

Mikoyan's Speech at the Military Council of General Pavlov's Group

November 21, 1962

Dear comrades, officers, generals, representatives of all units of General Pavlov's group, let me pass to you the regards, warmest regards, from the Soviet people, from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, from the Soviet government and Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers Comrade Khrushchev (stormy applause).

I do not intend to talk about domestic issues in the Soviet Union, although this is probably also interesting, but then we would not have time to talk about the issue that is more important for us at the present moment.

In addition, right now the Plenum of the Central Committee is taking place, and the brief summary of Comrade Khrushchev's report, which, as I was told, was distributed to you, will show you which problems are facing the party in the economic sphere, in the sphere of improving management, and perfection of party and government leadership over the entire economy—agriculture and industry.

I can only say that you can be confident that the development of our country—economic, cultural, and in other spheres—is proceeding according to plan and ahead of the plan. Therefore, you should not worry about your motherland; life is improving with every day, we are enjoying great success that exceeds the estimates of the Seven-Year Plan.

When you read Comrade Khrushchev's speech in more detail, everything will become clear to you; I do not want to spend more time on this.

As far as Cuba is concerned, one has to say that the Cuban problem is currently the main problem in the struggle of world Communism against world imperialism. And we are involved in the resolution of this problem, so that we can defend the interest of world Communism and the Cuban Revolution. And we believe that we are leaving this confrontation better off, with a victory over the forces of imperialism, while, of course, making some concessions to it, but at the same time having received considerable concessions in exchange which exceed those we had to make ourselves.

You probably remember, in 1958, when the Berlin problem was raised and even before that, the main goal of our foreign policy was to preserve the status quo. One time, Comrade Khrushchev said in his speech: Our goal is to preserve the status quo in the relationship between the socialist camp and the camp of capitalism, imperialism. Then John Foster Dulles and others, as representatives of aggressive policy, wanted to roll Communism back to the east, and further back. They made efforts to resurrect capitalism in the GDR [German Democratic Republic, i.e., East Germany], to push us out of the GDR. That was their goal. They made efforts to resurrect capitalism in Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary, and in general to roll us back to the borders of Russia, the Soviet Union. Those were their plans and they were screaming about it.

Then we believed it was correct to raise the issue of status quo. Let's do this; we are not going any further than we already have, and you give up your attempt to reach where we are sitting. They did not agree. But then we were the first to launch Sputnik, almost two years earlier than the Americans. And the Americans, Eisenhower, a year before we launched our Sputnik, announced that soon they would have an American satellite. We made no announcements that we were preparing our satellite; we were silent as if we would have nothing. And then, as you remember, in October 1957 suddenly the Soviet Sputnik was launched and there was no American satellite.

They had to wait about one and a half to two years to catch up with us. Then they announced that they were lagging behind and threw all their dollars into this, and announced that they would catch up with the Russians and overtake them in the next five years. Five years passed, they could not catch up with us. Their manned spacecraft made only three orbits, whereas ours was in space for more than three days. Our two Sputniks met in space. This, from the military point of view, has great significance—but we did not scream about it. If they could approach each other so closely, why cannot one Sputnik, if the other one belongs to the opponent, shoot at that one in space and destroy it? If we can move Sputniks so close one to another in space, we can also carry out such tasks. Military people understand that, even though the Americans were not screaming about it and we were not screaming either.

Therefore, it has been confirmed, and now for so many months since 1957, we have been ahead of them in space. This has military significance. We are ahead of them in long-range missiles, both in quantity and in quality. This has been proven by the fact that we have been launching our missiles for several years in a row from the Western part of the Soviet Union to the Pacific Ocean, almost to the U.S. shores in the sea. Our scientific observer ships stay in the area and observe where the missiles land. The Americans stay very close to our ships, because nobody can order them to leave and they see that it is not just propaganda, not advertising, but a fact that our missiles fly from 12,000 to 18,000 kilometers and reach their precise targets. They see where the ships are, which means that the Russians are expecting the missile to land in that exact place and they land in that exact spot. So, one does not need any secret intelligence or espionage to know that. Today the time has come, when the most secret weapons are impossible to keep secret. Missile launches and nuclear explosions are impossible to hide. Therefore, it is both a plus and a minus. It is a minus that the enemy knows a great deal, and it is a plus in the sense that they should know—and tremble. This is a plus. And this is our strength.

The correlation of forces has changed all over the world in our favor. The Americans are not talking anymore (when Kennedy came to power, he spoke about this directly) about any kind of return of capitalism to the socialist countries, whether to the GDR, or Czechoslovakia, or Poland. The question has been eliminated. They cannot even dream about that.

Moreover, in the past Berlin was open, so they penetrated it, were able to organize an uprising or conduct espionage—whatever you want. Now that we have erected the wall in Berlin, nobody can do it. The GDR has become like a fortress, and they are sitting in a mousetrap in West Berlin. There are 10,000 troops sitting in that mouse trap. This is what the correlation of forces is like.

Two years ago, Communists who were in the government were arrested in Laos. Then they escaped. After that Souvanna Phouma was also kicked out as left-wing bourgeois. The Americans orchestrated all that. But the revolutionary forces brought him back to power again, and now we have provided assistance to Souvanna Phouma and to Kong Le, who became a colonel-general, both by diplomatic negotiations and by providing military support. Now they are a neutral government that includes Communists. Communist troops have occupied quite significant territory. The correlation of forces has changed. After all this, the Americans pulled their troops out of that country. It is a noncommunist, but neutralist country, which has established relationships with all countries of the world. The prestige of the Soviet Union has grown considerably even in such a distant corner of the globe.

Indonesia has struggled and continues to struggle for West Irian. They threatened the use of force, but of course they had very few forces and where could they get them? Holland was more powerful than they were, NATO is helping it [Holland], they conducted diplomatic negotiations. Holland did not want to compromise, no matter what. Publicly, the Americans acted as if they tried to persuade the Indonesians to conclude a truce; however in reality they supported them. But when the Indonesian government—Sukarno—asked us to help them with weapons, we gave them a lot of weapons, good weapons, the same weapons as we have for our troops.

This summer, when Sukarno was getting ready to decide this issue and when negotiations in Washington were going on, he played with two pieces, played very intelligently with our help. He asked and we gave him several submarines with Soviet crews, several (I cannot cite the numbers) TU-16s with antiship missiles, so that they could destroy Dutch ships. They had great aircraft carriers and other means—antiaircraft missiles and sea ships.

Indonesia was very smart—as if it was hiding something from the Americans, but in reality it actually helped the Americans to find out what Soviet weapons they had. The Americans learned about this. Now they were facing the question: Did they want to get into a confrontation with those ships on the side of Holland (they are allies)? But this was very unfavorable for them; they knew what kind of forces we had that were concentrated in that area. All those forces were under the Indonesian flag. There was no Soviet flag on those ships, they had been temporarily transferred to Sukarno.

And therefore, Sukarno was able, while playing with two pieces on the political chessboard, to force Holland to give up Western Irian to Indonesia through the Americans.

This is what we have done. It would not have happened without our support and assistance. Imperialism lost its base, a strategic base in the distant region of the Pacific Ocean. It became a neutralist base, and therefore friendly to us.

As you can see, the correlation of forces is changing more and more in our favor and time is working for us.

Nobody expected, neither the American imperialists nor us, that there would emerge such a revolutionary volcano in Cuba, which would burn stronger and stronger, producing eruptions

one more powerful than the other, the volcano of Communism on American land, in the American hemisphere.

The American imperialists failed in their calculations. When Castro was approaching Havana, they thought that it was a normal change, customary for Latin America, from one junta to another. One junta comes in, holds power, then leaves, and another one comes in. Just like Makhno [an anti-Bolshevik commander during the Russian Civil War —ed.] used to say: The Bolsheviks are acting incorrectly—they take a city and do not give it to anybody. One should do like this: hold it for some time, then give it to another.

This is how they saw Castro, especially because Castro is from an aristocratic background, his father was a large farm [*latifunda*] owner. He was not a Communist; it is a fact. He led the Revolution under the banner of liberal demands, against imperialism, for democracy, against corruption, for honest government. Even the agrarian reform at first was not clearly defined; then it became more distinct. While leading the people, he was himself becoming one with the people [*sam vglub' naroda vlez*], and he accepted all the core problems of the people: from the peasants, agrarian reform; from the working class, social reform of the socialist Revolution. And the presence of the American monopolies caused in him a patriotic desire to get rid of the parasites—the American monopolies.

He was moving together with the people, the people were pushing him and he was pushing the people, and he is a person of the people's soul, connected with them with his roots, an honest person, and a person who desired to do the best. They came to the result that this so-called liberal Revolution developed and later was declared (and it is a fact, not just a declaration—this is what it is) a socialist Revolution in Cuba.

Can you imagine in the very center of the Americas, 100 kilometers from the United States, an island that proudly carries the banner of socialism and is struggling to the death for the victory of socialism!

What kind of situation have capitalism and imperialism in general found themselves in, can you imagine! I do not want to cite any comparisons, but, for example, if something like that emerged in the center of our camp—a similar volcano of imperialism, capitalism—what a blow it would be to the socialist countries and the Soviet Union!

Now they are biting their lips for having missed it earlier, for not having helped Batista to strangle the Castro movement at the very beginning. Of course, they could have done that if they had understood everything, they would have given him great military assistance, they could perhaps have choked them, but not for long. Now they see that this is a dangerous epicenter and they see the influence of the Soviet Union. Since it is a socialist country, of course, we have an agreement, and the influence of the Soviet Union is spreading as the sphere of influence of American imperialism is shrinking. More than that. As McCloy told me in a conversation: Cuba is a center of infection, of contagion, the center of Communist contagion. That is truly so. Cuba is developing as a country of socialism, achieving successes in cultural, political, and economic life; it is becoming a center of attraction for all Latin American countries, and at the same time an explosive force by the fact of its own flourishing. The Americans are afraid that

this example, as a torch attracting other countries, could tear Latin America, where they have invested billions, from their control. They are plundering it, they are sucking blood from there, and for them to lose it is almost like cutting off a leg.

That is why they have taken all possible measures to liquidate Cuba as a Communist country, as a socialist country. They attempted an invasion—remember last year in the spring—but unsuccessfully. The Cubans defeated that counterrevolutionary intervention, which was carried out with American support, not formally by the Americans but by counterrevolutionary Cubans. That has improved the morale of the Cuban people even more, and it made the Americans even angrier when they saw the defeat, the shame of defeat. And they were preparing to do it again, better this time, so that they could win. It was clear that they were preparing a more serious attack on Cuba, so that they could achieve decisive success. And if they had done that, there would have been no revolutionary Cuba. That would have been a great blow to the entire world Communist movement, to all socialist countries, to everything progressive. That would have thrown back the struggle of the peoples of Latin America, which is itself in the very early stages, and not only Latin America, but Africa too.

That would have changed to some extent the correlation of world forces in favor of the United States against us. The Soviet government decided to defend Cuba, not to let the Americans choke it. That is the reason why you are here in Cuba, not as tourists (it is unlikely that you would have been sent here as tourists), but you are here to carry out your duty, and you know what that is. The struggle with the United States on this issue is continuing, and Cuba has become the focus of world politics and, at the same time, a threshold beyond which war is possible.

Both of the world's largest powers, the world forces of socialism and capitalism, found themselves at the point of a sword, and the eruption of war was possible at any second, not just a local war, not a regional war, but a war that could have developed into a general, thermonuclear war.

Now we can speak about this; in today's circumstances many people can see it better than they saw it before; they will understand what we were speaking about earlier, and now Comrade Khrushchev has confirmed it. One can say that the leadership of the Soviet Union, of our party—Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev—skillfully, with great knowledge, and guided by Leninist science and forty-five years of experience in statecraft and foreign policy leadership has led us to victory in these difficult conditions, without using weapons that could have led to a devastating thermonuclear war, which nobody needs. We do not need such a war. History is working for us.

If we have peace, the victory of Communism is guaranteed. We are growing faster than they are; our prestige is growing high, while theirs is declining. That is why we do not need such a war—but we have to be prepared for one, so that the enemy does not dare to bring one about. In making conclusions about what happened here in the last two weeks, one has to make some judgments: what happened, did we act correctly, what did we do right, what are the results? These are natural questions, because one has to think through everything. Let's say that plans are one thing, their implementation is another, and the results are yet another thing. And of course, questions arise—should we have sent so much military force here, in particular, the missiles and

the Il-28 bombers? Such questions do arise. Some people say maybe we shouldn't have brought so many of them here—then we would not have to take them back. Why did we have to bring them here?

Other people even say that the danger of invasion of Cuba itself was caused by the fact of our deployment of missiles here. If we had not brought the missiles here, maybe there would not have been any direct threat to Cuba at all.

All these speculations are wrong. I will tell you why. You see, in September, the missiles had not yet been deployed to Cuba, and the Americans did not know anything about them. They learned about them rather late—only on the 20th or the 19th. That's when they learned our missiles were here. They were discovered by German intelligence; West German intelligence (we have such information) informed American intelligence. Then they flew the U-2 and discovered that our missiles were sticking up just like they were at the military parade in Red Square. Only in Red Square they would be placed horizontally, and here they were deployed vertically. Apparently, our rocket forces decided to make an offensive gesture to the Americans [*pokazat' Amerikantsam kukish*], and deployed them in full view instead of covering them with camouflage and hiding them. They published the photographs—all the missiles to the last one were photographed, in broad daylight, as it should be.

But already a month before they learned that there were the missiles there, they announced maneuvers or training exercises for Navy and paratroop forces under the name "Ortsac," that is, Castro if you read it backward. Children have such a habit—they write and read backward. So there was this name. Landing on an island in the area of Puerto Rico. They announced that the maneuvers would be held in October. They began, and a great number of troops were involved—two aircraft carriers, 20,000 troops on ships, forty ships. The commander was not an officer of a usual rank for this type of case, but an admiral—commander of all the forces (what they call amphibious forces) of the United States in the Atlantic Ocean, that is, with a higher military rank than appropriate for such maneuvers.

Besides, those maneuvers were not part of a U.S. armed forces plan for this year, 1962. They publish all their plans. Moreover, they had already conducted similar exercises with a smaller number of troops last year. Therefore, if such exercises had already been held a year earlier, why would you need to conduct them again a year later? Finally, if they were not included in the plan, why organize them outside of the plan? And also, why did they need to appoint the highest commander as the head of such exercises, and not somebody from the middle ranks?

Then they interrupted the exercises, ostensibly because of the hurricane. Yes, there was a hurricane; indeed, but it was not dangerous for forces like those. One would think—OK, they interrupted the exercises, but then the hurricane passed, so they should resume them. No, they never resumed the exercises. Why? Because they understood that the situation had changed. Because they knew that if they did not take out the missiles with nuclear warheads in advance, some number of them could explode on their territory. And that's terrible. That is why they stalled for several days in order to prepare anew. You are military people; you know that from

the military point of view this task is feasible, if you keep in mind that the missile bases were deployed at very short distance from the American shore.

Then we were faced with the question—first of all, you are stationed here in addition to the Cubans. If you had been attacked, we would have had to defend you, and you would have had to defend yourself in Cuba. That could have led to world war. Should we have entered a world war in order to save Cuba, especially if Cuba would have been the first to perish completely in such a war? In principle, that kind of thing might be permissible but only if one reaches one's goal. But in this case, there was no sense in it. And from the point of view of the whole of world politics, the interests of the Soviet Union, that would have been a catastrophe overall.

That is why we fully supported N. S. Khrushchev's initiative; our leadership was fully united during these events. Truth be told, we did a lot of thinking. We were thinking night and day in order not to make a single wrong step, to do everything with cold reason, with an exact calculation of forces.

Then we proposed, since the missiles had already been discovered—all of them in the photographs—then they ceased to be a means of deterrence, which is why we brought them here. We did not intend to attack America—not from here, and not from there. These missiles were a means for deterrence, so that they would not attack Cuba.

Then Comrade Khrushchev proposed to remove those missiles without weakening Cuban defenses in the military sense.

In this case, we would be removing the means of deterrence (but it had already ceased to be that due to the fact that it had been discovered), but in return we are attaining our goal—that Kennedy would announce officially that the American government would not attack Cuba, and that it would prevent its allies in the Western Hemisphere from doing so. In other words, the goal to defend Cuba is being achieved by withdrawing the missiles, which should have been defending it as the means of deterrence; the goal is being achieved by exchanging concessions: we made a concession by taking back the missiles, and they made a concession in that they are willing to officially and solemnly announce, and have already announced, that they would not invade Cuba.

Was it worth doing that? Was this game useful, right, profitable? Profitable. To ensure without going to war that Cuba would not be attacked! And what does it mean for the Americans?

They have the so-called Monroe Doctrine; that is, not a single country located outside the American hemisphere can interfere or intervene here; the United States is the leader of all the countries of this hemisphere. And here is the double meaning of this. Some time in the past, this doctrine had a different, more progressive meaning, when it was directed against the colonial powers—England, Portugal, and Spain. Later it became a reactionary slogan, ensuring the control of the United States, monopolistic control over Latin America.

By agreeing not to attack Cuba, and by announcing it publicly, the United States is thus admitting that with regard to Cuba the Monroe Doctrine is going to hell.

However, there is an agreement—it is called The Treaty of Rio de Janeiro—after the city where it was signed; it happened not long ago. All the countries of the Americas gathered together and decided that nowhere on this continent could there be a Marxist-Leninist, Communist government. And now the missiles have forced Kennedy to give the assurance—and his allies will have to give such assurances—that the Communist regime and Marxism-Leninism can blossom in Cuba.

They only want to make sure that Cuba does not forcefully export Marxist-Leninist ideas to other Latin American countries.

In general, we think it is absurd that ideas could be exported forcefully. Ideas travel by themselves freely, and the United States has no measures against that.

They invented one instrument—the Alliance for Progress. This is the name Kennedy gave it. They want to invest \$20 billion, to improve life, in order to somehow slow down the revolutionary storm in these countries. But one and a half years have already passed, and this Alliance for Progress has not had any effect, just embarrassment.

Therefore, they had to accept, even though not de jure but de facto, that a socialist state with a Marxist-Leninist government can exist in Latin America and in general on the American continent. As an exception, under our pressure, they went from a position of intolerance to a position of tolerance in this case. This does not yet mean that they will not try furtively to create obstacles or harm. They will do it, but in a way that would not be noticed. They will not start liking Cuba or socialism—no. We forced them, in our struggle, to take certain positions and not to reach beyond them. And this is the right thing to do—as in the GDR—we force the Americans not to interfere, not to engage in openly subversive activities, but to quietly and calmly sit in Berlin.

This is why this is such a big victory for Cuba. It is true that some Cuban comrades felt hurt. They are very emotional people. Their emotion, pride, courage—all the things that characterize them as good fighters, are very powerful, so powerful that sometimes cold reason cools down completely freezes and their feelings and emotions start to act. They hated to part with the missiles, which could pose a threat to the Americans, even though before that they never dreamed about any missiles, and did not feel bad because of that.

But this is an achievement, it gives them a lot, they get an opportunity to develop peacefully.

Some Cuban comrades are saying—can you trust the bourgeoisie? They will cheat, sure enough. How much, they say, are such treaties and statements worth—they are just pieces of paper, which they can tear apart at any time. Such treaties are worth no more than the cost of the paper itself. There are such statements. I am quoting the most extreme expressions.

This is not right. If that were true, such a state of affairs would have precluded the possibility of any kind of coexistence, not only of social systems but also of states in general. If that was true, we should be sending all diplomats into retirement without a pension, and then the military alone would unsheathe their bayonets, open their cannons, and shoot all the time. But this is impossible! Wars have happened, but there cannot be an endless war.

International life is possible when there exists some confidence in international documents. Of course, there can be moments in the history of nations and states when certain key questions are at stake. There can be moments when treaties are violated and when force is used. Hitler did this, some other people did this, but it happens in very extreme situations. And this delivers a blow to the state that has acted that way, a very strong moral blow, and it is not forgotten for centuries.

That is why treaties have substantial force. Can we say—we have lived alongside the bourgeois world for so many years now—that treaties are meaningless? They are very meaningful.

Why are we sitting in Berlin, in Germany—on the basis of what? The treaty. Power is the most important factor here—our power. But this power brought to life treaties and documents, which possess an independent power of their own.

Or take the United Nations. Now it brings together 109 nations, big and small. What do you think—doesn't their opinion carry power? Yes it does. When one finds himself in the minority in this forum it is a moral blow; when you get a majority—then that is a success.

Let's say Kennedy gives us his assurance. Some would say: "Earlier he declared at times that he would not attack. He is cunning; he is trying to soothe us. And if he states it himself like this, as he stated today, then a month or a year later, whenever he wants to, he can find some pretext, and will say that now I am stating the contrary. And you cannot do anything about it, it is his right."

However, if a statement of non-invasion is made in an exchange of letters with Khrushchev, this is not like a unilateral Kennedy statement; then it is an exchange of letters, that is, a special form of international agreement, which one cannot simply break. Then the other side will change its decision as well, and then he will have a conflict with us, not with Cuba.

Finally, we are trying to get, and we already have, a preliminary agreement with the Americans that this non-invasion assurance would be made in the United Nations, the world organ, that it would be approved by this forum. Then the power of that document would be even stronger than a bilateral treaty.

That is why we should treat it as a great achievement. However, we have not obtained it yet, the argument is continuing.

We decided to withdraw the missiles without waiting for an overall settlement because their continued presence would have increased tensions and complicated negotiations. We agreed to withdraw the so-called offensive weapons without specifying them in detail. Kennedy in his

two statements included not only the missiles but the Il-28 bombers in this category. He called them the “missile bombers.”

We started arguing that this weapon is so outdated that it cannot be considered a practical offensive weapon. But if you approach the question seriously, we have to say that the Americans do have a loophole [*zatsepka*] here. After all, this “Ilyushin” is called a bomber. Bombers were never considered weapons of defense. No one defends himself like this—it is a counterstrike. They agree that this is an outdated system, but it is a fact that this bomber can carry even nuclear weapons to the American territory.

During confidential negotiations we say to them: “You have an anti-aircraft defense system such that at this altitude, a maximum of 14,000 meters, and at the speed this plane can reach, it would not be able to penetrate the anti-aircraft fire and would be shot down. Therefore, what sense does it make to attack the United States with this kind of weapon?” They understand—this is true. However, for the countries of Latin America it would be a real problem, because they do not possess such defensive systems; take any country, you will not see any serious obstacles, any anti-aircraft fire. That is true, too.

Kennedy is under attack from extremely aggressive elements in the United States, from the Pentagon, the military; they are upset that Kennedy is not seizing the moment to choke Cuba, that he made a deal with Khrushchev, that he made a concession. They say that Khrushchev made a concession, and that is true. And then say that Kennedy made a concession as well. The right-wing elements in the United States are saying: “Why did he make a concession, what for?” His concession is in the fact that he refused to attack Cuba, will not commit an attack against Cuba, and gave a guarantee not to attack. He is currently himself under attack from the Republicans, and the extreme right-wing elements—they are criticizing him. And he decided to cling to the fact that we were not withdrawing the bombers (he considers them offensive weapons), that is, that we were not fulfilling our obligations in full. That gives him grounds to not fulfill his own obligations in full either.

However, it is true, there was an agreement that the Red Cross would be enforcing the quarantine, not them. And the most important detail is that they will not affirm the noninvasion guarantees if they see that the Soviet side is not fully abiding by their obligations. Then we decided to think it over—what would we achieve if we continue to insist on our position? In essence—we are right, but formally, they have a loophole—the bombers, the means of offense. What are we going to achieve? Does the Il-28 represent such a great military value for Cuba? Of course, they do have some value. We cannot deny that completely, especially in regard to the countries of Latin America. But they do not represent such value that it would be worth rupturing negotiations with Kennedy because of them, and not achieving guarantees of the sort we want—final confirmation of Kennedy’s concession.

And what if we do not get that? We have already removed the missiles, only the bombers are left, and Kennedy has some grounds (they are incorrect, but still it is a hook for public opinion) not to fulfill his promises.

We came to the conclusion that we need to withdraw these bombers under one condition—if they immediately lift the quarantine and negotiate to confirm the non-invasion pledge, as well as stop the overflights of Cuba. These are the demands that we set forth.

Yesterday, you probably heard that Kennedy made the statement, and this is very important (we agreed confidentially, and he gave his consent), that if Khrushchev gives his word as a gentleman that he will withdraw the Il-28 bombers in one month, then that would be sufficient for Kennedy and he would give the order to lift the blockade that same day. Yesterday, he fulfilled that promise. Khrushchev wrote to him that we agreed to withdraw the Il-28s in one month, and Kennedy gave his order on those grounds; he did not make any demands, did not link it to anything else, and did not say that we would lift the blockade the same day you withdraw the IL-28s. He could have posed the question that way. If the Americans felt themselves to be the winners, that is how they would have done it: let's lift the blockade on the same day you [the USSR] withdraw your bombers; when you withdraw the last one, that is when we will announce the lifting of the blockade.

They agreed on the basis of only a promise, one month before the withdrawal, which we promised, to lift the blockade. Isn't that new proof that we have won in this case?

Some say that, you see, if you make a concession to the enemy then his appetite will grow during the meal.

In general that is correct. But sometimes there are dinners where the appetite disappears and does not grow during the meal. Such cases happen in life. And here the appetite does not come, and has not come. I will tell you why this is so.

We gave just a sliver of a concession. That sliver was the offensive weapons. Beyond that line there could be no conversation. This is our position.

The Americans, of course, made some efforts, they wanted to develop the appetites. When I was in New York, McCloy told me that he considered us good "friends." In 1959, he received me very well in New York, organized a warm welcome when newspapers attacked us, when they threw eggs, tomatoes, threatened to kill us and all that. A nightmare. (This was when I flew there the last time.) But he organized a festive welcome; about 600 aces of the business world were there. So that friendship has held up from that time, although I am afraid that one day at some party cell meeting they will expel me from the Communist Party for maintaining a friendship with such a millionaire and capitalist.

He tells me: we know that there are Soviet officers on these missile anti-aircraft systems; most likely there are Cubans, too, but definitely Soviet officers. They knew that our people shot down the U-2, but did not speak about it. And why, he said, are you leaving these missile systems behind? Remove them.

I said, what kind of an offensive weapon is that? That is for attacking those who attack Cuba; it is an anti-aircraft system. Could it be otherwise? Then he smiled, and withdrew the question. Later, when the discussions ended, I went to the airport to fly to Havana; Stevenson

passed some paper to Kuznetsov and me, too. He said we forgot yesterday (can you imagine, they forgot, such little boys!) to raise the issue of the withdrawal of the Il-28 bombers and the Komar speedboats—and you know that those speedboats are serious weapons against ships—and there were four more names of weapon systems. Well, we sent all of these to hell, except the Il-28s, which are offensive systems. This is the spirit of it. And if you compare the MiG-21, which we have here, it handles all the tasks the Il-28 can handle, plus it has something better than that other one. And nobody dares to raise his voice against the MiGs. They know that we have them. It is considered a means of defense. And for defense, of course, this system is better than the Il-28. It is not only fast, and a high-altitude fighter, it can attack troops, ships and land targets. It is the strongest, most powerful weapon. The Americans have swallowed this needle. They have not said anything. Therefore, if you say that the appetite comes with the meal, then you can observe that the appetite is not coming, it has been spoiled.

If the Americans felt themselves to be the winners, first of all, their president would be the first to say I defeated Khrushchev, and he has not said that, and Nixon has not said it either. Neither has the press. Sometimes you could see some of that, very moderate words; it does not look like the American appetite. Where else can it be seen? For instance, Khrushchev gave them the promise that they could observe the actual dismantling and removal of missiles in situ. Although he added the caveat that if it is in situ, in Cuba, then the Cuban government should give its consent. That is correct. We cannot speak for other states where it concerns their sovereignty.

The Americans could have made a fuss about the fact that Castro is against inspections (he said—I will not let them in here—and we have to accept that); they could have said that there was no proof that the missiles had been dismantled, no proof that we had removed them, or whether we had removed all the missiles. They could have said—you have only shown us what you wanted, and therefore, we will consider that you have not fulfilled your obligations as long as there is no inspection in situ. From the legal point of view, this is quite possible; if they felt themselves to be the winners, they would most likely do it this way.

I don't know how we would have acted in their position. I think we would have acted differently from what they are doing today. We would have insisted on inspections; but they did not insist. The Americans themselves made this suggestion—I was then in New York—McCloy put it straight himself: If Castro is against inspections, we will have to find another alternative. It is a Latin word; it means a different opportunity, in other words.

I pretended that I was not interested in this issue, and said what kind of alternative do you have in mind? For example, giving us some information that would convince us that you have dismantled and withdrawn the missiles. We are not asking for military information, or military-technological, or strategic, just general facts that can be observed.

I pretended again that I was not really interested, said nothing, and passed by. However, that is a very big concession on their part.

They photographed practically everything and naively published everything in the newspapers. If they were real crooks, they would not have published anything, they could have

said that the photos were not good, that they could not see anything in them. Go then try to figure out, whether you can see anything or not! And then they could have demanded—let's go and see [in situ]. No. They essentially honestly told us everything that they had seen and published the photos in the newspapers.

Then the question is clear—if they photographed everything, what kind of inspection is needed in situ after everything has been photographed? This option is out.

We agreed that they could observe everything at sea, visually, without boarding the ships, and counting with their fingers. They could have said—let us board the ships and count with our fingers how many boxes of missiles you have. They did not demand that, they agreed to accept our statement that everything has been loaded on the ships, you can observe from a distance, at sea. Generally speaking, in the open sea, one can look at another without permission. One joke just came to mind, I will tell you so that you do not get bored. There is this guy from the Caucasus (Georgian, or Armenian—they all have the same nature), and there is a woman in front of him, and he stares at her very intently. She starts feeling uncomfortable and says, why are you looking at me like that? He responds, Lady, it's my eye, I look where I want to look. (Laughter).

Now to the Americans. Generally speaking, the sea is international territory. You can come close and look, just don't collide. If you collide with somebody, that is bad; it is a violation. But if you just come close and look, it can even be welcomed. This is no concession on our part. It is a very big concession on their part because they have to make sure that we have withdrawn everything. We said forty-two missiles, and showed them forty-two. Now they don't even say—how would we know that there were forty-two, maybe you had more than that? They could raise this question after all. But they trust us; they know what it means. First of all, they know how many there were from the photos.

They announced the quarantine, published the president's proclamation that they would climb on our ships and search them (commercial vessels going to Cuba) to establish that they are not carrying offensive weapons. Not weapons in general, but offensive weapons. But how did it go?

They never boarded any ships coming here, and never even tried to. Two times it happened, they addressed captains of two ships, and there was not a single conflict, although there was a crowd of their military ships around our ships. There were two instances where two of our ships carrying weapons were sailing from Cuba. Their war ship approached them and demanded that inspectors be allowed on deck for inspection. Our captains gave orders not to allow them; they rejected the American demand. Those Americans threatened to use weapons. Our commanders said, we will not submit, and we are not afraid of your threats.

We issued a protest, without publishing it in the press. The American military commanders did not dare to implement their threat, and did not board the ship. In addition, those ships were not going to Cuba, but coming back from Cuba. All this went beyond the framework of the president's proclamation. That is also a fact. These American imperialists are obnoxious, more so than the fascists.

The correlation of forces throughout the world is generally in our favor and, according to President Kennedy, we are equal in terms of military power. He admits this himself, but he considers that we are stronger right now in the sense of long-range missiles, and that instead their navy is stronger than ours. But on the given theater of political and military actions, in the Caribbean Sea they are significantly stronger than us. That is why they can be more audacious. After all, strength is a source of arrogance for the bourgeois. Unfortunately, we cannot escort every merchant ship here with navy battleships. We do not have that many ships, and our naval ports are very far away. Yet for them, it is home.

Despite the presence of an unfavorable balance of forces, especially naval and air forces in this region, the Americans have not accepted a single bit of evidence for incorrect attitudes toward our ships. Such is the moment.

What does it tell us? They are afraid of the might of the Soviet Union. We are talking not only about what is here, but about the power of our nuclear weapons and our long-range missiles. They are afraid of the outbreak of that sort of war. They know that this will be the first war where bombs will fall on their heads, because they have never experienced this in a single previous war.

When they finally found out that there were missiles in Cuba, pointing at their cities, and their stupid military started to publish which cities were within range of these missiles (they listed which cities – 12 or 14 here or there), still more panic came and they ran from American cities. For the first time they had such a nervous shock that atomic death was just around the corner. Before they thought, well, if somebody was to launch missiles from Russia, from tundra, maybe they miss me...it was very far away, they wouldn't hit me. But from Cuba, they thought the missiles would be more accurate, even though our long-range missiles would be no less accurate than the intermediate ones from Cuba. All educated or learned people understand this, but the common man thinks that if it is far away, it isn't scary. So they felt this shock. And they themselves wanted to move away from the edge of war. We also want this. We do not want to remain on the edge of war, so close that it could cause the outbreak of war itself. However, we have to bare our teeth. Nothing can be done, we are dealing with dogs, and if we don't bare our teeth we could be deceived.

These are the questions that I needed to illuminate before you.

Now here is the next question. What should we do now? The Americans confirm that they are prepared to solemnly announce to the United Nations that, which Kennedy wrote in his letter to Khrushchev. We want a little bit more. Bargaining is going on about this question.

There remains one, very large, controversial question about which arguments are going on right now, and that must be decided. If the question is agreeably resolved, then the entire conflict will be liquidated with formalization in international organizations and the situation will be normalized. This is the question about verification, so that the agreement, which will be signed by us, the Americans, and others (or a statement will be made) is carried out by all sides.

We promised the USA not to deliver any more offensive weapons here, but there has been no discussion about the remaining weapons; we can deliver them. They promised not to invade Cuba. But how can we verify that they aren't prepared for an invasion? If the Americans want to have confirmation that we are not delivering weapons anew (hauled them out and then brought them back), naturally, it suggests the necessity of some sort of verification.

The Americans want one-sided inspections. They want to have the ability to inspect Cuba themselves, but so that Cuba does not have any rights in relation to the USA. This violates Cuba's rights as a sovereign government. Cuba will never go for this, and they are right not to.

Cuba announced that they are prepared for multilateral inspections. If Cuba is inspected, then the southern regions of the USA should be inspected too. They don't even demand inspections over "Cape Canaveral," because the USA has a missile base there, and other areas such as Miami, Florida. And this is completely right. As well as in other Latin American countries in the Caribbean Sea region.

The acting General Secretary of the U.N., U. Thant, shows great activeness and, I need to say, in a positive sense, he generally sympathizes with Cuba and with us. I would say intelligently. He shows resourcefulness and initiative as well as restraint. Of course, he cannot go far. He has turned out to be a very capable person, and a prominent politician. Moreover, clearly, he will have to run for the next term. It's obvious, that he is taking the test for becoming general secretary. He also tries very hard. As of yet, all of the evidence shows that he will pass the exam. He is searching for those methods that will be acceptable for all sides. He has suggested three methods of inspection, rather, not inspections but verifications for Castro. But Cuba has refused all three.

U. Thant's goal was for there not to be permanent inspections, but for U. Thant's colleagues (there are several colleagues) to come here to Cuba to go to the places where the missiles were previously located, and to the ports where they load the missiles [on ships], to stay there for some time and to depart. And all inspections would be done. Generally speaking, from the point of view of sovereignty, this is fully acceptable. We would have gone for this, not considering ourselves insulted. But the feelings of the Cubans are so acute, that they did not want to listen. That fell apart.

Then U. Thant suggested: commission the ambassadors of the Latin American countries who are located in Havana (and these are those countries that have good relationships with Cuba, the others cut ties with Cuba), so that they can have the ability to be in the places where dismantling is occurring and to observe it.

Generally speaking, for example, we let the ambassadors into our country's regions, and they can go here and there, except for forbidden areas. Sometimes when we ourselves want it we let them into the forbidden places. This doesn't violate sovereignty. But the Cubans are offended and did not agree, no way.

Then U. Thant suggested that nine representatives of neutral countries including [OAR] and several other countries close to them who will support Cuba come to Cuba. The Cubans did not accept this either.

U Thant did not give up and submitted a new suggestion. It has still not been published, but it was received favorably. We discussed it here with the Cubans, and the Cubans also were favorably inclined, however with several reservations whose meaning it is still difficult to appraise right now. They may trigger difficulties, or they may not.

This is an interesting idea from U. Thant: for verifications, set up groups of observers from neutral countries who are permanently stationed in New York under the United States, but who go out to places in the USA, in Cuba, and in other countries in the region when they are told that it is necessary, if there is a demand or a complaint. They leave, look, and return.

In what is the strength of accepting this? It is multi-sided, it is not against one side, and all sides are in an equal place; Cuba and the USA have equal rights. Keep in mind that this is not the entire USA, but the southern regions.

First, what's good is that it is equally fair. The Cubans welcome this and are for it.

Second, that they won't always be poking around in ports and cities and traveling all the time, but only from port to port, in the event of necessity. This already softens the situation. This is also good.

However, of course, this raises the questions: in which situations do the observers go out, and who sends them? It won't turn out if they are always going to Cuba, but never or rarely go to the USA. Everything depends on the organ's structure, on the rights and authority of these individuals. These questions need to already be thoroughly discussed when the principles are agreed on.

Now for the most important question about control, in order to come to a decision. If we reach an agreement about this question, then I need to say, that the hardest questions about the liquidation of the Cuban Crisis are now questions of diplomatic order and of a decision happening satisfactorily and soon.

How are the Americans reacting to it? The Americans, apparently, could go for this, however they say: we will not allow inspections on our own territory, take our word for it.

McCoy even told me not to think about any sort of control on the USA's territory.

But, in this manner they could accept it, since as the control sits in New York, they can go into their territory too.

McCoy told me straightforwardly: we are liquidating all of our Cuban counterrevolutionary camps.

I said: "That needs to be verified."

Him: "Take our word for it."

There will be fights, of course. I think that U. Thant's plan for multi-sided control through a group of observers governed by the UN will likely pass, and that it will be very good.

The Americans are advantageously protracting these agreements so as not to confirm nonaggression on Cuba. They are going to find catches. It is better for us, on the other hand, to secure this agreement sooner.

That, as you can see comrades, is the situation. I have given you a detailed account, you are all caught up. You, military commanders, should know politics, and moreover, what the USA's policies have brought to the border of war. You need to conduct such diplomacy so as not to use weapons or have war.

We think that we have also decided well for you at the given stage. All of the questions are about how to secure victory, but we believe that this is a victory, judicially confirmed.

When I was at a staff officers meeting, I tried to explain in military language why this is a victory and in which situations and how to measure victory.

As they told me that this was convincing, I am repeating it at this meeting of commanders who were absent there.

How can you decide what is victory and what kind of victory, and what can you compare it with? You need to compare it with the original positions. The original position of the battle. Intelligence. Here you got ahead somewhere. Then your opponent is shot, we'll say, and you got farther ahead than you even planned, or just like you planned. Then there was a confrontation and you got behind. If you went back to your original position, it is of course a defeat. If you go too far back, it is a big defeat, and if it is just a little ways back then it is a small defeat. If there is not a winner left in those positions, then there is not a loser. And if you remain between the original position that occupied after the battle position, then this means that you secured a victory. The farther away you are from the original position, the larger the victory.

There, compare how it was in Cuba before the missiles arrived, we'll say, in the month of June and the month of November. Compare and see which initial positions are behind in all of the plans. First of all, Cuba is now armed with your help in a way that (in the sense of defense) it is unlikely that any other country from the socialist countries is as well armed in regard to the newness and firepower of the weaponry.

Second of all, the Americans deviated from the Monroe Doctrine, the Rio de Janeiro Protocol, and from the fact of refusing Cuba's right to be socialist. They recognized Cuba's right to be socialist and promised not to invade. This is important. It is they who stepped away from their initial position, from which they staged an invasion, and it is we who attained a promise through the UN that they would not enact it. This is our big leap ahead of our original position.

Finally, if you see, having won the “battle” in the political and diplomatic sense greatly boosted the prestige of the Soviet Union and Khrushchev, as the chairman of the Administration of the masses that do not want war. How many greetings and appeals, in relation to how with our help this war didn't take place, have come from different countries and people who survived the fear of nuclear war. We are the ones who saved [the world] from nuclear war. Everyone understands this.

American imperialism behaved provocatively, insolent and eager for nuclear battle. But we prevented these issues, defending our main goals of Cuban independence and not allowing Cuba to be invaded.

There, take our original position, compare (I won't go into detail here) and you will see that victory is achieved and we should secure it.

I have one more question that I want to illuminate. It is not included in our goal and is not in line with our policies to have a Soviet military base on Cuba, directed against the USA, or is it, say, to have one for the defense of Cuba.

The general Soviet strategy in relation to bases originates from the fact that for the defense of our country and for counterstrikes against our main opponents we don't need any bases on foreign territory because we have such nuclear might on our own territory. And that's not even most important. We have the means of delivering long-range missiles in such a large quantity, hidden so well and that are so accurate, that we have no use for having bases anywhere, except for missile launching sites hidden in our vast territory.

If you are located here, it is not because we need it for a Soviet base. It is to support Cuba, so that she is not strangled.

From the point of view of the interests of our country, to have or not to have bases isn't beneficial for us, and thus we boast that in Finland we one-sidedly liquidated our base that was legally obtained during the time of WWII, and that the refusal of Port Arthur Base wasn't done by the Chinese, but by us ourselves. We don't have bases anywhere, except as troops in Germany, which aren't considered bases due to Germany's defeat and a treaty with the GDR. We have troops in Poland and in Hungary, defending military communication, located in the West in the GDR. In other countries we don't have any kinds of troops, and we don't plan to have any. If the situation managed to be normalized, say, in Germany, it's possible that we would remove our troops from there. If disarmament and a pact of nonaggression occurred, we would remove our troops. However, right now this question is not worth it.

We have long demanded that the Americans sign a pact of nonaggression between the Warsaw Pact and NATO's pact. They have refused all, and say that NATO doesn't have such a defensive pact. Why do they need an additional nonaggression pact when the union in and of itself is defensive?

This is a fraudulent explanation. In words that is how it is, but not in actions. Here Kennedy, in connection with the Cuban Crisis, said in his own message that they are prepared to

sign such a pact. This is a step forward. This is our victory. That is, our suggestion dangled in the air; they did not take it. Regarding the history with Cuba, they accepted it. They will go on to meet about other issues too.

You, most likely, are interested in how long you will be here. (There is a quickening in the hall). At once, they cry, but I even know this without a cry. Not for years, just in case, our strength isn't here for many years. Some will leave earlier, as our Cuban comrades get accustomed to the weaponry that you have. We already have an agreement with the Cubans; I conversed with them here and our administration supports this. We will give the weapons to them, so they can get used to them, and we will have to teach them to use them. As soon as they have mastered the weapons, our people who have already been freed up will have no reason to sit here. Any instructors will stay in case of need. It's possible that for the shooting weapons there won't be any instruction needed. They have experience; they can acquire the ability to use them. Now they are quickly mastering the tanks, and most likely, they will be able to quickly master the armored fighting vehicles and the anti-aircraft artillery.

In aviation, naval affairs, anti-aircraft missiles, and others, of course, more time is needed, and specialists should already be assigned to this.

The Americans don't already have relation to this; it is our affair, and our relationship with Cuba. We consider, that the fact that we will not have any sort of base in Cuba (Cuba has agreed to this, I spoke with them) is more beneficial to us politically than if we had any sort of Soviet base.

You see, Fidel Castro and others are very sensitive. This is a very good man, a revolutionary. When they say that their administration depends on the Soviet Union, the Cubans say: "How is it dependent?" But the American propaganda is always shouting, and Kennedy even went so far in his proclamation as to say, that Castro is a puppet of the Soviet Union. He had such an expression: this, he said, is a toy in our hands.

If there were a Soviet base, this would only affirm the argument that there is dependence. We say ourselves that in those places where there is an American base, the administration depends on the Americans. When there is no base, but are instructors and consultants, there is no dependence and no reason to talk about puppets.

Your commander, over the course of affairs, can also respond in gatherings. He has his own plans and is preparing plans. He has the commission of Administration and Marshal Malinovsky, with the agreement of the Cubans, to teach the Cubans.

This is so that Cuba will be well armed. Their firepower is growing from this. The issue isn't in the number of its size, but in the levels of armament and the quality of the weapons. With the number of troops that they have now, they can have triple the firepower once they've mastered the weapons that General Pavlov ordered.

I think that it's more or less clear to you, what you wanted to ask and what I answered. It is hard to answer you any more clearly today. But, you are soldiers, and you all understand that it is clear enough for you.

I got carried away and thought that I presented for an hour, but I talked for an hour and a half. I beg your pardon for taking up so much time.

I wish you success, comrades. Serve the cause of our homeland, of socialism. While the country is progressing strongly, the party is united, the people trust their administration and our work to be victorious, we will be stronger and stronger.

Long live the Soviet Motherland!

(Thunderous applause)

General Pavlov

Comrade generals and officers,

Allow me to express on the behalf of all of us with you, and on the behalf of the individual military staff of our group, the most heartfelt thanks to our party's Central Committee Presidium member comrade Anastas Ivanovich Mikoyan for his attention to you, as these days are not the first that he has visited troops, and for his wonderful information that we listened to with great attention and interest. (Thunderous applause). Allow me to wish our dear Anastas Ivanovich many years of good health, and the greatest of success in the future for the good of our spectacular motherland! (Prolonged thunderous applause).

Comrades, by our request, Anastas Ivanovich has decided to take photographs with us (applause). Regarding the fact that we have many groups, we have decided to do this by type of troops.

Source: From the personal archive of Dr. Sergo A. Mikoyan, donated to the National Security Archive. Translation by Svetlana Savranskaya and Amanda Conrad for the National Security Archive.