody was watching. And was several your ships were going alongside. And, but we were looking and there was helicopters flying ant there, there was counting loudly, 8 miles, 5 miles, 3 miles, 2 miles. Like in High Noon. You know, Gary Cooper...But it's a real drama, live drama. And then there was zero. It was a line which couldn't be, your president's statement or quarantine announcement, he wouldn't allow our ships to pass through but ti was high sea, open sea. But I'll continue to go and I warned Robert Kennedy that our captains have orders no tot stop. They will go and if you begin to do it then an act of war. We have this conversation with him on the 23rd. But then it was, what happened, then there was an exchange 23rd, 24th, and I had several talks with Kennedy, on 25th, 26th. So this was resolve, this was all a question, because I couldn't say in one word, somebody show their resolve. This was just, tension was growing, growing and there was nobody yielding up til let's say on 26th.

Question: tell me about when you were, more about when you were watching those ships approach the imag, approach the imaginary line. What did you think at that moment about...

I think it could be war because either we're going to fire on them, or there will be some other measures taken. You see the question was, this question was answered by Robert Kennedy himself

when we met with him a little bit later. He said because they were concerned that we could answer not on the spot but maybe somewhere in Europe where we were much more better position strategically. Because on Cuba area , course, you have all the advantages , military advantages. On Europe we have better advantages than you have. So the thought in your government, according to Robert Kennedy, he mentioned to me, that we may answer on some actions of their military actions in somewhere in Europe and then there will be trouble for both of us . Because then it will be really Russians and American involved in a military conflict. Until now it's only threats and maneuvers. But nto really fired at each other. It is important.

Question: And once that military conflict begins ...

It's very difficult to stop. Better to prevent it than to stop when it begins because usually once military conflict begins it's very difficult to stop, especially with big powers.

Question: Especially once we were in the nuclear age.

Yeah, nuclear age too. But I think at the very beginning they didn't thought about the specifically nuclear war but still military conflict would be enough, too. It was, has its own logic which nobody had answer at that time be would be the end of this conflict.

Question: When did you, you remember when you began to think specifically about nuclear war?

Not specifically. No, I was still thinking about the war in general. Not a nuclear. Nuclear, I still, back of my mind I didn't believe it, that it will come. I think both government clever enough or wise enough not to go that far . But even certain kind of a military conflict with usually weapons big enough and serious enough.

Question: Tell me more about the meeting that you had with Robert Kennedy that first meet on night of the 23rd. What was his mood, what was his manner?

Well on the 23rd it was just after the announcement by his brother, the president. He came to meet, he was very angry, very emotional. In general he very emotional, he was very emotional man and it was rather difficult to discuss with him, even under usual circumstances. But so he came and he was really saying in a sense, he was angry that we misled president, that he was misled by Mr. Khrushchev, by Gromyko, and I misled and Kennedy, Kennedy, that you was saying here is no offensive weaponry in Cuba, but you, you put in your offensive weaponry, so what kind of trust do we have? So President very angry with the president, with Chairman Khrushchev and he believes that he violated his trust and this is the most important things, in this I agree with you, with him. When two leaders of the government lose trust in each others,So he began to develop this version of these kinds of things. He said many unpleasant things because he was definitely in a mood of, some unpleasant things personally about Khrushchev and Gromyko. So I put everything in my cable, quote-unquote, without comment, because I feel that much better for Khrushchev and Gromyko to read for what was said by the brother of the president because I couldn't describe myself here but I knew that this is important 'cause this is one they will read directly to him. Later on – crisis is over – Gromyko mentioned to me that when Gromyko

receive the telegram because we receive telegram in foreign ministry and then from foreign ministry it goes to the government. So he took this telegram on one copy and he put it in his pocket . (LAUGH) And he didn't send it to anyone. And he went to Khrushchev. What they discussed, nobody knows because there were two sitting there. But I'm sure that make some impression, which was my intention, too. Just for them to understand what kind of mood exist in the Kennedy administration because it 's very difficult otherwise translate the atmosphere. I make a report about what going on in the country, but only my guesses, so to speak, my summary. But here it's what brother of the President said, what just came from president. So I think it was rather important from this point of view. But then I said, look here, so now we're going not to have trust each other at all. He said, no, no, no, I still think that it's important to have between president and the chairman some trust and this is important, so we will continue. I said, this is good, we should help our leaders to get them some of this minimal trust. SoWhen he was leaving he said, what kind of instruction have your captains? I said, as of today they have instruction on open sea to go without stopping and don't allow anyone to search or stop them. And he said, so you better, I said to him, tell your brother to change your quarantine order. He goes, no, brother is not going to change his orders. It's the orders he gave. I said, well, what I know that our ships will go without stopping. And he said, well, then I don't know what going to happen. But captains of our ships have order to shoot. I said, then it will be war. He look at me and didn't say anything. And that was last things we discuss on 23rd.

Question: One of the things also that you say in your cable that he was, that he said the president was most upset about is that Kennedy felt he had a promise from Khrushchev that there would, nothing would happen.

No, you see it...

Question: ...before the elections....

No, you see, it's not a question about this one. There was a certain kind of misleading because it was playing, that they didn't specifically discuss missiles or not missiles. The question about whether offensive weaponry or defensive weaponry. I think that there was a certain kind of , at the beginning, really a certain kind of misunderstanding. Because the American side -this is my guess, I don't know - they really thought it was only weaponry just in case if somebody's going to attack Cuba . This kind of weaponry and missiles. In our case, the whole idea of putting, this of the putting our missiles on Cuba to defend Cuba against American imperialism, as we said at that time. In case if they're going to attack. So rather to prevent them from attacking by placing our missiles that will give you deterrent effect. So that was for Castro. So we consider it a defensive weapon, because we don't go, we didn't want the same, know for sure . Nobody was planning to attack United States with this missile, that's sure. But they felt they agreed with Castro, that this could really prevent from American side attack, of course, knowing that there is a missile there, nobody were going to risk. So it was, at the beginning, this kind of misunderstanding . But then later more and more became known, then he begin feel, probably the president, that he was deceived by Kennedy, by Khrushchev, without telling him directly. There is the missiles, with nuclear missiles, so this kind.

Question: Was there...

But there, in their correspondence it was never specifically questions, do you have there nuclear missiles, and answer, yes, we did – no. This was never directly discussed between them. So always question of offensive and defensive weaponry. Ever when Gromyko met him, this was most interesting, president didn't raise a single word about missiles. They again discuss about it in the category of offensive weaponry and defensive weaponry. But when President met Mr. Gromyko, your president already have all the photo, reconnaissance plane, very clear, so he could ask him why, what is it. Be he doesn't, he simply discuss, they discussed Berlin question and Cuba question. But in terms he mentioned offensive and defensive weapon, without identifying missiles or even nuclear missiles.

Question: What do you think might have happened if the president had revealed his knowledge privately to Gromyko and you?

Well, I don't know what can happen because it depends on what terms he would present it to Gromyko, how he strongly could convince him in the dangers this kind adventure. And then he could send him telegram to Moscow, because he sent telegram, rather I should say after the, he spoke with him on 18th and he sent from Washington telegram to members of his colleague of presidium of central Committee, where he put the situation rather satisfactorily. All his summary of the talk was satisfactory - that President Kennedy didn't raise this question, specifically spoke about offensive-defensive. It was talks, diplomatic talks, but nothing of raising some surprises or raising some threat or nothing. It was the usual talks when you're meeting with the president, I mean president and foreign minister. I don't know why president didn't wanted to do it. This rather a riddle for me because he could say it and then at least he could get some answer. Maybe he thought that he, he was wait until Gromyko himself would reveal maybe in the final moment would say, look here, we have this one and that he would discuss. Or might he feel that until now Gromyko always spoke about the defensive weaponry. He will again only answer defensive, defensive without, I don't know. But he didn't raise it, not to Gromyko. So Gromyko gave the conviction that nothing going to happen around this for the time being.

Question: That the Americans did not know yet.

He didn't say... because it was not specifically discussed..... He was saying that we discuss this, you usually discuss Cuba among other things. And my impression that there is nothing specifically unusual, certain grounds.

Question: So Victor Sukhodrev, who was there as the interpreter, told me that when they heard, when Gromyko heard that the president was going to give a speech, there began to be rumors that they made sure that they left the United states before that speech that they . .

Well.....

Question: ... advanced their departure some.

No, the question is really I don't know advanced or not that he was intended to leave on 22 because I have to go to see him and usually under that practice you have to notify State Department for

two days. So I notified them almost immediately on the 18th when, no, on the 20th. So I don't know, maybe, Sukhodrev was with him, so I don't know, if he mentioned something. But specifically there was, no, when I was there and I make it two days warning to, you know, not a warning, I'm joking, but simply checking that I'm leaving, according to the procedure, leaving from New, from Washington to New York. There was no speeding up or nothing. He just put it on before.

Question: One last question on the, what Kennedy had been told or promised by Khrushchev and what he hadn't.....Through, not through you but through what in the United States is now called the back channel, had he been assured that he had, had Kennedy been assured that there would be nothing that would happen to upset the relations between the two countries before the election?

In, in Cuba or in general?

Question: In general.

This I don't know. The only back channel he had with one my counsel, counselor. It not he, it was Robert Kennedy before I became ambassador. There was a good counselor, Bolshakov, who was on a very good term with Robert Kennedy and they met periodically. Our ambassador Menshikov did, my predecessor, was not really involved in any kind of discussion. He, fellow didn't want to be involved in anything, tried to avoid trouble. So it was a counselor who was dealing with Kennedy. And they became, relatively speaking, friends, that they, you know, go out for a drink together. So he was on rather good, good terms. So when I arrive at the beginning....

(tape change)

Question: You had just explained how Bolshakov and Kennedy had established a relationship, and you were getting ready to tell the story.

Yeah. Yes, they establish before my coming here so they were knew for, for a year or two before. So when I arrived for a few weeks, they continue to do it. I was not involved specifically. Once it was before, he went for a vacation, Bolshakov, and apparently Kennedy asked him to check in Moscow because Kennedy knew that he, this fellow was from our intelli, intelligence and I guess Kennedy knew there was a man from intelligence. So he asked him about different kind of things, about Cuban things and Bolshakov came back and give him answer. The same, of course, he report to me. He asked me so I check they said, please tell Kennedy that there is no offensive missiles, offensive weaponry and this is from Moscow. So this was direct answer. And as before, Robert Kennedy was a private channel through Bolshakov, not through ambassador. So probably he accepted it as really certain kind to Moscow. I check with this fellow.....cause when I was in Moscow I had to check with my, it was military intelligence, so he checked with his minister of defense and minister of defense give him right to give this kind of answer. I don't know, not Bolshakov, but minister. So this was, this was only things which was given because later on everything was went through me. Bolshakov was not, was not involved. He met from time to time, but the government put everything on myself because difficulty with Bolshakov is he was a good man but he didn't know the deals. So sometimes he went, he spoke with Kennedy. Kennedy sent him something and he came to me, I begin to ask him and he didn't know what to answer

because he doesn't know the problems. I said, did he ask you about, he said, no, and what this one. So it was difficult. So Moscow decided to, so little by little this changed. And it was by the October crisis, missile crisis I was completely in charge of all back channels.

Question: And that, that seems like a sort of dangerous thing for the White House to have engaged in as well.

Why?

Question: Because they had no knowledge of, they had no real knowledge of how much authority Bolshakov had to speak .

Well , it was before. I mean when they came that was, they felt was a switch from Bolshakov to me, so there was... But before as our ambassador didn't want to be involved, so I don't know, the government didn't really, because he wasn't a professional, Menshikov. He was minister of foreign trade. So probably government decide that he doesn't know very much how to handle the Americans so they would rather have fellow who before in America. This was their position . But when I came, so they switched to me. And so it was not specifically, it was out of necessity because with whom? Ambassador didn't want or didn't want, the government didn't want him to take. So it was Kennedy had to have some channel. So there was a channel from one of our counselor. And he would, he was intelligent, from intelligence, but he has only one assignment to keep channel with Robert Kennedy, nothing else. He was not involved in any other things specifically because Kennedy too important to keep. I think it was the right thing to do. But simply he, he was military man. He didn't know anything about politics. That was difficult.

Question: So when Robert Kennedy, when, when John Kennedy thought he had been deceived by Khrushchev, do you think he had been?

Who? But the same I'm telling you, it's very difficult to answer because it's playing the games. Defensive, offensive, defensive, offensive. There was never, at least for me, direct question: Do you have nuclear weaponry in, in Cuba? And our answer, yes we don't, it was never this kind of dialogue with anyone. It was always question about offensive and defensive. My impression they, American, they really thought, as I am explaining you, that we have only defensive weaponry. The missiles which would cover only strait, whatever straights, so to speak. So it was never raised, it was no argument even. Nobody argued with me specifically. No you have missiles, why you, no. I was, have only one answer which was given to me. No, we don't have offensive weaponry there. (LAUGH) But nobody asked me do you have nuclear...If Robert Kennedy asked me, look here Ambassador, according to our knowledge you have nuclear missiles. I'm sure I would have immediately report to the government and I will ask clarification at least for myself. What is, there was no, so I myself presumed that there was missiles, yes, but missiles defensive. It never come to mind that you have missiles which cover half of United States, more than that the nuclear missiles. So that's why there was no specifically questions of deceiving or not deceiving, this question. Probably President Kennedy expected that should be explained. Ah no, but he never asked. But this is rather childish explanation, of course, but it was what happened.

Question: After it had become a crisis, what did you know of in Moscow? What did you know whether or not there were arguments . . .

I know there was arguments. What I knew mostly I knew it afterwards. Because while you're in Washington you have no way to know, you only feel by telegrams and that kind, a little nervous or not nervous, but otherwise you have no way. But when I came back, of course I knew all the people so they explained me all details of what kind of scenario was it then. Real trouble was when we have a talk with, on 27th with Robert Kennedy because at that time it was decisive talk when we have really, and he really insisted to have an answer by 28th on Sunday. So, and then there was different kind of rumors, our intelligent, intelligence and some of the American side could begin bombing on Monday, on Monday or maybe Tuesday. So it became more nervous and nervous really and then, and the situation because became attention, tension, so they have to make a decision what to do. On 26th Khrushchev make the first step. He send telegram to Kennedy saying look here, we should go to war each with the other, it's nonsense. We should normalize our relations. What I am, could tell you now, he wrote it on 26th, that there will no military supplies or military equipment coming anymore to United, to Cuba. All of our ships which go there, they do not carry any weaponry, as I give you; prepare to give you obligations. So let's have a deal. There will be no more shipments, any kind of shipments of military significance, and you will give a promise that you're not going to attack Cuba. Then when it coming, receiving my telegram with Robert Kennedy which was a rather interesting discussion and I could tell you later I think it was decisive really, the whole conversation with Robert Kennedy cause he came a little after the talk with president. When he receive it, Khrushchev he begin to hesitate and he send a second letter on 27th, 26-27th. And where he, for the first time, proposed okay, we're preparing to withdraw liquidate our bases on Cuba if you liquidate your bases on Turkey. This for the first time mentioned. In this case we are not going to supply anymore and you are not inof quarantine, and so on. President ignored 27th letter but he answered on 26th which was, he said, yes, it was your very good proposal, we should normalize the situation not to have an incident, so let's do it a bit differently. First you have to, to stop building up your bases for missiles, the first step. But there's a bigger settlement that we prepared to give obligations no to attack Cuba and to be sure that not other country from hemisphere will do the same. And what for, and stopping the quarantine actions but from your side. You're not, you have to dismantle all the missiles and take them back, back out. That would... And then, then this was, this is, at that very moment, there was a, my telegram arriving from the, the talk with the 27th with Kennedy, Robert Kennedy. During this long conversation was very interesting one, what he, I could....

Question: Tell me about the conversation.

Yeah, the conversation, very well, take it off...So on 27th was really the peak of tension, argument. Robert Kennedy came to me and he said he was, really the situation was very bad, Mr. Ambassador, and we both government have to some thing to defuse the situation. And he said now it's most difficult because today your missiles, what missiles, ground to air, shoot down our plane, our military man demanded to give right our airplanes to fire back. President for the time being refusing because he's concerned that if they will return fire, we know that these armed batteries are yours. People there. So we will hurt them, it will be really some difficulty. But is one things, this plane. But in general you continue to build your bases, the missile bases, where you're putting your missiles. So

there's a strongly demand from the Pentagon to begin to bomb this missile, missile sites, 'cause ultimately we will be forced to do it, he mentioned to me. We will forced to bomb them because you couldn't tolerate that your missiles were staying there, 90 miles from, miles from Florida, from United States. But you understand, what does it mean bombing Cuba because all the soldiers are yours, all the specialists are yours there. It's not the Cubans around. So you'll definitely answer, where? Probably in Europe. So we'll bomb you here, you'll bomb us somewhere there. So you could see this is a dilemma now for the president. But he has to do something, one way or another, because pressure on him, has it from military men and political situation, is such that he has to make a decision. That's why he said, made a proposal, let's do it this way and he was speaking on behalf of the preside. Let's take a letter from 26th from your Mr. Khrushchev who's saying that let's normalize the situation and inviting us to stop quarantine, etc. But from our side, it would take our letter 27th which it said that you should dismantle all these kinds of things, first things to dismantle. And then you give obligation there will be no new missiles there. So it was a real compromise your proposal that we have. But there was nothing about Turkish base. I didn't know exactly that was proposal make already by Khrushchev because his answer gave through American embassy, embassy. So, and then I see, I see a little bit, two hours later that I spoke already with Kennedy. But I knew in general the situation, so I said, OK, Robert, you said that, fine, fine, it looked to me, but what about bases? Bases for bases. We're withdrawing, you withdrawing from Turkey. But he was ready to give and answer which Kennedy, President Kennedy, had not yet given to Khrushchev. He wouldn't in his letter mention Turkish at all. So for, for Moscow, for Khrushchev it was completely unknown answer or there was sort of the impression that president didn't want to have. So I said to him directly, what about this, this Turkish bases? And he said, yes, I, I'm authorized on behalf of the president, it it's the only obstacle, we accept. And we, but you have to understand that because we put these bases in Turkey on decision of NATO, so it is not out unilateral decision. So we need 4 or 5 months to make this arrangement. But you do not refer that we have arrangement with you. But we're giving your word, our word to you that in 4 or 5 months we'll withdraw them but we will go through usual, using our own argument, without referring to Cuban crisis, to refer, to mention them that we have to withdraw from Turkey. So I find this, this is as I was told by the people who were in Moscow. This was decisive when they were sitting all night from Saturday until Sunday. And then Sunday morning, they were sitting. Then when we received this one. It was a face-saving for Khrushchev because it was, looked so, base for base. Okay, we'll withdraw from Cuba and we're withdrawing from Turkey. So for him it was a relief. So they were so glad to receive this telegram so on Sunday 4:00 daytime, was the difference of the, I receive a very short telegram three, three lines saying, Mr. Khrushchev, we receive your talk with Robert Kennedy. We accept what he did discuss, settled on behalf of President Kennedy. President Kennedy, Chairman Khrushchev ask to you, authorize you to tell them that you accept his main term to dismantle our missiles from Cuba, the Cuban. All the other details we will put in a broadcast or letter which we will send, but we will immediately broadcast in order to save time because we still wanted to give answer during Sunday. So there was sended, it was lengthy answer which was really trying to cover our retreat, but putting all this, the agreement without Turkey. Turkey was not mentioned because Robert specifically warned me, please do not mention publically anywhere about Turkey because otherwise we will, we will say we refuse to accept that we discuss with you. So it wasn't mentioned. So this was, but it was in a hurry so they, when it was meeting in Moscow they put their -....was our chief of the press department – in a auto. He was rushing to the

radio because they wanted to be on time and he read it from himself, because there was no announcer, read this text of the answer of Khrushchev. But already I receive at 4:00 in the p.m. but 5:00 I already saw Robert Kennedy. This he sent, sent us, which was really he sent this. And he said, for the first time this month, during all this Cuban crisis he was very , he is usually not smiling type, but he sort of smiled and said, look here, for the first time I will go home to see my children because I really thought that I will not have the chance to see them anymore. I'm going to report immediately to the president and I think everything is all right. And by that time we receive a lengthy through a diplomatic purse or a letter.....a distance. You see one of the difficulty we have at that time, we didn't have direct lines with our governments. So for reasons when I send a telegram, we have to do a cipher, our people, then they could call to the Western Union. From Western Union re was a boy, Negro boy racing on a bicycles taking this, taking the Russian back and sending this numbers

Question: The code

And so on and so on. So that is one fo the result of the crisis was that we organize a hot line between Moscow and ...

Question: You're laughing about it and it is astonishing to think about but it must have been very serious at the time.

Well now I could, I spoke with you in a relaxed mood. At that time it was a different kind of situation. Of course it was very serious. Really one of, I think this was the most dangerous crisis in Soviet-American relations after the Second World War. We didn't have any more crisis of size. No. Both governments recognize it and both of our governments, doesn't matter with the change of presidents and secretary generals, they remember that and they were very careful not to come any more so close to the war as it was during those Cuban crisis years or days.

(tape change)

Question: You mentioned that, that the presidium or the ...

It was Politburo, but before it was called presidium of the Central Committee.

Question: But the group that was involved in making decisions during the week stayed up all night essentially...

Yeah, yeah.

Question: ...on Saturday night . Why?

Because it was very difficult situation. They have to make a major decision -war and peace. Everybody understood. So this is why you have to stay even two nights if necessary, or three nights. It was very serious, so we have no chance to go home, they're still discussing it we, have no option. Because one of this help when we spoke with Robert Kennedy to give him way out with the bases for bases exchanges. But otherwise too, you have to understand there is a prestige were involved for Mr.

Khrushchev too. He was the secretary general and he was making this kind of move with approval of, previous approval of the presidium. So they all, both respons, all are responsible for these kind of things. They have to completely defeat before the whole world that they were making greatest mistakes they have to withdraw and recognize this mistake or at least they too have a situation when they may more or less, situation which will at least give certain kind of explanations because first of all, what they achieved at least received assurance there will be no attack on Cuba, so it was one of the, one of the goal.

Second, was exchange when, when it was coming from Robert Kennedy, this base for base, this was really important because otherwise only, Cuba's one of course, it's important, but rather it's Soviet-American relations strategic relations, because one of the reasons, when Cuba, when Khrushchev went there I think it has three reasons really. I don't know, he didn't explain, but my guess was, first of course, he wanted one of the way to defend Cuba. Defend in a sense to prevent attacking, cause Castro was asking him, you should, you know, this weaponry and so on. But it was not Castro who asking them for nuclear weaponry. It was Khrushchev's idea himself. So he sense that by this way he could defend. Second, I'm speaking just in order how they came and not that important, second, he thought it was important for the strategic, Soviet-American strategic situation because you have missiles around my country at that time and we didn't have very close. We have a few intercontinental missiles so balance was definitely in your favor . Third, psychological. Khrushchev being very emotional man, he really was very angry – why? Kennedy have the right to put missiles under his nose, everywhere in Italy and Turkey, but he has not right to put his own several before his? To him, why I don't have? I don't have it. It's emotional things . So why do we sitting all night? Because you have to make a decision. So but when it come to basic things at least you could make an impression in our own people that you are withdrawing, not completely defeated by your wrongdoing what you at least receive something in return. We receive obligation not to attack Cuba. Second, at least some missiles from Turkey.

Question: And did you think and did they think that an American airstrike and invasion was imminent ?

For airstrike, yes. An invasion there was some doubts. Nobody have a for sure. We didn't have any specific, I should say. But I, I for one as an ambassador was almost sure that strike will come Monday or Tuesday because what they have, what they may have..... on Monday or maybe Tuesday or Thursday. But this is all a logical situation because after all, president was involved we had to analyze from his angle. He was involved. He couldn't retreat from the situation if you look logically . He make an announcement that before the whole public opinion on television, on television, he said, look here, Russians are putting their missiles, they put a very grave danger to the national security of my country and I will do everything to remove the danger. So he already put an obligation and he going to run in the next year for, rather in two years, for re-election and he definitely wanted to be second time the president . You know what happened. But at that time he was very, it was a, around him was a very young, ambitious people who were prepared to risk, to put it on a, sacrifice that kind of things. This was my impression. Maybe wrong. So I thought there were some kind of limits which America could tolerate under the given circumstance. Maybe different circum, different personalities from our side, their sides.

Question: But it...

But in this circumstance I thought he will do it. At least bomb from, definitely the missile sites. The sites which you are construction for. An invasion was not quite sure because it would cost a lot of American lives. I know the Americans, this is my impression, didn't like to really, to spend their lives, I mean, especially presidents, or those who tried to be elected. That's understandable. It's a good, do good feature, national feature of your country. But it was clear that it will take a lot of people because Cubans they fighting quite all right, they, in order to defend their own country. So it would be many sacrifices. Not to speak about ours, because several dozen thousand. So it makes, really make it worthwhile. So I was almost sure about, answering your question once again, about the bombing. About invasion, I was not sure.

Question: Many of, well all of the advisers to Kennedy who were advising for an air strike and possibly an invasion were also assuring him that no matter what action the United States took, military action, Khrushchev would not respond.

It depends with what .

Question: Period. That because of the...

You see, well I am sure he couldn't do anything in Cuba. I'm not so sure that nothing could do in Europe. In Europe, maybe. Some of our general could convince him to do certain kind of actions. Not really war with the United States . No, I doubt it. He never really want a war. But certain kind of a, well, another blockade of Berlin or something along those sides he could do.

Question: Escalate.

Escalate this one. But not specifically actions which could lead to the war, not from his side. He was, he's emotional but he was rather careful fellow. Really the point is, it may be difficult to believe, all our leaders, putting aside their quality, sounds now, or at that time, I'm just objectively, I knew practically all of them, none of them really ever wanted war with the United States. None. I don't know about Stalin, I never met him. I met him only once but in really different circumstances. But otherwise, not a single leader of my country ever wanted or thinking well, that this one, in case we have a war, let's have a war, no. Never.

Question: I'm sure that you understand, at least in part because of the propaganda of the time, that many in the United States would find that statement difficult to believe.

I know. I spent too many years in the United States, almost 30 years. What I'm telling you is our responsibility, especially now the whole reason of my, hope again being in your country as ambassador and being here for many years. I will tell you very clear because there is not a single case which you could tell me, I'm prepared to discuss with anyone, who said this. This is a point where we have chance or not in danger of deliberately go so close to war, no. All the troubles we have later on with all the presidents, there are always distance. With Cuba, Angola, Yemen, Addis Abbaba. Always kind of somewhere remote areas . We never have a really, in Europe there was a permanently, but in Europe it

was, you, watching each other very closely, and we really taking pulse from each other practically each day, one way or in, one way or another, legally or illegally, through the intelligence, or through the diplomatic actions. We more or less, sure, there was not a real case in my knowledge that we have...The only one that happened during the Nixon administration during the middle war, the Middle East War, in '73 , when you announce for half a day partial alert . But when I immediately called the White House, I was worried. I received the alarm, and they said, Mr. Ambassador, don't worry, tomorrow we'll take care of it. So it was, otherwise it was not a single case. There was no really intention to be on the war. You can always argue here you're trying to get at our expense certain kinds of advantages. Well this is disputable because you were doing one thing, we were doing another because there are some cases. But the main things which I mentioned, there was not a single leader who really wanted or was prepared to have or to risk certain kind of things to have a war with the United States. There was not a single leader of my country. This I know. Simply know, not saying on, or heard something, no. I was too close up till last year.

Question: And you said earlier, I mean in talking about this you said anyone who deliberately wanted a war on that Saturday the 27th before your meeting in the evening with Robert Kennedy, were you worried that things were simply spinning out of control? Not that anyone...

No, no what really, I was really concerned about from your side. In what, because, that particular juncture, dangerous, belonged, so happened, really, to you because you have to make next move. Not me, but you. You put the results and we were waiting and you said remove it, we didn't remove it. So you had to do next step. So from this point of view it was your step. What kind of step? Bom, bombardment? Invasion? Or what, what else? Cause if we simply froze , freeze the situation then it would be our missiles standing there and you sitting there with your threats. That' s impossible. It wass impossible, but it should be solved one way or another because as I mentioned to you, I was quite sure whether President Kennedy couldn't allow to stop the things as it was, at a completely deadlock. This should be solved one way or another so it was important what move from your side. So when, when he specifically mentioned about this possibility base for base, basically I think he get what wanted to, to force us to take this one of missiles and bring them back. And second, he didn't , and we kept our word, he didn't announce it publicly so the public opinion of United States get the idea it was full victory, because Russian didn't receive except obligations not to invade. This was important too. But still, Russia to UnitedStates on this basis bilateral, we received nothing, but it was in Turkey. But it wasn't mentioned and nobody really knew about it in United States until recently because we never really published this kind of arrangement. And it was exactly, it was done, and wasn't really on 28th, on 28th was finalized. On 29 I went to Kennedy with the message of, Robert Kennedy with the message from our chairman to President Kennedy saying look here, I would like to repeat on his behalf, he says, that all the arrangements we just made with you, which we agreed upon, we make with the clear understanding that you will remove your missiles from Turkey because we will not say nothing publically in all these letters and nothing. So I was authorized specific events. So that's our ambassador, me and Robert Kennedy to discuss what kind of arrangement we will fix it. So Robert said, I will put to the president. The next day he came to me and he said, look here, president repeating his obligation, given his firm word that he'd going to keep his word within 4 or 5 months but he couldn't give any written agreement

with you because it's too sensitive. Robert Kennedy then add, look here, I'm looking for my own political future and I don't want to have somebody somewhere who will find that paper saying that I was selling missiles in Turkey. I don't want to have this. So I report this conversation to it, and on the first of, of November, I went again to Robert Kennedy and said, Khrushchev asked me to tell the president that he believe in his words and he doesn't need any papers. He just relying on his word, period.

Question: And why, given the fact that you said that in world op, in public opinion it looked like the United States won. Why was Khrushchev willing to keep that agreement about the Turkish missiles...

Well it was, it was, he may refused to do it because at first we were under the impression that President Kennedy will not accept Turkish bases. And he didn't answer until my talk with Robert Kennedy. So, and Robert specifically wondered if he will mention publically he will accept it. So it was a choice between whether to risk and say, look here, there's a Turkish and then president said no, I never mentioned Turkey. Here we are, in the same boat. (LAUGH) Again, rowing in different directions.

Question: During the week, were you ever afraid for your family?

No, they're all with my, with my...Speaking about afraid for the family I could tell you another story, it's really nothing to do with this one. Brezhnev when, when he was, during Nixon administration in '72, he was in, no in '73, in '73 he was invited by Nixon to visit, and he was in Washington. And he was staying in the Blair House, but he was giving a return dinner for President Nixon in our embassy. This was the custom or tradition. And so after the dinner when it was over and he didn't stay in the embassy, he was so, when it was over, everybody went away and he, Brezhnev, mentioned to me, I would like to see how you live. He was meaning, he knew my wife, he said, Irina, that was her name, and Anatoly I would like to see, and it was all this protocol arrangements, second floor, really, go on third floor, small three rooms, upper. It was, embassy was small. So we said, okay, you like. So he went to us, only three of us and myself, my wife and the biggest room we have it was our, our bedroom. So he went there, sit down in the bedroom and discuss. And then I saw the chief of security was standing there and he making some (gestures) to me. I look at him and I didn't notice. I said, what's happening? He said, I would like to speak with ambassador. Why, you want, you have already speak for me? Tell immediately the four of us. So he says, you see, comrade Dob, comrade Brezhnev, he called him by the first name, Leonid Ilyech, there is a call to our embassy. There is a bomb in our embassy so we better to go away. It was 12:00 at night or it was all, dinner was over. So I said, yes, better to go to Blair House. It was very close. So I said, better Leonid Ilyech, you go there. And then he didn't ask me, he asked my wife, Irina, what are, what's your advice? And my wife, she's a rather brave woman, she said, well, we have these calls rather frequently and he said, what are you doing? We are going to bed! (LAUGH) And he looked at her, really? Then I stayed for another half an hour. I was really mad because really one thing weird, because we have not to go when we have received, received these kind of calls. Always.....when you see, so many calls we're receiving other embassies, it's even....But it was particular period when we were favorite target for these kind of calls. And so he's..... I was really nervous because if something happens, he says, why ambassador, you kept him in your own house when you knew there's a bomb there. But it was, everything turned out. It was for, he went away and nothing happened.

Question: Do you think the missile crisis changed Khrushchev in any way?

I think he became more cautious, definitely. There was no real such acute crisis over Berlin because, for instance, for several months, begins from '91 through Vienna meetings, there was many ups and downs, up downs over West Berlin exercises and sometimes when it was a blockade, it was unpleasant. When there was interruption over air routes when your planes were flying and there was interceptors flying so it was very close, with some incidents really. After this crisis, it was never, Berlin crisis became that strong as it was before. It was continued but on the level quite manageable and there was no other crisis during the Khrushchev crisis between us and the United states. No. On the contrary, they became better and better. Have this agreement and then have an agreement next year on partial test ban treaty. Summit agreements. So it was, then it was a good statement by president Kennedy on American University in the summer next year. As a matter of fact, I don't know Jacqueline mentioned to me when, when there was a very sad occasion and she was receiving, in receiving line when he was killed in White House, it was last ceremony really paying respect all this , when there was, Mr. Mikoyan and I was with him and it was a long line and we came she said thank you, thank you. What else she could say during this very difficult time but she was really brave woman, she was standing stoic. When he came, he suddenly look as if she knew me even but she didn't know him, Mr. Mikoyan, he was deputy to Khrushchev. Then she suddenly said, you know, this may sound strange, but on that very morning when we were in Dallas, I don't know why, but during lunch time we were sitting two of us, lunch time, but breakfast, with my husband, he suddenly mentioned to me, we should do our best to have really better relations with the Soviet Union. I don't know why because she didn't discuss with him, which him before or during this breakfast. Probably he continued certain kind of thoughts. But this he mentioned? I would like you to know this.