

Castro Addresses Conference

*CM0304154092 Havana Cubavision Television
in Spanish at 2233 GMT 28 Feb 92*

[Fourth of four parts of the special program: "Reflections on a Crisis," a tripartite conference on the Cuban Missile Crisis held in Havana from 9 to 12 January—recorded]

[Text] Well, another surprise. I thought that this morning we were going to discuss a point brought up by the American delegation, and that my speech might be in the afternoon. I think I can make an effort, in any case. If this is what you prefer, in that case, I will speak. Maybe I will need a little help, some paper.

Check and see if the five points are anywhere around there. [speaking to unidentified aide]

I think I have the essential ideas to speak right now. If I do not speak long, do not think that it is because I do not want to provide information, but really because I do not want to make a traditional two-and-a-half, or three-hour speech. I want to summarize ideas as much as possible. I want to concentrate on those things that I believe are essential. I must keep in mind everything that has been discussed in the two previous days. I do not want to repeat any of those issues.

I believe that many things have been clarified here. I believe that the meeting has been truly fruitful, at least for me, since I did not have an opportunity to participate in the previous meetings. I do not know everything that has been discussed. I only know it in very general terms. That is why I think that I should limit myself to those things that, by their character, have not been discussed in other meetings.

I should begin by saying that in analyzing a period such as this one, it is necessary to analyze or report the involvement in it of different personalities. Two of them were very important personalities of our time. They were Khrushchev and Kennedy. They were two people for whom I have great respect. I respect Khrushchev for his demonstrations of friendship toward Cuba in extremely difficult times. I always thought that he was pleasant. I had the opportunity to get to know him personally. I remember at the United Nations when, as a result of a meeting of heads of state at the United Nations, Khrushchev came to visit me at the Teresa Hotel, where I was practically in confinement in those days because of the atmosphere of intense hostility that I found there, and because I had been virtually thrown out of my other hotel. I had two alternatives, to either set up a tent in the UN front yard or to go to the Teresa Hotel. I was warmly welcomed at the Teresa Hotel. I was visited there by many heads of states, among them Khrushchev, which was a great honor.

Khrushchev was extraordinarily good to us. Always, when we requested something from him, he made every possible effort at his disposal to approve our requests. He

gave me the impression of being basically a peasant; that was the impression he gave. A clever peasant, and not only a clever peasant, he was an intelligent, very intelligent man. He was a daring and courageous man. Those were the personal impressions I got from him.

I also have an opinion of the personal qualities of Kennedy, apart from the conflicts that emerged between his administration and ours. He was a talented man and also courageous. A man with the ability to lead his country. He made mistakes but also did things right. He was the central character in charge of directing the United States during the October Crisis. He had new ideas—some of them were brilliant, or very intelligent—such as the idea of the Alliance for Progress.

It is my opinion that with the authority he attained precisely after the October Crisis—which was when he consolidated his leadership in the United States—he could have been one of the presidents, or maybe the president, in the best position to rectify certain aspects of the U.S. policy toward Cuba. I had proof of this precisely on the day of his death. I was talking that morning with a French reporter, Jean Daniel, who had interviewed him at length and whom he asked to come to Cuba to talk with me. He conveyed a message to me and, as we were talking, the news of the attack in Dallas was heard on the radio. You can see how many coincidences have occurred in all of this. From what that reporter told me, I could see a man who was pondering the possibility of holding talks, finding some solutions to the problems with Cuba, since he began by saying, actually talking or asking, he conveyed to me to what degree we had been in danger of a nuclear war.

Was I aware of this? He truly wanted, regarding all these issues, an exchange of opinions that really became unnecessary. We were in the middle of our conversation when the news of his death arrived. I think Kennedy was a capable man because of his authority, because of his ability to correct certain aspects of U.S. policy toward Cuba. I have explained this, and I say it with lots of sincerity, to justify why I feel real respect and admiration for these historic figures, and because I do not have the least intention of saying things to hurt anyone, or to defame anyone's memory.

In relation to the most immediate antecedents of the problem that would emerge afterwards, we have the issue of the Bay of Pigs. However, I do not blame Kennedy for the Bay of Pigs. Kennedy received a legacy from the previous administration. Decisions had already been made; everything was already prepared. Kennedy was still new in office; he had just been sworn in. He knew that it was a very serious problem; he had made certain pledges regarding Cuba in some speeches during the electoral campaign.

The impression I have is that he did not like that operation. It is true that he had constitutional authority to have stopped it, but constitutional authority alone is not enough. Sometimes you need moral authority and a

considerable amount of political authority to solve certain problems, which U.S. administrations usually do not have during the first few weeks of government, and sometimes do not have even during the entire first presidential term. You are aware that many times it is said that a president cannot solve this or that problem in his first term because the next elections are still pending, but that he could solve it during a second term. Therefore, I do not blame him for the Bay of Pigs invasion.

Somehow, we have to acknowledge that he remained very composed regarding these events. As has been stated here, the whole thing became a disaster, a political disaster that, because of its scope, cannot be compared to a military disaster, with other military disasters. From the military point of view, and the scale of the battles, it also became a disaster. It was a difficult trial for Kennedy, and I would say that he showed courage at the time. I have not forgotten what he said when he assumed total responsibility for it: Victory has many fathers, but defeat is an orphan.

He could have made the decision to order U.S. troops and squadrons to participate. The Bay of Pigs' battles were held within view of the U.S. aircraft carriers and warships that were three miles from our coasts. I saw this personally when we entered Giron as it was getting dark that 19 April 1961. The squadron was out there with all its lights off, in full combat gear. They witnessed everything and were ready to enter into action. The invasion plans even presupposed the intervention of military forces later on. The goal was to establish a government, recognize it, and support it with troops. In other words, the invasion plans included the premise of using military force against our country, the intervention and invasion of our country because, naturally, those troops that disembarked, and those forces did not have the support of our people and could not do anything but maybe sustain their hold on a piece of territory and create in Cuba something like Taiwan or the like, nothing else. But we know that the plan presupposed a recognition after the recognition. The intervention always occurred within this framework.

In other words, if Kennedy had not been a composed and courageous man at the time, if he had not realized how mistaken the plan was from every point of view, military and political.[sentence as heard] Kennedy, undoubtedly was very concerned with Latin American public opinion. He did not want to begin his administration with an event of that nature and decided not to give the order for U.S. forces to intervene.

That would have been a very bloody war, and I do not know if the number of Cuban casualties would have been as high, maybe, as if an intervention had occurred during the months of the 1962 October Crisis. There are no doubts that that war would have had a different character and unpredictable consequences. Despite that, casualty estimates were prepared. At the time, April 1961, we had hundred of thousands of armed men and women in our country. Weapons were distributed

throughout the country, in the mountains, the plains, in the cities, everywhere. An enormous resistance would have been put up by the people, who were armed and had just come out of a war. All the guerrilla traditions were still fresh.

Our people would have had to fight a well-equipped army that numbered up to 80,000 men-in-arms, yet by the end of the war we barely had 3,000 battle weapons. At that time, we could estimate that we had approximately 300,000 men and women armed or capable of taking up arms, or in different ways organized and prepared. We also already had some infantry cannons, some tanks, on which the soldiers received quick, accelerated training. I would ask the first advisers—at that time we already had some specialists teaching us how to use the weapons, advisers from Czechoslovakia and the USSR; there was a large number of cannons and anti-aircraft artillery guns—and we asked them if they could train all the necessary personnel. The training program would have taken years, yet we did it in weeks, because what our comrades would learn in the morning, they would go and teach in the evening in the other camps that we organized. There was a great exhilaration among the people. Maybe, we might still be fighting if there had been an intervention in 1961.

This may have meant a cost of hundreds of thousands of lives for our country. A prolonged struggle would have also resulted in considerable losses for the invaders of our territory. This is why I said that, on the contrary, we should credit Kennedy with the common sense and wisdom to have not ordered the intervention of the U.S. troops at the time. I know of presidents who would not even think for three minutes about ordering the intervention of U.S. troops. I tell you this so you can understand the reason for our opinion of the conduct of President Kennedy at the time. In Giron, we find the antecedents of the October Crisis because there is no doubt that, for Kennedy, it meant a severe political blow. He was embittered by this event. He was very upset. And afterwards, the issue of Cuba had a special meaning for him. This was reflected in the relations between the two countries.

I am not going to talk about the clandestine operations, acts of sabotage, that were continuous during that period. I am not going to make reference to the problems related to assassination plots. Unfortunately, all these things happened in one way or another during that period, but are not the subject of our analysis. But Kennedy was left very bitter about Cuba, determined to end in one way or another the revolutionary process in Cuba. He also used political instruments and strategies. I cite, as I used to, the example of the Alliance for Progress designed to change objective conditions, because he knew that the objective conditions in Latin American were, as they still are nowadays, favorable for social explosions. He wanted to deal with it from that angle.

We should remember that the Bay of Pigs crisis was followed by a meeting between Kennedy and Khrushchev. According to the news we received, Khrushchev heard with concern the Kennedy statements regarding Cuba. We still need to find out, through some of the figures that were there, if that was when Hungary was discussed, because Kennedy made reference to Hungary—that they had solved the problem in Hungary and that the U.S. still had not been able to solve the problem of Cuba. I do not have the means to clarify this now, if this was mentioned in the Vienna talks. Darusenkov thinks that yes, it was in Vienna. There was also a later version saying that in a conversation of Khrushchev's son-in-law, whom I believe was the director of PRAVDA, (Aksuvev), forgive me if I do not pronounce the last name correctly; director of IZVESTIYA, right? He was traveling and made some remarks in the United States. I have heard comrades talk about the conversation between (Aksuvev) and Kennedy, and the subject of Hungary was mentioned—the same problem they did not know how to solve—and they took it as a warning, as a firm statement that they were planning to solve by one means or another the problem of Cuba. I remember that (Aksuvev) visited us, I do not remember the exact date either, if it was after the Washington trip. Maybe Oleg [Darusenkov] remembers this. But we have to clarify in which of the two conversations, or if on both occasions, the issue of Hungary was mentioned.

I do know, and I am aware of the great concern that Khrushchev felt after those conversations. It was a frequent subject, long before any idea about installing missiles existed. Of course, we were asking for more weapons. We were willing to defend ourselves. We asked for more weapon supplies. We signed certain accords on weapon supplies for our Armed Forces. That was the situation up to May 1962. Here we have already talked about some of the antecedents.

Aleksandr, for many years an ambassador in our country, and ambassador during the crisis, has talked about this, and other members of the Soviet delegation have provided details here of the conversations that took place regarding the missiles when we did not have any news about it.

We received news of an upcoming visit by (Rachido), who was the leader of the party in Uzbekistan, and who had already visited us and spent several months in Cuba providing cooperation in matters of agriculture, irrigation, etc. He was bringing along a marshal, Belysofov or Belysofov, [corrected by unidentified speakers] Bydiusov. I am appalling in English, but I think that in terms of pronunciation I am even worse in Russian. Bydiusov, Bydiusov. His war name was Petrov? Well, Petrov Bydiusov—undoubtedly a very smart and energetic man—I believe that he later died in an airplane crash in Yugoslavia. He accompanied (Rachido), but he was the one basically entrusted with the issue of the missiles. Naturally he did not begin talking about missiles right at the beginning. We met with him right away. He did not begin by talking about missiles. He began by talking

about the international situation, the situation of Cuba, the risks facing Cuba, and at one point he asked me what would be required to prevent a U.S. invasion. That was the question he asked me. I immediately answered him. I told him: Well, if the United States knows what an invasion of Cuba would mean with the Soviet Union, that would be, in my opinion, the best way to prevent an invasion of Cuba. That was my answer.

To corroborate this with documentation, you can, if you want, see the version that I wrote six years later and what I said in a report to the Central Committee in 1968. A Soviet military delegation came to visit around that time, headed by a marshal. He asked us how we believed the problem of an invasion could best be prevented. We told him that by adopting measures that unquestionably expressed to imperialism—forgive me for using that word, but that is how it was said, literally [muffled laughter]—that any aggression against Cuba would mean not only war with Cuba. Since the man already had his ideas ready, he said: But, specifically how? We have to perform concrete acts to indicate this.

He already had the mission to propose the installation of strategic missiles, and perhaps he was even afraid that we might refuse. We might have said: Well, the missiles here could mean, or could be used as a reason for criticism and campaigns against Cuba and the revolution in the rest of Latin America. But we did not have any doubts. First of all, when the issue of the missiles was first brought up, we thought that it was something beneficial to the consolidation of the defensive power of the entire socialist bloc, that it would contribute to this. We did not want to concentrate on our problems. Subsequently, it represented our defense. Subsequently, But really, the comrades who participated were the comrades of the directorate, who met to analyze this problem and make a decision. And how was it presented: That in our opinion it would strengthen the socialist bloc, the socialist bloc.

If we held the belief that the socialist bloc should be willing to go to war for the sake of any other socialist country, we did not have any right to consider something that could represent a danger to us. The questions of propaganda stayed within us, but we also saw the real danger of any crisis that could emerge, but without any hesitation, and honestly, thinking in a truly internationalist manner. All the comrades decided to give an immediate response. Keeping in mind the affirmative answer—with an enormous trust in a country that we believed was experienced in many things, even in war, and in international affairs—we told, we stated to them the usefulness of signing a military accord. Then, they sent an accord bill, I already talked about that.

Here I have what I said, textually, in a private conversation in 1968, regarding the antecedents of the October Crisis. In all truth and summarizing, we, from the beginning, saw it as a strategic operation. I am going to tell the truth about how we thought. We did not like the missiles. If it was a matter of our defense alone, we would not have accepted the missiles here. But, do not think

that it was because of the dangers that could come from having the missiles here, but rather because of the way in which this could damage the image of the revolution. We were very committed to the image of the revolution in the rest of Latin America.

The fact that the presence of the missiles would turn us into a Soviet military base would have a high political cost for our country's image, which we valued so highly. So if it had been for our defense—and I say this here with all honesty, Aleksandr knows this—we would not have accepted the missiles. But we really saw in the issue of the missile installation something that would strengthen the socialist bloc, something that would help in some way to improve the so-called correlation of forces. That was how we perceived it immediately, immediately, instantaneously.

We did not argue about this. It would not have made sense, because if we had argued about what they were for, in fact, the conclusion we would draw would be that they should not be brought. In fact, we would have refused to accept the missiles because, of course, their presence was not presented in those terms. That was what we perceived immediately. Then we asked a few questions about what kind of missiles and how many. We did not have any practical knowledge about these things, and we were informed that they would deploy 42 missiles. From what has been shown here, it seems there were 36 operational missiles and six for testing. But they told us there would be 42 missiles. We asked for time because we had to meet with the leadership and to inform them about all this before coming to a decision, but we said we would do this quickly.

In fact, when this meeting was over, we organized a meeting of the leadership, and we analyzed the matter in the terms that I have explained. We said that the presence of the missiles had this and that significance. We also were not unaware—and for me it was obvious—that the presence of the missiles was going to give rise to great political tension. That was obvious. But we saw this matter from the angle of our moral, political, and internationalist duties. That was how we understood it.

There was talk about the missiles in a different sense. After the Bay of Pigs invasion, there had already been talk about missiles. You would have to review all of Nikita's statements. He insinuated more than once that an invasion of Cuba could be responded to with the use of missiles. He insinuated this more than once, publicly, to such an extent that everyone here was talking about the Soviet missiles before the crisis, after the Bay of Pigs, as if they were their property. Many comrades talked about the missiles in their speeches. However, I refrained from saying a single word about missiles, because it did not seem right to me that our people, our populace, should place their hopes for defense in support from abroad. Our populace should be totally prepared—as it is today, and today more than ever—to develop their confidence in themselves and their ability to struggle and resist without any foreign support.

That is why I did not talk about the Soviet missiles as a possible aid in any of my speeches, and there are quite a few in that period. Nikita encouraged this matter a lot with his public statements. As was also acknowledged here yesterday, even in the United States, even Kennedy said in his campaign that he thought that there was an imbalance in strategic missiles. Throughout the world, people thought there was an imbalance in strategic missiles. It was known that the Americans had a very powerful air force, but that the Soviet Union had made great progress in the area of rocketry.

During those days, there were spectacular technical achievements like the space flights. The first space flight was made by a Soviet pilot, in a space capsule. All of that had an enormous effect on world opinion, and from what I can see, it also had an enormous effect in the United States. It is not at all strange that we would have more or less similar ideas about the combat capacity of each of the great powers in this area of nuclear missiles.

But everyone thought this, and assuming that the USSR had many more missiles than they had, we perceived that the presence of these missiles here in Cuba meant a modification...[changes thought] not a change; we cannot talk about a change in the correlation of forces, but it was a considerable improvement in the correlation of forces in favor of the socialist countries that we saw as our allies, friends, and brothers—sharing a common ideology.

Of course, we never saw the missiles as something that could one day be used against the United States, in an attack against the United States, an unjustified attack or a first strike. I remember that Nikita was always repeating: that they would never make a first strike, a nuclear strike. This issue was an obsession of his. He was constantly talking about peace. He was constantly talking about negotiations with the United States, of ending the Cold War, the arms race, etc.

So to judge the mood of that time, one should understand what was thought about this and about the strength of each of the great powers. But we saw that this improved the situation of the socialist bloc, and we really saw the issue of Cuba's defense as a secondary matter, for the reasons I have explained. So that was how we saw it, and we have continued to have this perception throughout all these years. That is why I read this speech 24 years ago. If one sees that the correlation ...[rephrases] Knowing what one knows now, one can see the practical military importance these rockets had, because they really turned medium-range missiles into strategic missiles.

When we returned to the meeting with the marshal and (Rachidov), we gave them our answer. It was in these words.... [changes thought] Unfortunately, this was not recorded. It should have been recorded, but recordings were very underdeveloped at that time. Those little recorders that many people have now that they can put in their pocket did not exist. Today everything is

recorded. So this meeting is being recorded, and whenever we have visits by heads of state. We asked Gorbachev the last visit we had from him, and we agreed that everything we talked about should be recorded. We ask permission of the person with whom we are talking, as a rule, right? Of course, there are those who are more in the habit of recording and those who are less in the habit. But our meetings are being recorded, and you already....[changes thought] The meetings with U Thant were recorded, by mutual agreement and all that. If one thinks about history, one sees how many details and things could have been recorded and kept.

But we answered them with these words: that if it was to strengthen the socialist bloc, yes, if it was to strengthen the socialist bloc, and also—and I put this in second place—if it would contribute to Cuba's defense, we were willing to receive all the missiles that might be needed. To be more faithful, we said that we were willing to receive up to 1,000 missiles, if they wanted to send them. Those were our words, verbatim. I used the words: 1,000. I said: This is our resolution. It has been made. [words indistinct], as they say a Roman general said in ancient times—I think it was Julius Caesar. If the decision has already been made, it has already been made. But it was made in that spirit and with that intention. This may also explain why we felt so indignant about the later development of events, about what happened. Because we practically took an attitude of rebellion and intransigence about the crisis.

Then there was the whole process that has been talked about that has been so clearly explained by the Soviet military officer—how they organized it. In a few months, they began a great movement of weapons and troops. From a logistics point of view, it was a perfect operation. We can see this, not only from theoretical considerations, but because we have also found ourselves forced to send troops abroad, as we did in Angola, for example.

I remember the first time we sent 36,000 men in a few weeks with a large part of their weaponry. But I also remember what we did after Cuito Cuanavale, when we increased our forces to 53,000 men. We have some experience in transporting troops in our ships. There was not a single Soviet ship in this operation. We transported our troops and weapons. We were all alone in Cuito Cuanavale. That was also true of the operation in Angola in 1975. That was a decision of ours. The only thing that came from the Soviet Union was worries. They conveyed them to us in 1975, but it was an absolutely free and sovereign decision by our country.

A crisis situation arose in Cuito Cuanavale that forced us to send large numbers of troops, and we did so with decisiveness, because one must do things decisively. Otherwise, one will be defeated. If 20,000 are needed and you send 10,000, the most likely thing is that you will be defeated. We were facing the South Africans. They are very powerful. They manufacture weapons. They have good training, good equipment, and very good aircraft. We prepared for battle with the South

Africans. To give you an idea, when our troops advanced, they had 1,000 antiaircraft weapons, so that they could have superiority in antiaircraft weapons. So we also have some experience in troop movements, and we know what it means to carry out an operation. Of course, there were no missiles in this case, but we did have to send all kinds of heavy weapons. This operation with the missiles was carried out very efficiently by the Soviet Armed Forces and in a very short time. They fulfilled completely the mission that had been assigned to them.

Well, the motivations still need to be clarified. Here opinions have been given on this point by almost all the Soviets. They really have summarized what was talked about in the Soviet Union, and what was said in the Soviet Union, and the reasoning Nikita always used. I have already said that Nikita was very shrewd about how he presented the problem to the other CPSU leaders, and how he really thought, or if there was another CPSU leader who knew Nikita's most personal intentions. In the light of the facts we know today about the true correlation of forces, we can clearly see that it was a necessity. I am not criticizing Khrushchev. Really, I am not criticizing him for the fact that he wanted to improve the correlation of forces. It seems absolutely legitimate to me, absolutely legal—if we are going to talk in terms of international law—absolutely moral, to want to improve the correlation of forces between the socialist bloc and the United States.

If what they really had was 50 or 60 missiles, there is no doubt that the presence of those 42 missiles significantly improved the situation. It almost doubled the effective assets. We have not talked about the submarines here. You probably also know how many missiles the Soviets had on the submarines and their ability to move with their submarines and also carry out strikes, because I know they had submarines with nuclear missiles. This information has not come out here, how many they had at that time. But there is no doubt that the missiles on land were doubled.

If we had known that the correlation of forces, which we did not know—I repeat—perhaps we would have suggested ...[rephrases] If they had talked to us in those terms, of improving the correlation of forces, perhaps we would have advised prudence. Because I think, of course, that if you have 50 missiles, you have to be more prudent than if you have 300. That is clear. If we had had that information, and if they had talked to us in strategic terms, we would surely have advised prudence because I say, and I repeat, that we were not concerned about defending the country. If that were not true, what kind of situation would we be in today? We do not receive missiles or anything, and here you can see that we are all unworried. The United States is much more powerful. I do not know what kinds of conventional weapons and smart weapons and all those things that it has, and you can see that we are calm here. We have confidence in ourselves. We have confidence in our ability to fight, and we are proud of this confidence and ability to fight.

I say that it is a mystery. We do not know Nikita's most personal thoughts. But that was how we understood it, and how the other members of the Soviet leadership understood it. As I have said, he was very shrewd. He could present something in one set of terms and think in another set. But I could not find any other explanation and, even today, I cannot find any other explanation. Of course, it is true that Nikita loved Cuba and admired Cuba a lot. He felt special affection for Cuba. We would say that he was fond of Cuba, in his feelings, his emotions, and all. Because Nikita was also a man of political thinking. He had a political theory and doctrine, and he was consistent with that doctrine. He thought in those terms, between capitalism and socialism. He had very solid convictions. He even thought, in my opinion erroneously, that one day socialism would surpass capitalism by peaceful means.

I say that this is a possibly mistaken concept, because I do not think that the aim of a socialist society should be consumption. I do not think Third World countries need to imitate capitalism in consumption. I always wonder what would happen in the world if every Chinese family had a car, and every Indian family also had a car, and every family in Bangladesh, Pakistan, and all those other places had a car. If they reached such a level of development, how much longer would the oil and fuel last? How much longer would the atmosphere tolerate this poisoning and all these phenomena we know about?

That is why I say that there is a mistake in this concept of socialism. Socialism should solve people's basic problems—education, health, culture, housing, food—all the essential material needs, and not be the idea that everyone should have a car or consumer objects. They should have what they can have, what the environment can tolerate. We have a different concept of socialism, but he was a man of profound political convictions. I do not think that Nikita wanted war. The farthest thing from his mind was war, especially nuclear war. He was very aware of what a nuclear war would mean for the Soviet Union. He did have an obsession about reaching some kind of parity.

I think that the words, the reasoning yesterday by Mr. McNamara was excellent when he said that parity existed at all times after the first moment when there was the capacity to make a response that would cause terrible damage. But even if all the nuclear weapons were launched against one country, the world would be annihilated just the same. Because the contamination this would cause—and the problems of all kinds that this would cause—would be such that, even if only 10,000 of the 50,000 warheads are used and are used in only one place, the world will be finished. This reasoning about when parity really exists seems wise to me, because parity exists as soon as there is the capacity to respond by doing enough damage so that it would be unacceptable to someone who is thinking about launching a nuclear attack.

I tried to find out how this was discussed in the leadership of the CPSU and the Soviet Government when I traveled to the USSR in 1963. But, in fact, I was unable to clarify this. I asked a lot of questions of as many Politburo members as I met with: Kosygin, Gromyko—I do not remember if Gromyko was a Politburo member. I asked all of them one by one: Tell me, how was that decision made? What were the arguments that were used? I really was not able to get a single word out of them. They often did not answer my questions. Of course, you cannot be impertinent and say: Listen, answer me! For all my questions, I was not able to get a clear answer about the possibility that the strategic argument had been used among the Soviet leadership. That was our perception and our conception of the problem. I should say this, really.

The agreements were put into effect immediately. After the verbal agreement, it was necessary to formalize it, but it was already in effect. That was how a draft was drawn up in the USSR; Aleksandr has spoken about this. This draft was sent to Cuba. Politically, the draft was erratic, in the sense that there was no clear foundation established about the matter. It did not talk about strategic weapons, of course. I modified it, using some of points. I took some away, some of the considerations, and I established the political foundation for the agreement, which in my opinion was unobjectionable. The articles of the agreement were not mentioned. It said: The Soviet Union will send to the Republic of Cuba armed forces to reinforce its defenses in the face of a danger of foreign aggression, and thus contribute to maintaining world peace. The type of Soviet troops, and the areas where they will be stationed on the territory of the Republic of Cuba, will be set by the representatives named in accordance with Article 11 of this agreement.

Article 11 talks about the representatives. There is no mention of the kind of strategic weapons, and this agreement could have been mentioned... [pauses] could have been published, and no one could have challenged the legality and morality of this agreement. Of course, it was not essential to bring the missiles here to defend Cuba. That argument was not included, because we could have made a military pact with the USSR saying that an attack on Cuba would be equivalent to an attack on the USSR. The United States has a lot of these pacts throughout the world, and they are respected, because the word of nations is respected and because the risks involved in violating the treaties or disregarding the treaties are taken into consideration.

That is why I say that you should know this. The USSR could have declared that an attack on Cuba would be equivalent to an attack on the USSR. We could have had a military agreement. We could have been able to achieve the aim of the defense of Cuba without the presence of the missiles. I am absolutely convinced of this. This is one of the things that reaffirms the conviction we had at that time and that we have kept until now, even though there is not a single bit of proof that a different argument was used. That is why the comrades

in the Soviet delegation—I can no longer say Soviet, from the CIS—but I mean those who participated in the delegation from the armed forces and the country that participated in this crisis, have spoken, in my opinion, with absolute honesty about the reasoning and concepts that prevailed there in the Soviet Union.

All this brought, or gave rise to, a great effort in the period when the missiles were installed, because there were people living in the places that had been chosen. There were farmers, buildings, and things. We had to clean them out, rid the places of obstacles. We appointed a comrade, a party and government official, to attend exclusively to everything connected with the negotiations to free the land to install the missiles, and it was quite a bit of land. I do not have the figures fresh in my mind, but hundreds of families had to move. We had to arrange this with them, find land for them, give them benefits. All of this was negotiated, and all as much in secret as possible, without being able to explain what it was for.

[Text] There were all kinds of leaks. Well, we had to adopt a measure. All those who knew something knew that they had the duty to consider themselves quarantined. So sometimes, groups of officials came and said: Listen, I have found something out. I have come to stay here now. Because in such-and-such a place, and while talking with someone, a Soviet official often...[changes thought] because you can imagine, there were a lot of troops, 42,000 men, and they establish relations, and some talk to some people, others talk to other people, or another person sees something. So we adopted the method that is used in cases of serious epidemics, which is to quarantine the infected people. Everyone who knew something was infected and was quarantined.

Of course, there were large troop movements, and there began to be talk relatively early that there might be offensive weapons, other sorts of weapons or missiles. In addition, when the missiles began to arrive, those devices are so large...[pauses] I think the current ones must be more modern and smaller. Maybe they can be carried in a suitcase. I do not know what the technology is like; other people know more than we do about this problem. However, those were such enormous devices, approximately 25 meters long, no one knows for sure, that it could occupy an entire block. When such big devices were unloaded, no matter how hard one tried to hide and move through in the streets, everyone knew about it.

That was the best kept secret in history, I would say, because several million Cubans knew it. It was something that really could not be hidden. I imagine that the Central Intelligence Agency must have received letters, because there were spontaneous informers here. They were people who were not with the revolution, and they sympathized with the United States, or they were against the revolution. There were these spontaneous informers. But no one knew anything for sure. No one had any proof.

It was a truly intense process, truly intense work. We had to see to an infinite number of details and solve an infinite number of issues to keep it a secret. All this did not happen....[rephrases] Other things happened that have already been mentioned here. I am not going to repeat them. Raul's trip to Moscow, the trip of Che [Guevara] and (?Aragoni) to the Soviet Union when he delivered the final draft that was accepted. Our draft was accepted, just as it was, without adding or deleting one comma. I have already talked about this. We should remember that a tremendous atmosphere was being created, which seemed negative to us. Therefore, we thought that we should come out with the law on our side, and simply publish this military agreement. The secrecy put us at a disadvantage. It put us at a political and practical disadvantage. It did both things.

But we should distinguish between secrecy—many military operations have to be done in secret, the operation itself, not the basis for an operation—and the information that was given about it. I think this is an important point. There was a big mistake made here, a really big mistake. Not only the mistake about the secrecy, which is one thing that harmed us, but also the information that was given to Kennedy, going along with the game about the category of the weapons, whether they were offensive or defensive.

If you want to verify this, you will see that in none of the Cuban statements—and there were several—did we ever go along with the game relating to the category of the weapons. We refused to go along with that game and, in public statements the government made and in the statements at the United Nations, we always said that Cuba considered that it had a sovereign right to have whatever kind of weapons it thought appropriate, and no one had any right to establish what kind of weapons our country could or could not have. We never went along with denying the strategic nature of the weapons. We never did. We did not agree to that game. We did not agree with that approach. Therefore, we never denied or confirmed the nature of the weapons; rather, we reaffirmed our right to have whatever type of weapons we thought appropriate for our defense.

In contrast, to tell the truth, Khrushchev went along with the game of categorizing the weapons. He turned it into something intentional. Since he did not have any intention of using the weapons in an offensive operation, he believed that it was the intention that defined the nature of the weapons. But it was very clear that Kennedy did not understand it that way. Kennedy did not understand the issue of intentions but rather the issue of type of weapons, whether they were strategic weapons or not. That was the issue. It can be seen very clearly that Kennedy was convinced that strategic weapons were not going to be brought to Cuba.

Because of this, I would say that there was something more than shrewdness here. Deception was involved here. I think the two things—the secrecy about the military agreement and the deception—were two facts,

two facts that did harm. Because I think a different approach should have been adopted, and not the approach of deceit. It did us a lot of harm because, in the first place, Kennedy had a lot at stake. He had already suffered the setback of the Bay of Pigs. He was entering his second year. There were elections. Khrushchev did not want to affect those elections. That is very clear. Perhaps this was one of the factors he used in deciding not to publish the agreement. It is possible that he was counting on not doing anything that would hurt (?Kennedy) in the elections, but he did the worst thing. It was not anticipated that what was happening could become known.

So, in my opinion, Kennedy trusted in what he was told. This is seen in all his public statements. It was like a relief to him to think: Well, they are filling that country with tanks or cannons or who knows what, but there are no strategic weapons there. He thought according to a rationale; he made calculations according to a rationale. This naturally gave him, not legal force, but it gave him the opportunity to present himself to world public opinion as one who had been deceived, saying: They have told me this, they have told me that, they have repeated this to me many times.

So in the eyes of world public opinion, Kennedy gained moral force, not legal force. But he said: They assured me of this, but it has turned out otherwise. He was put in a difficult personal situation—which was something Khrushchev would not have wanted but that, in fact, occurred. He presented himself as one who had been deceived, who had been assured of this, that, or the other, while the truth was something else. That was one of the advantages he was given, not by the secrecy itself but by the secrecy plus the deception.

What other advantage did it give him? That when the missile sites were finally discovered on 14 October, the United States had an enormous advantage because they held the secret in their hands. They could take the initiative. The initiative in the military realm was put into the hands of the United States because they knew what was happening and could afford to choose one option or another, a political option, a quarantine, or a surprise air attack on those installations.

I think that was a very dangerous moment, from the military point of view—even if it was illegal, arbitrary, and unjust, or even immoral from any point of view because you have to comply with international laws. You do not have the right to attack any country or invade any country. But, well, he had the choice in his hands. There could have been a surprise strike when no one was expecting it. Of course, the Soviet military officer explained something here that is extremely important. The nuclear warheads were not in the same place. They were a considerable distance away—which was the right thing, the elementary thing; just as I had told the Soviet officer not to put all the missiles in the same place—that

was on 26 October, already in the middle of the crisis—so that they would not all be destroyed and some capability could be kept.

It is unquestionable that the Soviet military took these elementary measures, but I fear that a large part, or almost all, of the surface-to-air missile units and all the installations that were in view could have been destroyed in a totally surprise attack. Because those anti-aircraft missiles really fired above 1,000 meters. They did not have defenses. The defenses of those installations were strengthened against the low-altitude overflights when we mobilized all our batteries and devoted them to defending those installations. These were conventional batteries. But at that time, they were very vulnerable. Of course, things changed later. The situation improved. But the United States had eight days—or from 16 October when it was reported to them, six days—to act before making this information public. I think this was an extremely dangerous time, not only from the political point of view but also militarily, the way the issue was handled in these two respects. In my opinion, these were negative respects, but that was how it was handled.

I have already explained the position we took. We had our views. We do not know about the others. The crisis broke out on 22 October, but in the morning we issued a combat alert to all forces when we saw the movement and the meeting, all the information that reached us publicly. We also realized that it was about the missiles. We did not lose a single minute, and we issued a maximum combat alert to all our forces that same day before Kennedy spoke. We had already mobilized the forces, our forces. We also warned the Soviets about the situation.

Essentially, the crisis erupted on the night of 22 October, and defense preparations occupied almost all of our time after that. We dedicated ourselves to feverishly working day and night on things that I have already talked about: the mobilization of our forces, the protection of the missile bases, and also the medium range surface-to-air missiles. We assigned to all the Soviet facilities practically all of our anti-aircraft batteries. We thought that it was the most important thing to defend from the beginning of the crisis.

What was Khrushchev's mood once the crisis was declared? What mood was he in? He was in a very combative, very determined mood. Therefore, he sent a letter on 23 October. I am declassifying this also. Does this business of declassifying have anything to do with the theory of class struggles or what? [laughter]

Khrushchev said: [Begins quoting letter] Dear Comrade Castro, the Soviet Government has just received from U.S. President Kennedy, the following document, of which we attach a copy. We consider this declaration of the U.S. Government and Kennedy's speech on 22 October—Oh, alright. They are telling me to go slowly. Thanks—The Soviet Government has just received from U.S. President Kennedy the following document, a copy

of which we have attached. We consider this declaration by the U.S. Government and Kennedy's speech on 22 October as an inconceivable interference in the internal affairs of the Republic of Cuba, and a violation of the norms of international law, and of the basic rules that govern relations between states, and as a blatant act of provocation against the Soviet Union.

The Republic of Cuba has the total right, as any other sovereign state, to defend itself and to choose allies as it wishes. We reject the blatant demands of the U.S. Government for control over the shipment of weapons to Cuba and their aspiration to determine what type of weapons the Republic of Cuba can possess. The U.S. Government knows quite well that no sovereign state will permit another state to meddle in its relations with other states, nor will it render an account of pending measures until its national defense reaches a point of strength.... [corrects himself] toward the strengthening of its national defense. In response to Kennedy's speech, the Soviet Government states its most emphatic protest against the piracy [piratescas] actions of the U.S. Government and depicts these actions as treacherous and aggressive—See, this is all in one paragraph—piracy, treacherous, and aggressive actions in regards to sovereign states, and declares its decision to actively fight against such actions.

We have given instructions to our UN Security Council representative to urgently present to the Council the issue of the violation by the United States of the norms of international law and the UN Charter and to state an emphatic protest against the aggressive and treacherous actions of U.S. imperialism. As a result of the situation created, we have instructed the Soviet military representatives in Cuba on the need to adopt corresponding measures and to be completely ready, ready for combat.

We are sure that the actions undertaken by the American imperialists with the intention of taking away the legitimate right of the Republic of Cuba to strengthen its defensive power and the defense of its territory, will provoke the irate protest of all peace-loving countries.—The truth is that there were really no big protests because politically adverse conditions had arisen due to the procedures used. All of this is in parenthesis. This is what I am saying.—Will provoke the irate protest of all peace-loving countries and will move into action the widest masses in defense of the just cause of revolutionary Cuba. [ends quoting letter]

This could have been accomplished, in part, if we had done things openly. All of this is true because we were within our most absolute right to do so. And if we had the right, how were we going to act in a way that made it seem that we did not have this right, that made it seem that we were doing something wrong. I am analyzing this in terms of ethics, politics, legality—not in terms of force, correlations of force, or in military terms.

[Continues quoting letter] We send to you, Comrade Castro, and to all your comrades in arms, our warmest

greetings and express our firm believe that the aggressive plans of the U.S. imperialists will be thwarted. [ends quoting letter]

The other thing is the declaration. This is the letter that we received on the 23d, and nothing else.

It contained a clear and firm commitment to fight against the piracy, treacherous, and aggressive actions [words indistinct]. What was ahead was combat. I could not imagine any withdrawal. To tell the truth, the idea of a withdrawal never crossed our minds. We did not think it was possible. And Khrushchev, who is the one who knew how many missiles and nuclear weapons he had available and all those things, sent us this letter on the 23d. We, of course, told ourselves: The issue is clear, things are clear, and we went ahead with our preparations. Then, the time came when I wrote the letter, when we had already taken all the humanly possible measures, I met with the Soviet military command, as I have explained before. It reported that everything was ready, all the weapons that were mentioned here, that the Soviet officer explained here, and with lots of willingness.

A truly strange phenomenon occurred among the Soviet troops in a situation such as that one, in which the people were in extreme danger and at the same time remained totally calm. The Soviet and Cuban troops remained totally calm. There was total calm among the Cuban people. If you conducted a poll of the Cuban people and asked: Should we return the missiles? Ninety percent would have answered no. Our people maintained a calm and intransigent position regarding this issue. That same day, the 26th, we notified the Soviet officers that low-altitude overflights were unacceptable, as I mentioned before and, therefore, our batteries were going to open fire, and we wanted them to be informed.

According to the accord, there were two armies and two commands, we commanded our forces and our country. We said, well, we cannot continue to tolerate this. This is extremely dangerous. I already mentioned this, I should not repeat it. Essentially, on the morning of the 27th, when the U.S. aircraft arrived—this was an daily occurrence early in the morning—they faced the fire from our anti-aircraft batteries. The Soviet anti-aircraft missile unit shot down the aircraft in the eastern part of the country; naturally, it was a moment of great tension. But in reality, it was clear, that when we were meeting, or even before we met, on the 26th, when we met with the Soviet officers and were sending a message to Khrushchev, he had already sent a message to Kennedy. You are well aware of all of this. His message proposed the basis for a solution—which was the withdrawal of the missiles in return for guaranties toward Cuba, of not attacking Cuba. Later, the next day, he sent another message and from what I am told, the message on that second day added to the issue of the guaranty for Cuba the issue of missiles in Turkey.

Of course, when this news arrived, the news arrived here on the 28th, it provoked a great indignation because we realized that we had become some type of game token. We not only saw a unilateral decision; a series of steps had been taken without including us. They could have told us; there was the message on the 26th and on the 27th. There had been time, but we heard on the radio on the 28th that an agreement had taken place. We had to endure the humiliation. I understood the Soviet officer when he said that it was the most painful decision that he had to obey in his life, the issue of the inspection of the ships.

We found out about the agreement on the 28th. I believe that there was a message on the way, informing us after the fact. It arrived one or two hours later through the embassy. The reaction of all the people, of all the people, all the cadres, of all the comrades was of profound indignation, it was not a feeling of relief. Then, the political decision that we immediately took was to issue the five-point demands on that same day, the 28th.

Do we have it around here? Check and see where our five-points are. [speaking to unidentified aide]

There were five points, very simple and easy to remember.

1. The end of the economic blockade and of all the economic and trade pressure measures that the United States implemented throughout the world against our country;
2. The end of all subversive actions, shipment and infiltration of weapons and explosives by air or sea, organization of mercenary invasions, infiltration of spies and saboteurs, actions that are carried out from U.S. territory and certain accomplice countries;
3. The end to all pirate attacks conducted from existing bases in the United States and in Puerto Rico;
4. The end of all violations of our airspace and waters by U.S. aircraft and warships;
5. The withdrawal from the Guantanamo Naval Base and the return of the territory occupied by the United States.

These were the five points that we issued on the 28th as our demands.

We would not have opposed a solution. If there was a real danger of war, if we would have known that Nikita was willing to withdraw the missiles and find a solution on that basis, and on a truly honorable basis, we would not have refused. Logically, there was no purpose in insisting on a situation or a solution, but it had to be an acceptable and honorable solution.

The simple solution to withdraw the missiles because the United States had given its word that it would not attack Cuba is incongruent with all the steps taken and it was incongruent with the existence of a situation in our

country that had to be overcome. It would have been enough if Nikita had said: Would you agree to the withdrawal of the missiles if satisfactory guarantees are given to Cuba? Cuba was not a stumbling block to that solution. Cuba would have helped but would have said the minimum guarantees we want are these. Not a guarantee that they would not invade us, I believe that the whole world, anyhow, would have seen with relief the beginning of the solution of the crisis because the consent by Nikita to withdraw the missiles would already have produced relief.

The people would have thought that it was reasonable to find an agreement on a basis related to Cuba, because if Cuba was the motive for the missiles, Cuba should have been kept in mind instead of the missiles in Turkey. But it is evident that the missiles in Turkey were present in Nikita's mind, because he said that he was in the Baltic Sea, near Turkey, and thought about those missiles or so the story goes. The Black Sea? [corrected by unidentified aide] And thought about the missiles in Turkey and all that. And in the end, he ends up also thinking about the missiles in Turkey for whatever reasons, because someone might have suggested that they could be included. But from the political and international point of view, for the honest people, the peace-loving people, those people in the world that sympathized with Cuba, or with independence, or whatever, it made no sense to propose an exchange of missiles in Cuba with missiles in Turkey. If the reason was the defense of Cuba, what did Turkey have to do with the defense of Cuba? Absolutely nothing.

The demands that Cuba made were completely reasonable, a good negotiation point could have been found, and the missiles could have been withdrawn, if that was the condition required to preserve the peace because peace was really threatened. I believe that the procedures used promoted those actions that endangered peace. I already explained them. We were already at that point on the 28th, when another solution was not possible anymore. A commitment had been made, Cuba had been ignored, Turkey had been mentioned; then we issued our five points.

We have already talked about the trip by U Thant. The Soviet Government asked us to please hold our fire, to not shoot anymore. We agreed, right, but as long as the negotiations last, only as long as the negotiations; only as long as the negotiations [repeats] are taking place will we maintain that cease-fire order, the order to not fire against the low-altitude overflights. Because immediately afterwards, on the 27th, the aircraft stopped flying. After our batteries on the 27th.... [changes thought] There were no more sorties that afternoon, there were no more overflights. There were none on the 28th. But later, after the batteries went silent, they began to conduct overflights again while the negotiations were taking place, and it was very humiliating. Given the frame of mind of our people, to watch those aircraft flying at 100 meters was extremely irritating and demoralizing even for the artillery soldiers and everyone else. You have to

really understand the Cuban personality to comprehend the harmful effect to our morale of events of this nature.

Then U Thant came to visit. I fully explained to him our position, even the five points, and especially our categorical opposition to the inspections. I told him that we did not accept—because the USSR is a sovereign country and so were we—and that no one could authorize an inspection of our territory if we did not authorize it. And we told him, there is not going to be any inspection. That was one of our reactions because we were in disagreement with the manner in which... [changes thought] with the outcome of the crisis. When U Thant came, I explained to him all our positions.

He definitely did not go beyond three proposals. He proposed that we accept a group of UN representatives and all that, a UN reconnaissance plane crewed by people acceptable to the Cuban, Russian, and American Governments. We really were not in the mood for overflights in those days.

[Begins quoting U Thant message] So, the United States has told me that if this system is put into practice, I will make a public statement, in the Security Council if necessary, because they will not continue to have aggressive intentions against the Cuban Government, and they will guarantee the integrity of the nation's territory, etc. [ends quoting]

Where is my response? I told him, precisely: We do not understand why this is being asked of us, because we have not violated anyone's rights. We have not carried out any attack on anyone at all. All our actions have been based on international law. We have been the victims of an embargo, in the first place, which is an illegal act; and in the second place, of an attempt to determine from another country what we have the right to do or not do within our borders. Cuba is a sovereign state.—I am reading the essential things—The United States has been repeatedly violating our airspace without any right. We can accept anything that complies with the law and that does not involve a reduction in our status as a sovereign state. I understand that this business about the inspections is one more attempt to humiliate our country. Therefore, we do not accept it. This demand for inspections is to validate their attempt to violate our right to act within our borders with complete freedom, to decide what we can and cannot do within our borders.

The threat of launching a direct armed attack is absurd. If Cuba were to strengthen itself militarily to a degree that the United States takes on itself to determine. [sentence as heard] We do not have the least intention of accounting to or consulting the U.S. Senate or House about the weapons we think it appropriate to acquire or the measures to be taken to fully defend our country. We have not yielded, nor do we intend to yield any sovereign prerogative to the U.S. Congress. We can negotiate with all sincerity and honor. It would not be honorable if we accepted negotiating about a sovereign right of our country.

Then U Thant explained. He said: All actions by the United Nations on Cuban territory can only be undertaken with the consent of the Cuban Government and people. Here, in essence, are some other ideas U Thant presented. They are very interesting. He said: My colleagues and I [words indistinct] what I have said.

[Quoting from own letter] In the first place, our government does not have the least doubt of the great intention, disinterest, and honesty with which the current UN Secretary General is working. We do not have any doubts about your intentions, good faith, and extraordinary interest in finding a solution to this problem. I understand the interest all of us should have in peace, but the road to peace is not the road of sacrificing the rights of peoples, violating the rights of peoples, because that precisely the road that leads to war. The road to peace is the road of guaranteeing the rights of peoples and the willingness of peoples to resist when defending those rights.

Here I said: The road to the last world war was the road set by the annexation of Austria, the dividing up of Czechoslovakia, acts of German imperialism that were tolerated and that led to that war. That is why it is difficult to understand how one can talk about an immediate solution without reference to future solutions, when what is of greatest interest is not paying any price for peace now, but rather, guaranteeing peace in a definitive way.

I said: Cuba is not Austria nor southeastern Czechoslovakia—it is southwestern, right? I said southeastern, that is what appears here—Cuba is not Austria nor southeastern Czechoslovakia nor the Congo. We have the very firm determination to defend our rights through any difficulties and any dangers.

I hope [name indistinct] has not underlined anything more here, because otherwise this will drag on too long. Here I said: The Soviet Government's decision to withdraw the strategic weapons they brought to defend Cuba should have been enough for them. The Cuban Government has not impeded the withdrawal of those weapons. If, in addition to that, the United States wants to humiliate our country, they will not succeed. We have not hesitated a single minute in our determination to defend our rights.

I added: We also oppose the inspections at our ports. I ask, if the Soviet Union has authorized inspections of its ships at sea, why would it then be necessary to inspect them again in Cuban ports? Regarding this, I want to say, in the first place, that the United States has no right to invade Cuba, and one cannot negotiate based on a promise not to commit a crime, based on the simple promise not to commit a crime—I repeat—and that given the threat of this danger, we trust more in our determination to defend ourselves than in the U.S. Government's words.

I said: Why not value equally the public pledge made to the United Nations by the Soviet Union to withdraw the

strategic weapons it had sent to defend the Republic of Cuba? Those are, in essence, the ideas I presented.

Now, U Thant said some interesting things. U Thant said: My colleagues and I—I am also reading the essential parts—think that the blockade was illegal, that no state can permit a blockade that is not only military, or even an economic one. [sentence as heard] This is using the imposition of a great power's force against a small country. I also told him that the air reconnaissance that was being done over Cuba was illegal and inadmissible. These three things—economic embargo, military blockade, and air reconnaissance—are illegal.

Here he said: The Pentagon, the Central Intelligence Agency ...[rephrases] There are three forces in the United States: the Pentagon, the CIA, and the State Department. This will not please the man who looks like Hemingway much. [referring to Ray Cline] U Thant said: In my opinion, the Pentagon and the CIA have more power than the State Department. Ah, this will not please [Edwin] Martin much. [laughter] If the CIA and the Pentagon continue to have that power, I see the future of the world very black. That is what U Thant said. Well, I hope they do not have any monument to U Thant there in the United States. Now they will take it away [chuckles] with a crane. [laughter]

[Continues quoting U Thant] I said to the United States that if they do anything drastic, I would not only report them to the Security Council but would accuse the United States in the Security Council. Even though the United States has the vote and the veto, there can still be a moral sanction. I also told them I would resign my post, because if the United Nations cannot stop a great power in an attack against a small country, I do not want to be the secretary general. I warned them that they should not make any attack on Cuba, because that would be the end of the United Nations. My aim is to achieve peace and ensure the continuation of the United Nations.

He said: I am thinking about the first proposal by Khrushchev about the dismantling and inspection accepted by the Soviet Union. Since Your Excellency considers that the Soviet Union was referring to having the inspections performed outside Cuba, I believe this might create some division or misunderstanding between the Soviet Union and Cuba. That is what he said. There are other things of interest in my opinion but in essence, that is what U Thant said. That was on 31 October, that meeting, on 30 and 31 October.

Then Mikoyan visited two or three days after U Thant. Do you remember, Aleksandr? [Alekseyev answers: "4 November; he arrived in Cuba on 2 November, and the first meeting was on 4 November."] He arrived in Cuba on 2 November. The lengthy negotiations or talks with Mikoyan began, based on the positions taken by the Soviet Union and the positions we had taken. Those negotiations were very difficult, because first we talked about the missiles. Then we talked about the IL-28's.

Then we talked about other things. It seemed interminable. I have already talked about this here. I should not repeat it.

A really unpleasant incident happened when the talks with Mikoyan started. The news came from the USSR that his wife had died. They gave him the choice of returning to the USSR, and he really made a very generous gesture. He decided, well... [rephrases] He received the news. Of course, it had a great impact on him. They had been very close, married for a long time. Mikoyan cried, but he decided to stay in the country and continue the talks instead of returning to the USSR. It was also very hard for us to receive that news, at a time when we were beginning talks that were not easy at all.

He stayed about three weeks, and we discussed this. As you have seen and heard in recent days—at least many of us have, some of you surely knew it before—the letters have been published. [speaking to unidentified aide] See if you can help me find the letters. I had them right here. Here they are. Here are the letters in translation. On the first day, I was able to reach my goal of reading 85 pages of them, early in the morning. That is why I was a little sleepy here in the meeting yesterday. These letters were really very interesting. Here you can see when the problem of the IL-28's came up, the discussions.

With the same honesty I have spoken with up to now I should say that I see a difference here between Kennedy's and Khrushchev's conduct, in this correspondence. It must be said that Khrushchev conducted himself very well, with great dignity. You can see that he is anxious to solve not only these problems but also many others. I see here a noble, thoughtful, capable, intelligent Khrushchev, who uses profound arguments, not just with respect to the crisis, but also with respect to world peace.

In contrast, we can see a harsh Kennedy. The same nobility is not reflected in these letters in Kennedy's case. You can see that he squeezes Khrushchev, squeezes him more and more, and the further away the missiles were, the more he squeezed him. That is what I see in these letters. It is not the same thing to discuss when the missiles were here as when they have been taken out. So Kennedy's language became harsher as the ships left for the Soviet Union with the missiles. He presented new demands and talked about verification. He talked about continued guarantees. He insisted on this. You can see that he was reluctant to formalize the pledges he had made to Khrushchev. He used very subtle words. He said one thing in one place, and then tried to soften it with other words elsewhere. You can see Khrushchev struggling so that the pledges Kennedy had been made would be fulfilled and formalized.

It is unquestionable that Khrushchev's position was much weaker at that stage, from an objective point of view, especially after 20 November, when the missiles

had been withdrawn. Naturally, we did not know anything about this exchange. We did not have any information about this. But we still had a problem. The days went by, and the planes continued their overflights. That was intolerable. We finally informed Mikoyan that we had no alternative but to fire at the planes flying at low altitudes. We issued the appropriate instructions about this matter.

I knew that there would be a U.S. counterattack. Since I was responsible for that order, I went to one of our air bases and spent the morning there. That was the next day; I do not know if it was on 16 November. I believed it was a moral duty if there was a reprisal against that base... [rephrases] The planes passed over that base at 1000, and I considered that I had a moral duty, not to commit suicide there, but to be with the troops that were going to fire. I went to one place, but many places were going to fire.

We had warned Mikoyan about 24 hours before—24 or 48 hours before—so that he could inform the Soviets. We were waiting for the planes at that antiaircraft battery that morning, and fortunately the planes did not come. That was the best thing that could have happened, right? For the planes not to fly, because they would have been shot down. Because there were so many batteries there that it would have been impossible not to hit the planes. Even though our gunners were not very expert, the planes had been flying very low and relatively slowly, at the minimum possible speed and at about 100 meters altitude. They would come by like that. But they did not come.

I know that in one of the letters—the one on 15 November—Kennedy told Khrushchev that... [changes thought] because he mentions me every once in a while, always trying to cause some friction between the Soviets and us, or make the Soviets punish us in some way. He would say that Castro was the bad guy, and wanted war or who knows what. He said that he had received news that we were going to fire against the low-altitude overflights. It is possible... [rephrases] I imagine that Mikoyan in some way communicated to someone, through some channel, that we had decided to fire. It seemed stupid to me that the United States would continue with those flights because Kennedy really was so pleased with the results he had obtained that he had no reason to complicate that whole situation by doing something that made no sense at that time, except to humiliate us.

There were people among the antiaircraft troops who made cartoons, drawing spiderwebs and things. The Cubans who were at the antiaircraft batteries had a sense of humor. [unidentified aide hands letter to Castro] Yes? To U Thant? Where? What day was this? On 15 November, a letter from the prime minister [Castro] to Acting UN Secretary General Mr. U Thant says that we will not tolerate further low-altitude overflights over Cuba, since these serve U.S. military plans against the revolution and demoralize our national defense. We

assert that groups of sabotage and subversion have been introduced into Cuba, which proves the military usefulness of the overflights for the United States.

Yes, we also informed U Thant about this on 15 November. So, fortunately, I think the attitude adopted by the administration was reasonable, not to cause a conflict. They understood that it was unnecessary and senseless, and that our reaction was natural. This might have interrupted the withdrawal of the missiles or something, and made the situation more complicated. So they did not send the flights. They did not authorize the low-altitude overflights any more.

Then they approached the coasts, and there were some enormous exchanges of fire because some came close to the coasts, and all the batteries fired at them when they got near. But, in general, the low-altitude overflights ended by mid-November, and the U-2 remained. People could not see the U-2. We were not in agreement with the U-2 overflights, but we could do nothing about them. It was a long process. Then, they finally turned over to us those anti-aircraft batteries when our personnel had learned how to use them. We had to take a lot of boys out of the universities, or recent graduates, to learn to handle all those missiles, which were for targets higher than 1,000 meters. But when the Soviets turned them over to us, they did it on the condition that we not fire at the U-2. We found ourselves in the dilemma of either going without anti-aircraft batteries or pledging not to fire at the U-2. We had to promise not to. It was quite a while later when they turned those surface-to-air missiles over to us.

That is the only thing I can say, basically, concerning Cuba in those days. These letters refer to it. Towards the end of the year, things were a little better. In December, things got better. Now, were these the only letters? No, I had three more pieces of paper. That one was on the IL-28's, but we have already talked about that. I think these letters are really very revealing. At that moment.... [rephrases] The circumstances had changed. Khrushchev was one man before the crisis, and a different one afterwards. Kennedy was one man before the crisis, and a different one afterwards. Kennedy behaved with great nobility and elegance and believed what they told him, and Khrushchev fed the deception, the theory that there were no offensive weapons. He went along with that game. Afterwards, in the other stage, we can see a very noble, frank, sincere Khrushchev and a harsher Kennedy who, in short, squeezes him—to use an elegant word.

But the effort Khrushchev made was admirable. He behaved with great elegance. He did not make concessions concerning Cuba, in the face of all the.... [changes thought] Except that at one time he said that it was a question of the Spanish character, but he did not say it in pejorative terms, according to what I have read there. On the other hand, he makes a rather rude reference to Eisenhower. That is the only little part of the letter that I do not like. It is not that I am an Eisenhower sympathizer—not at all. We are very far apart ideologically.

But the way he said it, the phrase he used—about an old man who has one foot in the grave should not interfere with our plans—was not very elegant. It was not an elegant way of saying it. Then Kennedy, of course, defends Eisenhower, saying that the two problems have nothing to do with each other.

But I think public knowledge has been enriched with this. Now we have to ask the State Department to continue declassifying things, more letters. Because the one from 1963 is still missing. It may contain interesting things, from what I remember. Let me find the letter. Now, three more months had gone by, and on 31 January—almost four months later, right? November, December, January: three months and a bit—on 31 January 1963, Khrushchev wrote me a lengthy letter, really a wonderful letter. It is 31 pages long. I am not going to read it, of course, but it can be handed out to anyone because it is a beautiful, elegant, friendly, very friendly letter. Some of its paragraphs are almost poetic. It invites me to visit the Soviet Union. He was travelling from Berlin to Moscow by train, where a conference was taking place.

You can see in his letter.... [changes thought] It was written by him, because he was a man who knew how to express himself very well, write very well, and he wrote a persuasive letter. Tempers had been cooling down by then; they had been quite hot. I accepted the trip. You know, I got there by a miracle, because I had to fly in a TU-114 plane. It was a 16-hour flight. I think that is a kind of bombardment in a plane like that. [Words indistinct] I arrived in Murmansk on a direct flight from Havana in 16 hours. That plane had four propellers, and it shook and vibrated, and we had to land blind. It was lucky that Khrushchev, who was very concerned about details, had sent the best pilot in the Soviet Union because he was the only man who would have been able to land in the middle of the mountains in Murmansk with such a fog that you could not see for five meters. On the third try, we finally landed. Mikoyan was waiting for me there in Murmansk with a delegation. I spoke by telephone with Khrushchev for a short time.

That was the first time I visited the Soviet Union. I can say that my part in all this could have ended that day we landed in Murmansk. [chuckles] I said: If this crashes, we will never even know why. I was sitting with the pilots watching the operation. Suddenly I said: I will get out of here. I do not want it to happen that instead of helping, I make things more complicated. I stayed sitting down until that monster landed. It was an enormous plane.

This is how I first visited the USSR.

There is an excellent letter. This is why I said that I know Khrushchev well. It contained outstanding feelings. It was friendly; he was concerned for Cuba. I appreciated this letter very much. Then the invitation to visit the USSR was made. In the USSR, we talked about this, as I have already told you. I had my theory on what the goal was. I was trying to find out what had been discussed, yet

not once he did talk about the terms, he and all the others, as a rule. I was not able to clarify the issue. But for hours he read many messages to me, messages from President Kennedy, messages sometimes delivered through Robert Kennedy, and other times through Thompson, that is the name I remember. There was a translator, and Khrushchev read and read the letters sent back and forth.

I have read this with great interest to find out if any of the issues touched in the messages were from that trimester, but they were not, they belong to a later period. They probably belong to the first trimester of 1963: January, February, March, and April, the first quarter of the year, because I arrived in the Soviet Union toward the end of April.

Khrushchev was sitting with me in (Savidova), a remote hunting reserve. He liked hunting very much. He tried to do so whenever he had a chance, he did not have much time available, he was a hard worker. We sat in the patio. It was already spring. It was almost spring, and you can be outside with a coat on in spring in the Soviet Union. He kept reading the letters. The messages continued on and on, discussing the security of Cuba.

There was a moment when Khrushchev.... [changes thought] There were two moments of interest to me. There was a moment when Khrushchev was reading and the other man was translating, when there was a phrase in which they said: Something is going to happen, in reference to Cuba. Then when Khrushchev later read his reply, it said—I have not forgotten the phrase, even though it was not recorded—that something is going to happen, something unbelievable. That was the word used by Khrushchev in his reply. Therefore, it seems that, at a certain point, the mood was getting heated again when they told him—regarding Cuba—that something was going to happen, and he says that something is going to happen but it will be something unbelievable. As if to say that there would be a war if it is not fulfilled. [sentence as heard]

You have seen from his letters that he writes with dignity, with elegance but with dignity. I have not forgotten that phrase. Khrushchev kept on reading and reading. There was a moment when I believe that he said something that he did not want me to hear. Anyone can make a mistake, even me, while reading letters. But here no one had highlighted for him the essential ideas, and there was a moment when he read a message from the other side: We have fulfilled all our pledges—take notice of these words—and have withdrawn or are withdrawing, or are going to withdraw the missiles from Turkey and Italy. I remember it well, that he not only said Turkey but also said Italy. I always kept that in my mind. Once I asked the Soviets if in the documents or the papers there was finally something to this effect. I sent a query to Gromyko, since there was a new campaign in the United States because we were going to receive some MiG-23 or some other planes of that kind. They were

always examining to see if 1962 accords were being violated. I was told that the issue of Turkey appeared, but not Italy.

But in that message that Nikita was reading and that the translator was translating it said: We have withdrawn, are withdrawing, are going to withdraw. This refers to the withdrawal of the missiles from Turkey and Italy. I told myself, well, this has not been discussed publicly. This must have been some kind of gift or concession made—maybe in this case by Kennedy—to help Khrushchev. There had been times when Khrushchev had wanted to help Kennedy, but other times he had wanted to hurt him—or did not want to but did anyway—and other times it was Kennedy who had wanted to hurt Khrushchev.

I only know and remember that phrase. When I heard that phrase, it was the last thing that Nikita wanted me to hear, since he knew my way of thinking, and that we were completely against being used as an exchange token. This was contradictory to the theory that the missiles were sent for the defense of Cuba. Withdrawing missiles from Turkey had nothing to do with the defense of Cuba. That is quite clear, it is a matter of simple logic. Cuba was defended by saying: Please, remove the naval base; please, stop the economic blockade and the pirate attacks. Withdrawing missiles from Turkey was in total contradiction to the theory that the essential goal had been the defense of Cuba.

When this was read, I looked at him and said: Nikita, would you please read that part again about the missiles in Turkey and Italy? He laughed that mischievous laugh of his. He laughed, but that was it. I was sure that they were not going to repeat it again because it was like that old phrase about bringing up the issue of the noose in the home of the man who was hung.

There were two points, and this is why I am going to leave it to the researchers to investigate this. We will await with interest the day when this is declassified, now that everything is being declassified, or as it also is called, the deideologizing [chuckles] of international relations. It is better if all these documents come to light once and for all.

Of course, this situation in 1962, despite efforts by both parts, and we also tried to completely overcome the incident, tried to save the relations with the Soviet Union, tried to stop it from getting any more embittered. Yet the 1962 incidents affected for many years the relations between the Soviet Union and Cuba. We are putting all these documents at the disposal of historians and, if you think so, we can make photocopies.

No, this document also. [speaking to unidentified aide]

I believe that the text of this accord has never been made public. I do not know if it is of any interest to historians. We can have it typed or make photocopies. What was that? Not typed, photocopies? We will make copies for the historians. This is now declassified.

You are in charge of providing this. [speaking to unidentified aide]

This letter also, the one sent on the 23d; someone might be interested in it.

Yes. [speaking to unidentified aide]

I do not remember anything else that, in my opinion, might be of concrete and specific interest in relation to the studies that you are conducting. If any more papers or anything else of interest surfaces, we can give them to

you. We do not have anything to hide with respect to this whole problem of the October Crisis, and if it can be of use or contribute to clarifying the facts and to drawing the pertinent conclusions. I am not going to draw conclusions here about all this. There is a lot of material to study, to mull over, many things to reflect on, thanks in part to the constructive efforts made by bringing this to light. As a Soviet man once said, never has a problem been so seriously discussed as this one has, from which important lessons can be derived. Thank you very much. [applause]