

Record of Conversation between J. Kennedy and A. I. Mikoyan

November 29, 1962

After an exchange of greetings, J. Kennedy asks A. I. Mikoyan about his impressions of the trip to Cuba. A. I. Mikoyan replies that he came away with the best impressions—that Cuba is a beautiful island, and that the Cubans are very interesting people who are enthusiastically building a new life. Castro personally gives a great deal of attention to this effort, in particular to the development of agriculture, to the construction of schools and hospitals, and to other such activities.

A. I. Mikoyan talks about Castro's family, noting that the brothers—Fidel and Raul—had long given their considerable lands to the peasants, while their older brother, who until recently had not shared their revolutionary ideas, remained a landowner. However, he finally understood the meaning of changes taking place in Cuba, and also gave his land to the peasants. This brother now says that he would have joined Fidel and Raul a long time ago, if he could have foreseen in what direction they would take the Cuban revolution.

J. Kennedy asks when Castro became a Communist.

A. I. Mikoyan replies that Castro has been a Marxist for the last one or two years. Previously, he and his closest friends, such as Aragonés, were revolutionary liberals. Raul Castro and Che Guevara become Communists earlier.

A. I. Mikoyan notes further that from numerous meetings with representatives of the various segments of the Cuban population, he got the impression that Cubans have a quite natural distrustful of the United States and American imperialism based on their bitter

experience, and openly talk about this. It is necessary to openly acknowledge that relations now between the United States and Cuba, through the fault of the former, are completely unsatisfactory.

J. Kennedy agrees that relations between Cuba and the United States are not satisfactory, and remarks that the efforts of the Cuban people and Castro in the spheres of education, medical care, and the development of the country's economy are positive events. However, the United States is worried that Cuba is turning into the springboard of Soviet politics aimed at undermining Latin America, that Cuba and Castro lead subversive activities against the Latin American countries. Nonetheless, Kennedy went on, in my speeches I criticized those who wanted to invade Cuba. My attitude to Playa Giron is well known, too. Last summer, Cuba started a military buildup. Hundreds of Soviet ships with weapons appeared there, and in the end even missiles. All this puts us in a difficult situation. How can I know that this would not happen again in a month, or that such weapons are not delivered to Cuba by the Chinese? And still, notwithstanding all this, we argued against those who alleged that Cuba was a Soviet military base. And precisely at that same time, we received assurances from Chairman Khrushchev that there were no offensive weapons in Cuba. How is it possible after all that to guarantee that, let's say, in the beginning of next year such weapons would not be delivered there again?

A. I. Mikoyan said that the Soviet government, taking into account the good relationship between N. S. Khrushchev and J. Kennedy, decided at the time to inform president Kennedy confidentially at first, and only then announce publicly in the press about the delivery of weapons to Cuba, whereas the U.S. government does not inform us about what kind of weapons it delivers to its bases. As time went on, one way or another, this would cease to be a secret, but we wanted to stress that when we directed these weapons to Cuba, we did not pursue any kind of

aggressive aims, and clearly we did not do it to attack the United States. You are a military man, Mr. President, A. I. Mikoyan went on, and you understand that it would have been stupid even to think about attacking the United States from Cuba. It would seem even every civilian understands that. The president let Comrade Khrushchev know through informal channels that during the American presidential election campaign, he did not want the Soviet Union to take any steps on Berlin or other issues that could have an unfavorable impact on the campaign. Wishing to not complicate the position of the president, it was decided to communicate confidentially on this issue immediately after the elections, and then to publish in print. I repeat, the weapons were supplied not with an aim to attack the United States but as a deterrent, and for the purpose of reinforcing Cuba's defense capabilities to protect it from the possibility of an outside attack.

J. Kennedy notes it is not an issue of informing or not informing his government. Of course, we do not communicate with you about these things, and you do not have to inform us either. But in September there was a statement from TASS that there are no offensive weapons in Cuba. Furthermore, Ambassador Dobrynin said this to the U.S. attorney general, R. Kennedy. This turned out to be a lie.

A. I. Mikoyan says that this is incorrect; there was no lie. A difference in the interpretation of these weapons occurred. We sent these weapons to Cuba for defensive purposes, not for an attack. In our September statement, we emphasized the purpose of these weapons; their purpose is one thing, while their nature is another. Therefore, we made this statement. These weapons were sent to Cuba only for the purpose of defense, as a means of deterring possible aggressors. It would have been foolish to consider using these missiles to attack the United States. It is well known that the USSR has powerful enough missiles with a

huge range. Everyone understands that if the missiles stationed in Cuba were used against the United States, the matter would not be limited to Cuba—it would start a world war. But it is well known that we do not want to attack anybody, we do not want war.

In this regard, A. I. Mikoyan notes, I recall my conversation with Dulles and Eisenhower. I asked Dulles if he thought that the Soviet Union wanted to go to war with the U.S. He was silent for a moment and answered that he didn't think so, and asked whether the Soviet government believes that the United States wants to go to war with the Soviet Union. I answered, A. I. Mikoyan continued, that we do not think this way either, but we have grave concerns about it. We ask ourselves the question: If the United States does not want to fight with us, then why does it need the bases located in the immediate vicinity of the Soviet Union, which fan the "Cold War," and why do they conduct their policy "on the verge of war?"

Further, A. I. Mikoyan notes that Kennedy's words about turning Cuba into a base against the United States and countries of Latin America reminded him of the above-mentioned conversation with Dulles. In this connection, he would like to ask President Kennedy the same question: Does he think that the Soviet Union wants to fight with the United States?.

J. Kennedy says that he, in turn, would like to ask A. I. Mikoyan why the Soviet Union, despite the public and confidential assurance of its leaders to the contrary, delivered to Cuba medium-range missiles and other "offensive weapons," although it was well known that the United States did not threaten to invade Cuba either in the spring or summer of that year. He said so frankly to Khrushchev even in Vienna. Despite the fact that he, Kennedy, faced attacks from those who claimed that the United States is allowing the creation of military bases in Cuba, in September and even in October he spoke publicly against an invasion of Cuba. And the United States could have formally justified such an invasion, but it did not think that this would be a

solution. So we could have told Khrushchev then that we would not invade Cuba. We proceeded from the idea that we would be working on greater international issues together with you, and we did not intend to invade Cuba. Ambassador Dobrynin knows this well. Chairman Khrushchev said that Cuba does not have offensive weapons; the same thing was said in the well-known TASS statement, and Ambassador Dobrynin talked about this also. Suddenly, we find out that missiles are installed in Cuba. This was a great insult to me. We are interested in avoiding dangerous conflicts in the next years, and something has already been done in this direction; in particular, we have already agreed on a peaceful regulation of the Laotian problem. The most important thing is that Khrushchev and I understand each other well. What do we have now? A direct military confrontation because of Cuba. Who can say that this will not happen again, let's say, in six months?

A. I. Mikoyan says that without mutual understanding between Khrushchev and Kennedy, between the USSR and the United States, it is indeed difficult to count on the preservation of peace. He notes that the goal of the Soviet government, including in this conversation he is having with Kennedy, is to find ways to improve the mutual understanding between the USSR and the United States on all contentious issues, thereby strengthening peace in the whole world.

On one hand, continues A. I. Mikoyan, you announced that you are not planning to attack Cuba. But on the other hand, it is well known that on U.S. territory, as well as in some countries of the Caribbean, military training of considerable groups of Cuban immigrants was under way. Moreover, there was recruitment of Cuban émigrés into the U.S. military for the purpose of creating Spanish-speaking divisions.

Subversive activity continued against Cuba; officials from the Pentagon gave speeches that contradicted the president's statements. "My good friend" Nixon echoed their sentiments, continues A. I. Mikoyan. Besides that, everyone remembers the invasion of Cuba that was done with U.S. assistance. I know from your words, which were said to Khrushchev, that the Bay of Pigs invasion was prepared by your predecessor; however, it still took place under your presidency. A. I. Mikoyan repeats that the Soviet government announced truthfully that the missiles delivered to Cuba were only for defense purposes. We consider the missiles in Cuba as a "detering" force, not at all as "offensive" weapons. If we wanted to attack the United States, then we have extremely long-range missiles. It is known that the territory of the Soviet Union is not enough for us to test such missiles, so we have to launch them into the Pacific Ocean, not far from U.S. shores. We have sufficient means for delivery, and we have enough hydrogen and atomic bombs. The United States, of course, also has such bombs. Thus it is clear that the forty-two missiles located in Cuba were meant only for defense. Everyone knows that if these missiles had been used against the United States, it would have meant a world war. However, the missiles in Cuba were meant for defense; they were in the hands of Soviet officers and could not be used without our order. I have to tell you confidentially, not for publication, notes A. I. Mikoyan, that we have a law that forbids the transfer of nuclear weapons to second hands. We understand that at the present moment the issue is not only restricted to Cuba; we are talking about the relationship between the USSR and the United States. We proceed from the necessity of the gradual resolution of all contentious issues and, therefore, believe that we should completely eliminate the conflict over Cuba and move to resolve other pressing problems.

Next, A. I. Mikoyan talks about his own conversation with U.S. secretary of state Cordell Hull in 1936, in the course of which Hull said to A. I. Mikoyan that Germany and Japan are

preparing aggression and that the only countries that can stop the aggression are the United States and the USSR. Noting that at that time the situation was not as it is right now—when we are the only two powers with unprecedented destructive weapons—A. I. Mikoyan says that today the preservation of peace is even more dependent on the two greatest world powers—the USSR and the United States. Mikoyan notes that the whole world was pleased at the agreement between N. S. Khrushchev and John Kennedy on overcoming the situation on the brink of war in connection with Cuba. Mikoyan emphasizes that our goal now is to resolve the Cuban problem as soon as possible and to start working on other urgent issues.

J. Kennedy notes that Nixon can say anything he likes, but he does not determine U.S. policy. Nixon indeed criticized the policies of the current U.S. government regarding Cuba and the USSR, calling them too “soft.” As for the Pentagon generals, the government controls their statements. He does not know any officials who would come forward with proposals to attack Cuba.

Kennedy further notes that he had to take the responsibility for the invasion on Playa Giron. But neither in the spring nor in the summer of this year, he stresses, was there talk about an invasion of Cuba.

It is not Cuba (what can it really do against us), but the actions of the Soviet Union that have significance for us, Kennedy says. Just as the Soviet Union does not want to attack Albania, so we do not want to attack Cuba. The Soviet Union and the United States have strength sufficient to destroy one another, and if we do not understand each other on some issue, it could lead to a major explosion. I hope that someday the Soviet Union will understand this, and will limit itself to its own borders and its internal construction, and will stop pressing on us. Then the United States will be ready to do the same. Today, said the president, a situation has developed

whereby, although our two countries have no territorial claims to each other, we clash with you almost everywhere, and in the present nuclear age this situation is fraught with great dangers for the entire world. As soon as a revolutionary spark flashes anywhere in the world—your presence is noticeable. You are right there. We should mutually try to avoid an aggravation of the situation in all parts of the world.

A. I. Mikoyan touches on Kennedy's observation about the revolutions, referring to the example of Cuba. We, the Soviet Union, did not know anything beforehand about the armed insurrection being prepared and headed by F. Castro in Cuba; and we did not meddle in any way in this insurrection, which ended nonetheless with such a wonderful success. And the Americans had their embassy there, as well as an obedient government. American monopolies were in effect there. Does the U.S. president really not know of all this? (Kennedy here immediately corroborated that U.S. policymakers firmly know that the Soviet Union had nothing to do with it.)

If we are realists, continued A. I. Mikoyan, we have to admit that revolutions break out not because a mythical "Moscow hand" is involved, but because in some countries appropriate social, economic, and political conditions become ripe for a revolution. Revolutions did happen, and revolutions will happen. And they will win in countries of the Americas. And they will win in the United States as well. It is quite possible that you could find yourself playing Castro's role, who leads Cuba to socialism without being a Marxist.

J. Kennedy laughed, saying, "Not I; but my little brother can end up in such a situation."

A. I. Mikoyan says that the Soviet government's policy, led by Chairman N. S. Khrushchev, is to solve all problems step by step, and to strengthen peace. We strive to eliminate all pockets of danger, and already have achieved a great deal in this direction. In cases when we

are not successful in finding a solution to a controversial problem, this happens only because we do not have understanding from the Western powers.

Urgent issues need to be resolved—not left up in the air. Leaving unresolved issues creates an atmosphere that is always fraught with new and dangerous outbreaks of conflicts. We are for solving issues, not avoiding them. And, to speak frankly, it is impossible to avoid them.

In one of your messages regarding Cuba, says A. I. Mikoyan to Kennedy, you yourself raised the matter of the desirability of a signing a nonaggression pact between the countries of NATO and the Warsaw Pact. This would be a major step to strengthen peace. Together with this, we should discuss questions such as the cessation of nuclear testing, the Berlin issue, and disarmament—questions that are waiting for resolution. I would like to touch upon these issues in today's conversation, if you are ready to discuss them.

A. I. Mikoyan says that the exchange of messages between N. S. Khrushchev and J. Kennedy is a basis for settlement of the Cuban issue. Working with the Cuban side, the Soviet side used the messages of N. S. Khrushchev and Kennedy to develop a draft protocol and included in it a number of positions consistent with the spirit of these messages. Unfortunately, the U.S. representatives rejected this draft. But, to date, we have agreed with U.S. representatives at the negotiations in New York on two important points: (1) The document formulating the settlement of the Cuban crisis must not be in form of a protocol, but in the form of a trilateral declaration—by the USSR, Cuba, and the United States. (2) These declarations are presented to the UN Security Council for approval. However, an agreement has still not been reached on the concrete points of this declaration.

J. Kennedy notes that he cannot say anything about the Cuban declaration, and asks whether UN approval implies a simple registration of the declarations with the secretary-general

of the UN, or a vote in the United Nations. In his opinion, the secretary-general should register these declarations. It goes without saying, he continued, that we cannot vote for Castro's declaration, which he [Kennedy] supposes will contain positions clearly unacceptable to the United States. I suppose that our declaration also is unacceptable to Castro. But the main thing is to reach an agreement on the texts between the United States and the USSR and to pass them on to the secretary-general, and the Cubans can say whatever they want in their declaration. That does not interest us.

A. I. Mikoyan says that as he sees it, the texts of the declarations must be agreed and then brought to the UN Security Council, since the Cuban issue is on its agenda. Thus, A. I. Mikoyan explains, we will bring to the Security Council a draft of the declaration, in which the issues on which we reached agreement will be shown, and the Security Council can take it into account or approve them, charging the sides to regulate peacefully the remaining unresolved issues.

We do not intend to strike up a debate between us in the Security Council. We want to come to an agreement beforehand both on the text of the declaration, and on the draft resolution of the Security Council.

J. Kennedy notes that Cuba cannot take part, and that we are talking about agreeing on declarations only of the USSR and the United States.

To Kennedy's remark that the Soviet Union seemingly does not particularly like the American draft of the declaration, A. I. Mikoyan says that this is the case.

J. Kennedy states that the Soviet Union has already removed missiles from Cuba and that soon it would remove the bombers. Besides, he hopes that the troops stationed for the defense of the missiles would be withdrawn, too. For its part, the United States lifted its blockade and announced that it would not support aggression against Cuba. Therefore, significant progress has

already been achieved. The issue about withdrawal of troops defending the missiles was not directly mentioned in Khrushchev's letter, but it was implied that it would be done. He believes that the rest of the troops and the remaining weapons would be withdrawn, too.

A. I. Mikoyan says that the president is mistaken; we will withdraw no more and no less than what was named by Khrushchev in his letter.

Further, he notes that the American draft of declaration was so far unsatisfactory, because it essentially undermines the noninvasion of Cuba given by the American president. By including in their draft the stipulation that the noninvasion guarantee would be in force as long as Cuba would refrain from "subversive activities" and would not undertake actions that would violate the security of other countries of Americas, the United States thus was trying to assign itself a right to interpret the actions of the Cuban government and put it under its own control. Who gave the United States that right? How can we agree to that? Castro told me, "What right does the U.S. president have to attack Cuba and at the same time to present the case in such a way as if he was doing a great public good by promising to give a guarantee not to invade it? Cuba is an independent country after all." I could not disagree with him.

The first part of the American declaration is acceptable overall, but we will suggest a somewhat different version. As regards the so-called subversive activities of Cuba, if we are to talk about Cuba's commitment not to engage in such actions, in which it is not engaged anyway, then the same obligations should be recorded for all of Cuba's neighbors. We have to stipulate mutual obligations—not to commit subversive acts and not to send mercenaries. Then it would be fair.

In the draft of the Soviet-Cuban protocol, there is one fairly difficult point for the United States: the issue of the liquidation of the base at Guantánamo. Castro agreed, and it has been

written down in the draft protocol—for now to begin the discussions on the time frame for the liquidation of the base. The rest of Castro's five points included in the protocol, from the point of view of international law, are elementary demands [sic]: Do not impose an economic embargo; take measures to prevent privacy; stop firing on hotels in Havana, as happened recently.

J. Kennedy said that he agrees, and that such actions are against the U.S. law. He noted that such sporadic action does not serve any practical purpose, but rather is done to cause a stir. The most important thing, he stressed, is that the United States is not preparing troops to invade Cuba. We declare, Kennedy said, that there will not be an invasion.

You said the other day that the arms of the imperialists will be tied. That is why when it comes to providing documents to the UN, we want to be particularly careful. It is not a question of two months, but of two or six years—in a word, while I am president. Besides which, who can guarantee that, let's say, in three years the Chinese will not put missiles and atomic weapons in Cuba, or you yourselves will not once again transfer them there. We need to be very cautious while working on such documents. We also need to recognize that Castro is not our friend.

The United States, although it would not intentionally attack Cuba, needs to assure the people of the Western Hemisphere that they have every guarantee that missiles will not be transferred to Cuba once again, and also that Cuba will not carry out subversive activities against neighboring countries. After all, Cuba could increase such an activity, relying on complete impunity, if the United States gives a formulated announcement of nonaggression.

A. I. Mikoyan confirms what he said, and considers that it was well said. We want to tie the hands of the imperialists in aggressive acts, but we do not plan to tie their hands in good activities.

J. Kennedy says, I think you know that we would not attack Cuba, but you want some public assurance in this regard. However, we must assure the people of the Western Hemisphere that there are no missiles in Cuba and that they have every guarantee that they will not be there again. I hope that we will succeed in resolving this issue either by achieving the agreement about onsite inspections, or by way of inspections by other methods, to trouble Castro as little as possible. I know that you and Castro are against our flights over Cuban territory, but right now there is no other way. This problem needs to be resolved. We need to have satisfactory means of verification, or we will continue our flights over Cuba.

Furthermore, Kennedy shows A. I. Mikoyan a clipping from the *New York Mirror* newspaper from November 28, in which there is a reference to “underground sources in Cuba,” and a list of places is given, including a cave where Soviet missiles are allegedly hidden, with a map attached. Kennedy asks how, in his place, A. I. Mikoyan would have reacted to such a note.

A. I. Mikoyan answers that it would have made me laugh.

J. Kennedy says that we believe you and we are also laughing.

A. I. Mikoyan says that they showed him this note in New York and that he said it had been intended for fools, but he hoped that there were not many of those in America. (Kennedy laughs at that.) As far as the missiles in Cuba are concerned, they have all been removed. Your newspapers established this fact and published aerial photographs of the dismantling of all missile installations, and your officers ascertained the removal of the missiles from Cuba on our ships. The continuous flights over Cuban territory only summon the completely understandable anger of the Cubans, and are a gross violation of Cuba’s sovereignty and of the UN Charter. I was told that with your equipment, you have been able to make intelligence surveys of Cuba’s

territory from the air while flying outside Cuba's air space. Thus it becomes clear that your flights over Cuba have as their goal only to insult Cubans by violating their sovereignty.

J. Kennedy says that the United States has no device allowing it to survey at such a big angle, so that the planes could be outside the 3-mile zone. Lately, he notes, our flights have not caused great worry to the Cubans, because they were done at very high altitudes, while low-altitude flights were ceased.

A. I. Mikoyan says that it is clear that the numerous and frequent low-altitude flights were simply hooliganism on the part of the United States, and the current high-altitude flights are also hooliganism, only at greater altitudes.

J. Kennedy repeats that in his opinion these infrequent high-altitude flights should not especially worry Castro.

A. I. Mikoyan notes that Castro still knows about these flights, and they irritate the Cubans because they present a violation of Cuba's sovereignty. The Cubans are a proud people; they have suffered enough in their history—Spanish and then U.S. domination, the military base, the Platt law, and now the U.S. press criticizes them every day. Indeed, how can you say that the United States has the right to conduct such flights, when the UN Charter outlines governments' obligation not to violate the sovereignty of other countries? If the United States has some fears about the future, then Castro and we can agree to international control, continues A. I. Mikoyan, but this international control must be multilateral and equal for all countries of the Caribbean. This corresponds to U Thant's last plan. Castro, naturally, rejects unilateral control. You write in the declaration that you intend to collect information through your means. If by this you mean flights over Cuban territory, then this is a violation of international law, and we cannot sign such a document, and Castro and the UN also cannot. Furthermore, the declaration states that

guarantees will be in effect under the condition that the Cuban side will not undertake subversive activities. How can this be reconciled with international law? If we are to talk about Cuba's commitment not to engage in such actions, in which it is not engaged anyway, then the same obligations should be recorded for all of Cuba's neighbors. Then it would be fair. The U.S. side's advancement of such a condition now, after it was not provided in the exchange of messages between the president and N. S. Khrushchev, in effect nullifies the obligation of nonaggression toward Cuba you provided.

J. Kennedy reads out the American draft, which states that the United States will guarantee nonaggression under the condition that there will be no offensive weapons in Cuba, and that Cuba will not threaten other countries. He asks: If Cuba does not plan to threaten other countries, then what here is unacceptable?

A. I. Mikoyan says that we are not disputing the point regarding the import of "offensive weapons." However, the above-mentioned condition on "the subversive actions of Cuba" is, in essence, a negation of the declaration of nonaggression.

J. Kennedy notes that he understands the Soviet side's concern regarding the formulations, but asks them to understand his position also. Kennedy says that he is being asked to take on the obligations or give guarantees, that is, "to tie his hands" for several years, no matter what Castro might do. I can give guarantees, he continues, only under the condition that there will be no nuclear weapons in Cuba. I am announcing that we will not attack Cuba, but we clearly understand that Castro is our enemy. At the same time, we are ready to meet N. S. Khrushchev halfway—just as he, I hope, is ready to meet us halfway. We do not want Castro to think that as soon as the declaration is signed he can do what he will in the Caribbean. I do not want Castro to think that he can do what he wants against other countries of the region.

A. I. Mikoyan says that it sounds like you want to have control over the actions of the Cuban government. On what grounds? If you are worried about his “subversive activity,” then let us take Castro’s offer—let’s come to an agreement on a multilateral base. You want to continue subversive work against Cuba and at the same time keep the “right” to attack Cuba should Castro want to respond in kind. This is a departure from the position stated in the exchange of messages. You say that Castro is your enemy. This is incorrect. You can turn him into your enemy by your own actions. He is proposing to you to lift the economic embargo of Cuba, and in general to normalize relations between the United States and Cuba. But you want to keep the economic embargo, as well as have the possibility of carrying out subversive activities against him. The messages talked about only one condition—the removal of “offensive weapons” and their not being reintroduced. Everything else is related to the sphere of normalizing relations. Castro states as much. You should reread his message to U Thant from November 26. Further, your draft references the Treaty of Rio de Janeiro. We think that this question is irrelevant to the present issue. It is not a subject of the discussions between the USSR and United States. Plus, you excluded Cuba from the inter-American system. Then what does this treaty have to do with this issue? A reference to the Treaty of Rio de Janeiro in the declaration is absolutely unjustified, and needs to be removed.

J. Kennedy notes that A. I. Mikoyan is talking about the United States’ departure from the initial position, but there is, he says, also a departure by the Soviet side. It also has not fulfilled all of its obligations. In N. S. Khrushchev’s message, Kennedy continues, it was stipulated that the dismantling and removal of missiles would be carried out under UN supervision. It is true that we agreed on a different verification method of the removal of these weapons. Further, it was said that there will be guarantees that such weapons will not be

imported in the future. But you could once again decide to bring them to Cuba. In the message, there was no mention of conducting inspections on U.S. territory. Right now you put forth this condition, even though you say nothing of inspections on the territory of the Soviet Union. The USSR and U.S. declarations have official status in the Security Council. Therefore the United States believes that as long as they are not provided adequate verification, they will have to carry it out by some other means. I want to be sure that the American people will not be made fools of again. How can I know that there are no missiles in Cuba and that they are not still being imported? What do I answer to such questions, to such criticism? It is necessary, first, to use our own means until a system of verification within the UN framework is organized; and second, we need to consider that we are tied by the position of the Treaty of Rio de Janeiro. I am prepared to give guarantees of nonaggression, but if the declaration is issued through the UN, we need to make a reference to that treaty. As for the guarantee of nonaggression, McCloy and Kuznetsov can return to this issue again in New York. But I have to stress that we may be asked whether we are remain tied by the Treaty of Rio de Janeiro. Also, we can be asked about how matters stand with the inspections. We need to have some way to make sure that press releases such as the article in the *New York Mirror* do not correspond to reality. Of course, I remember what I wrote to N. S. Khrushchev, but we expect that Castro will behave in a restrained manner, that he will not provoke us. If Castro focuses on public education and economic development, we will have no problems.

There remain the problems of verification and the format in which to provide the nonaggression guarantee. This could be done at a separate press conference or announcement. Kennedy continues that if the Soviet Union is not satisfied with a reference to the condition, under which the obligation of nonaggression toward Cuba will remain in force, and also a

reference to the Treaty of Rio de Janeiro, then the American side could soften some of the wording, but in this case sides' declarations would not be registered with the UN, but done in some other form, for example, as an announcement at press conferences in Washington and Moscow.

Again, if we cannot find a coordinated formula, then we can make a separate announcement at a press conference, in which I would clearly expound our political intentions in relation to Cuba based on the exchange of our messages with N. S. Khrushchev. We made such an announcement at the last press conference, saying that that we will not begin aggression towards Cuba and that we will not allow others to do so. I know that Khrushchev responded positively to this statement. I think that we already made considerable progress, and we could close this phase of the crisis. Meanwhile, let Kuznetsov and McCloy continue their discussions in the UN. If they do not succeed—and we should take into account the desirability of presenting coordinated documents to the UN Security Council in order to avoid unnecessary arguments—I could make some kind of statement, say, at a press conference. Chairman Khrushchev and I could make separate statements about what we achieved and what we did not achieve, and expound upon our plans—what measures need to be taken to reach an agreement. This would allow us to ease the situation and avoid a crisis in the UN. After this we could have time to “cool down.”

A. I. Mikoyan says that from this, I conclude that, contrary to our position, which is to complete the mutual settlement of the Cuban crisis as soon as possible and create a favorable atmosphere for the resolution of other issues, the United States, it seems, does not want to put out the fire and wants to avoid concluding the agreement reached in the exchange of messages.

J. Kennedy says that his interpreter must have misinterpreted his meaning.

A. I. Mikoyan says, that is what I thought.

J. Kennedy says that we have not swayed from the position stated in the letter from October 27. On the other hand, there was no UN verification of the dismantling and removal of missiles, to which the Soviet Union had agreed. Though, we later found other means to verify the removal of the missiles.

Kennedy continues that given the circumstances, namely, that the USSR could not completely fulfill its obligations, he is trying to be as understanding of the Soviet position as possible.

A. I. Mikoyan says, I disagree with the statement that the Soviet Union has not fulfilled its obligations. The Soviet Union did everything that was promised by Khrushchev on the part of inspections. These promises were made within the Soviet Union's rights as the owner of the missiles. As for ground inspections on Cuban territory, Khrushchev's letter from October 27, and again referenced in the letter from October 28, specifically stipulated that this can be done only with the consent of the Cuban government. We found a mutually satisfactory alternative, another way to monitor the removal of missiles. This was done with the participation of U Thant, acting as UN secretary-general. Therefore, we completed the dismantling and removal of the missiles under control in an agreed format. We fulfilled our obligations to you. Now it is already a fact of history. I would like to ask, do you want to move backward or forward? Presenting an array of conditions for Cuba cannot be seen as anything but a retreat from the guarantees of nonaggression. We are ready to go further, ready to add new conditions; however, everything has to be consistent with the spirit of the exchange of the messages. You can make any statement you like about the Treaty of Rio de Janeiro, but it is not a subject for inclusion in the declaration.

J. Kennedy notes that the messages did not say anything about a declaration. If you do not like the wording, Kennedy continues, then give us your wording. But we say directly that we will not attack Cuba. Castro needs to change his behavior.

A. I. Mikoyan says that Castro himself announced that he wants to live in peace and wants to have negotiations with the United States.

J. Kennedy points out, if this is the case, why cannot Castro agree to the U.S. wording?

A. I. Mikoyan says that conditions such as “if the government of Cuba does not . . .” would be offensive to any nation.

J. Kennedy says, but the statement about nonaggression is also unusual. Kennedy then asks whether N. S. Khrushchev would agree to the wording along the lines of: “This commitment will no longer be valid if nuclear weapons are brought into Cuba by China or any other country.”

A. I. Mikoyan says that this is a completely different issue, and does not have anything to do with us.

J. Kennedy says that the following points should be reflected in the declaration: The United States remains bound by the Treaty of Rio de Janeiro; the United States receives assurance that offensive weapons will not be imported to Cuba in the future; Castro can count on a nonaggression guarantee, if he refrains from subversive activities against his neighbors. Kennedy notes that Mikoyan spent a lot of time in Cuba, but to him, Kennedy, he is giving very little time. Therefore, it would be advisable to continue the negotiations between Kuznetsov and McCloy in New York. Kennedy adds that the Soviet Union should not be worried about an attack on Cuba. We, continues Kennedy, have still not succeeded in coming to an agreement on a system of guarantees that offensive weapons will not be brought to Cuba again. You oppose the

flights over Cuba, which we carry out for this purpose. Let us continue the negotiations, and perhaps we will find a coordinated decision.

Mikoyan says that he agrees with the spirit of the president's statements, but has to point out that the United States is attempting to raise other questions without having reached an agreement on the main issue. The main issue, as it was fixed in the exchange of messages, is the guarantee of nonaggression. We have fulfilled our obligations regarding the missiles and we will remove the bombers. It looks like it was easier to carry out the actual measures than to formulate them verbally. You cannot put forward new regulations as a condition of providing guarantees to Cuba; you cannot include positions about flights over Cuba without the consent of the Cuban government. The provisions for the normalization of the situation need to be common to all countries in the region. If Kennedy will give the appropriate instructions to McCloy and Stevenson, there will be a real possibility for progress in the negotiations. Mikoyan asks Kennedy: "What can I report to Khrushchev? Does the U.S. government still adhere to the language contained in the correspondence or not?"

Kennedy replies that the United States will not invade Cuba and that it will not depart from the position expounded in the messages, and he hopes that the Soviet Union will do the same. As I already said, continues Kennedy, the United States will not attack Cuba and will not allow anyone else to do it.

Mikoyan says, in connection with the president's mention of the statement at the last press conference, that in general the announcement made a positive impression on him, and that he heard from Comrade Khrushchev that he was of the same opinion.

Kennedy says that certain progress was already reached in the negotiations; let McCloy and Kuznetsov continue their work in New York. Kennedy notes that he and N. S. Khrushchev

understand each other and that he, Kennedy, will fulfill the obligations he assumed. But since his “hands will be tied,” he must pay extremely close attention to the wording of the documents.

Kennedy says that he would like to use the opportunity to touch upon a few questions related to Laos. Khrushchev and I reached an agreement on Laos, Kennedy goes on, and I attach a great deal of importance to the implementation of this agreement. I ask you to convey to N. S. Khrushchev that right now three points in the present situation in Laos reveal the violation of spirit of the aforementioned agreement, and this worries me. I am talking about the following:

<NL>

1. The “North Vietnamese troops” are still not removed from Laos.
2. Their infiltration into South Vietnam continues, reaching at the present time the level of 500 people a month.
3. Recently, on the Plain of Jars, over territory that is controlled by the forces of Pathet Lao, an American plane with foodstuffs was shot down despite the fact that the flight had Souvanna Phouma’s permission, and the fact that the plane was questioned from a local airport control tower and was cleared to continue the flight. Two Americans were killed.

It is important that incidents like these do not happen again.

<END NL>

Kennedy continues that the Laos issue is very important, because it relates to an actual agreement between him and N. S. Khrushchev. It is necessary that the sides carry fulfill their obligations. This ensures the success of negotiations on other international issues as well.

Mikoyan replies that the Soviet Union fulfilled and will continue to fulfill its obligations in Laos. The president should not have any doubts about this.

Kennedy notes further that the USSR and the United States for the most part made it through the Cuban crisis. But there is a risk that the interests of these two biggest and richest world powers can collide in other parts of the world and bring about the danger of a military conflict.

Mikoyan asks, wouldn't the president think that a nonaggression pact between the NATO and Warsaw Pact countries would serve these goals? This would ease the situation in one of the most important regions of the world—Europe.

Kennedy says that at a time when people in Latin America, China, and Asia are in need so much, it is silly for the Soviet Union and the United States to waste time and resources intimidating each other. In these conditions, even thirty nonaggression treaties would not help if the USSR considers revolutions in other countries to be their own business, not bearing in mind the United States' special interests in some regions of the world, for example, in Latin America.

Kennedy, returning to the issue of Soviet missiles in Cuba, asks Mikoyan in a half-joking, half-serious manner whether he would sleep peacefully if, let's say, 100 missiles positioned against the Soviet Union appeared in Finland unexpectedly.

Mikoyan replies that people in the USSR are sleeping peacefully despite the fact that very close, or more precisely right near his homeland of Armenia, there are American military bases in Turkey. The Soviet people know that these missiles are in the Americans' hands, and the

Americans are well informed about the response capabilities of Soviet missiles. Soon you will have to eliminate those bases.

Kennedy mentions that he is of the opinion that the missile bases in Turkey and Italy do not serve much of a purpose. For about twenty months, we have been considering whether it makes sense to keep these bases.

In conclusion of the conversation, Mikoyan conveys greetings and best wishes of health to Kennedy from Khrushchev.

Kennedy thanks him for the good wishes and asks Mikoyan to convey his best wishes to Khrushchev.

The conversation lasted three hours and fifteen minutes. Present were, from the Soviet side, the USSR ambassador to the United States, F. Dobrynin; and from the American side, the secretary of state, Dean Rusk, and the adviser to the president on Soviet affairs, L. Thompson. Yu. Vinogradov and I. Bubnov recorded the conversation. 2.XII.62.

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