

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]