

Memorandum of A. I. Mikoyan's Conversation with Comrades F. Castro, O. Dorticós,
E. Guevara, E. Aragonés, and C. R. Rodriguez

November 22, 1962

At the beginning of the conversation, which took place in the Presidential Palace, Fidel Castro asked A. I. Mikoyan what he did yesterday and inquired about his plans for the next several days.

A. I. Mikoyan briefly spoke about his trip out of town and, reminding [Castro] that Vilma Espín invited him to spend one or two days in Santiago, he asked whether Raul Castro had already returned to Havana.

F. Castro responded that Raul was still in Santiago, and that if Comrade Mikoyan wanted to go there, they should call Raul so that he would not leave Santiago.

A. I. Mikoyan agreed with that suggestion and asked what were the impressions of Comrade Fidel Castro and his comrades regarding President Kennedy's statement at the November 22 press conference.

F. Castro: Do you want to know my sincere opinion?

A. I. Mikoyan: Of course. Just like we always talk to each other.

F. Castro: Very bad.

A. I. Mikoyan: In what sense?

F. Castro: In every sense.

A. I. Mikoyan: You feel bad that the blockade was lifted?

F. Castro: No, that the blockade was lifted is not bad. It was bad that we lost the Il-28 planes. Right now we are preparing a response to Kennedy's statement at the press conference. We really don't like his statement that they are going to continue the air reconnaissance.

A. I. Mikoyan: Comrade Fidel, we have taught Kennedy to some extent. Did you notice the form of his statement?

F. Castro: I don't like the form either. He is stomping on the same [issues], like a bear in the circus.

A. I. Mikoyan: You are wrong, Comrade Fidel. Taking into account your wishes, N. S. Khrushchev sent Kennedy some "directives" so to speak, regarding his [forthcoming] speech. And if you examine the statement carefully, you will notice that its tone is very different from Kennedy's previous speeches on the Cuban issue.

F. Castro: I am still in a bad mood, because some points are still unclear to me. I am concerned, first of all, by Kennedy's statement that all nuclear weapons were removed from Cuba. Has the Soviet Union ever given such a promise? Is it true that all the tactical nuclear weapons are already removed?

A. I. Mikoyan: The Soviet government has not given any promises regarding the removal of the tactical nuclear weapons. The Americans do not even have any information that they are in Cuba.

F. Castro: So then the tactical nuclear weapons are here? And no assurances were given regarding their withdrawal?

A. I. Mikoyan: Not about tactical nuclear weapons.

F. Castro: Therefore, then, the weapons are here?

A. I. Mikoyan: Yes, they are here. They are in Comrade Pavlov's hands. These weapons are not offensive weapons. They can be used in the place of nuclear cannons.

F. Castro: If I am not mistaken, you refer to the weapons that we call Colina [*Kolina*]?

A. I. Mikoyan: Yes. And it can be used with two types of warheads—conventional and nuclear.

F. Castro: This kind of weapon makes one respect it.

A. I. Mikoyan: That is true. The power of the warhead is quite substantial, although the range is short.

F. Castro: I am also concerned with another issue. Judging by Kennedy's statement, it appears that the Soviet government assured the U.S. government that all the Soviet troops would be withdrawn from Cuba. Is that true?

A. I. Mikoyan: Americans knew the regions where the missiles were stationed; therefore, they also know the regions where the support troops are deployed.

F. Castro: And what is the number of support troops?

A. I. Mikoyan: Presently we have four support regiments in Cuba, 2,000 people each, and 8,000 people altogether. All their armaments and combat equipment, including tanks and armored vehicles, will be transferred to the Cubans. We should start thinking about the plan of withdrawal of the personnel. It is clear that the soldiers will be the first ones to be withdrawn, later officers, and then senior officers. We should do it in such a way so that the Soviet personnel have an opportunity to pass their skills of operating these weapons and equipment on to the Cuban personnel.

F. Castro: One more question. When we spoke with you, Comrade Mikoyan, in Varadero, I was very inspired about your concern about us. We need to sit down and have a good talk. This issue is not resolved yet, and we should discuss it in detail.

All we did in Varadero was a walk on the beach, but the question deserves serious discussion. I do not think that Kennedy believes that all the Soviet regiments in Cuba serve the purposes of supporting the missile. For example, there were no strategic missiles in the Oriente Province, but Soviet troops were deployed there as well. We thought that they would serve for destroying the paratrooper landing forces in the event of an invasion.

A. I. Mikoyan: Missiles were supposed to be delivered to the Oriente Province as well.

F. Castro: It means that all the Soviet troops are just support forces, then . . .

A. I. Mikoyan: No. The support forces consist of only four regiments, that is, 8,000 soldiers and officers. Altogether, there are 34,000 Soviet soldiers and officers in Cuba. Four regiments of the support battalion support one missile battalion.

We will start the withdrawal of the personnel in accordance with the timetable coordinated with you.

F. Castro: It would be better not to rush with the withdrawal of the Soviet troops. However, I am afraid the Americans will remind you about them soon.

A. I. Mikoyan: But they know whom they are dealing with. You see, the United States was screaming about the blockade, but there was no real blockade. Then it made noise that it would demand proof that the strategic weapons were removed from Cuba; it was saying that it would search the ships. And what came out of it? The Americans were scared of confrontation and limited themselves to visual observation. To be precise, they limited themselves to receiving our information—there was no real inspection. And what did they see? Boxes, kind of like coffins. But they still did not demand to inspect the ships.

F. Castro: I believe that the American guarantees have no great significance for us. There were no guarantees before October 22. The blockade existed [before], approximately the same. But we had the Il-28 bombers. Now our situation is even worse. We agreed to the withdrawal of the Il-28 bombers only in order to help the Soviet Union.

A. I. Mikoyan: No, Comrade Fidel. If we remind ourselves how we compared the Cuban situation in June of this year with its situation today, in November, we would see that it has improved in the military as well as in the political and diplomatic sense. Recall how the Americans were preparing an operation under the code name “Ortsac,” that is, “Castro” spelled backward. They were preparing to land 20,000 marines!

F. Castro: Well, the invasion was only hypothetical!

A. I. Mikoyan: And what would you say about the active preparations for the invasion in the Latin American countries?! You know well that the United States was preparing an invasion in mid-September under the guise of naval maneuvers.

F. Castro: We saw a possibility of an invasion even in October, but it was only a probability.

A. I. Mikoyan: It was you, Comrade Fidel, who informed us that a U.S. attack on Cuba was possible in the next twenty-four hours. The first goal of such an invasion could be to destroy the missiles, but the second would be an invasion.

F. Castro: I think that first of all there would have been a strike against the missile bases, and speaking about an invasion, it was much less probable.

I do not believe in an invasion. And I do not think that an invasion would have caused a world war. Such danger was present, it seems to me, at the moment when the Soviet missiles were discovered. Obviously, the Soviet military specialists did not undertake all necessary measures to camouflage the missiles. They should have used the anti-aircraft guided missiles against the U-2 from the very beginning to prevent them from discovering the missiles.

A. I. Mikoyan: I have already told you, Comrade Fidel, that when we received your telegram where you spoke about the danger of imminent invasion, we immediately gave Comrade Pavlov an order to bring the Soviet forces in Cuba to the highest combat readiness so that the Soviet soldiers and officers could fight together with the Cubans to repel the aggression. After all, we have a whole army here. If an invasion on the part of the Americans began, it would have led to a global confrontation.

F. Castro: Maybe. . . . However, I wrote my telegram to Khrushchev having in mind mainly [the possibility] that the Americans could deliver a strike against the missile bases. If I had known that he would make a decision to remove the missiles, I would not have written that.

And here is one more question that concerns me. We had no idea at all about the framework in which the strategic missiles could be used. We did not even know what measures were undertaken to prevent the enemy from discovering them. Why didn't we use the antiaircraft guided weapons, in order not to allow overflights of our territory by the U-2 planes? We were talking with you about the most solid defense, about having bases 90 miles from the United States, while at the same time we have not undertaken the necessary measures of camouflage. And it is understandable that the enemy had discovered the missiles. We relied on the Soviet military comrades—because they have both political and military experience—but what they did with the missiles was not at all what should have been done properly. We had a number of issues, which were still unclear to us when the missiles were already en route to Cuba. We practically did not know the framework of the achieved agreement.

C. R. Rodriguez: It turned out that we were speaking about solidarity, and not about a nuclear war.

F. Castro: It all began with the Soviet Marshal of the Rocket Forces [Sergey Biryuzov], promising us the missiles. We believed that the missiles were delivered to Cuba not in the interest of Cuba, because we did not need them. Then I gave my consent, thinking that we were fulfilling our duty to the socialist camp. We took the risk, believing that the socialist camp would also take the risk for us. We were even prepared for a nuclear war in the event if the Soviet Union was attacked. Now I can see that the Soviet government was not prepared to do the same for us.

A. I. Mikoyan: We were also prepared to make sacrifices for Cuba. The Americans were not as much afraid because we deployed our missiles in Cuba as they were afraid that we would transfer them to you.

F. Castro: Doesn't the Soviet Union transfer nuclear weapons to other countries?

A. I. Mikoyan: We have a law prohibiting the transfer of any nuclear weapons, including the tactical ones, to anybody. We never transferred it to anyone, and we did not intend to transfer it. The nuclear weapons, remaining in our hands, would be used in the event of a war to defend the entire socialist camp.

F. Castro: Would it be possible to leave the tactical nuclear weapons in Cuba in Soviet hands, without transferring them to the Cubans?

A. I. Mikoyan: No, Comrade Fidel, it would not be possible, because if there is not Soviet base in Cuba, then the Soviet officers will be acting only as advisers to the Cuban army. The Americans are not aware that the tactical nuclear weapons are here, and we are taking it out not because of the American demands, as you would think, but of our own will.

F. Castro: I understand you, Comrade Mikoyan. However, we thought that the jointly developed strategy is a factor in strengthening the ties between the countries of the socialist camp both in the political and psychological sense.

We are not afraid of responsibility. We understood the Soviet statements in their direct sense, not in a figurative sense. We did not think that you would choose the less dangerous option. If we had known about it, we would not have agreed to the deployment of Soviet missiles in Cuba.

A. I. Mikoyan: Are we returning to the first day, Comrade Fidel?

F. Castro: Maybe we have never left it.

A. I. Mikoyan: You have not learned anything?

F. Castro: We realize that you made a great deal of effort, Comrade Mikoyan, and we thank you for that.

A. I. Mikoyan: Let's not talk about it.

F. Castro: Good. But still, if one sums everything up, we still have not achieved the acceptance of the five points. We made concessions. It did not give us anything other than the lifting of the blockade.

A. I. Mikoyan: And what concessions have you made?

F. Castro: What do you think we are? A zero on the left, a dirty rag. We tried to help the Soviet Union to get out of a difficult situation.

A. I. Mikoyan: We did not allow inspections, we achieved the lifting of the blockade. . . .

F. Castro: We could not even shoot at the U-2. The Americans constantly violate our airspace when their planes take off from Guantánamo Base. The airfield is built in such a way that even if they did not want to violate [our airspace], they would violate it anyway. We repeatedly wrote about it and made protests. All this is very unpleasant for us. I am saying this to you with all sincerity.

A. I. Mikoyan: I value [your] sincerity. However, we see the results differently. It is a success that we achieved the lifting of the blockade. This is the assessment of the CC CPSU, of N. S. Khrushchev. He asked [me] to tell you about it, and also to give you his regards. Your letter to U Thant was published in *Pravda*, with the title "The Decision Should Be Acceptable to Everybody."

F. Castro: We are not taking responsibility for other people. If you say so, maybe [it is so]. (The interpreter, having heard this Fidel Castro's phrase incorrectly, translated it as "You say it as U Thant might have said it.")

A. I. Mikoyan: Why are comparing me with a bourgeois actor?

F. Castro: I did not compare you [to anybody].

Interpreter (asked Castro to repeat what he has said): My fault, Anastas Ivanovich; I did not hear it well. (Everybody laughs).

A. I. Mikoyan: I would like, comrades, to remind you about how the Soviet missiles were deployed in Cuba. The marshal of the rocket forces reported to N. S. Khrushchev that the missiles could be camouflaged in Cuba by stationing them in the palm forests and caves. N. S. Khrushchev gave an order that the missiles should be lowered to the horizontal position in the daytime and carefully camouflaged, and that they would be raised to the combat position only in the nighttime. It was planned to make public the fact of the missiles' deployment in Cuba at an

appropriate time, when all the assembly work would have been completed. Only then they would be able to play a real deterrent role. However, apparently our military acted incorrectly. It turned out that there are practically no palm forests in Cuba, and it was almost impossible to camouflage the missiles.

F. Castro: I accidentally saw the missiles in the combat position during one of my trips. But, to tell you the truth, nobody ever invited me to look at the missiles. I truly familiarized myself with the missiles only after they were dismantled. I think not all possible means were used for the purposes of camouflage. We could have built fake buildings or fake storage structures. For example, the kind of buildings that we use for birdhouses [on poultry farms], in my view, would be very suitable for hiding the missiles in the horizontal position. It could also have been done so that the buildings, which housed the missiles, would have removable roofs. Those roofs would slide back only for the time when the use of the missiles was probable. The rest of time they would have stayed closed.

A. I. Mikoyan: It is true; our military, obviously, failed to take into account the great skills of the Cuban architects.

F. Castro: It was also possible to use light tents, which we use for covering the tobacco plantations, and to camouflage the missiles. You probably saw them, Comrade Mikoyan, in Pinar del Rio Province.

A. I. Mikoyan: Yes, I've seen them.

F. Castro: It was very important not to allow the missiles to be photographed, and we had the capacity to do so. We are engaged in extensive construction in the countryside. The palm trees could have been transplanted.

A. I. Mikoyan: Of course, they could have been transplanted. But it is too late to discuss it now.

F. Castro: Unfortunately, we abstained from asking questions, because the plan was prepared in the Soviet Union. Of course, we know much less about the military issues than you do. But we know our geographic conditions, and our resources, much better than you. And that, of course, offended us.

A. I. Mikoyan: I understand you. Comrade Raul also was telling me about it.

F. Castro: Let us turn to a different issue now.

A. I. Mikoyan: I agree.

F. Castro: Did you inform Moscow that we are very interested in the issue of the military agreement?

A. I. Mikoyan: Yes, I informed N. S. Khrushchev about my conversation with you. He approved my idea that I should hear your opinion—although I have no authority, and I do not feel prepared to conduct negotiations on military issues—and report it to the CC CPSU.

F. Castro: It would be very good for us to have a military assistance treaty with the Soviet Union, like the ones the Soviet Union has with other countries of socialism, and to have Soviet troops here.

A. I. Mikoyan: In principle, we are against having our troops or bases in other countries. Some time ago, we had military bases in Finland. In China, we had a military base in Port Arthur. Neither the Finns nor the Chinese demanded that we close those. We made the decision to dismantle them ourselves. At the present time, we have no bases abroad.

F. Castro: You had a submarine base in Albania.

A. I. Mikoyan: Yes, we did; but then we liquidated it as well. You cannot hide military bases, but you can easily hide nuclear warheads. For example, there are American bases in Turkey. But we keep them constantly under the observation of our radio locators [radar installations —ed.]. We have missiles targeted at those bases.

F. Castro: Do you demand that the United States remove the bases in Turkey? (The interpreter could not hear the phrase well, and translated it as “Would the United States demand liquidation of your bases targeted at Turkey?”)

A. I. Mikoyan: Comrade Fidel, and you say this after the forty-fifth anniversary of the Great October?!

(It turns out that it was the interpreter’s mistake. The mistake causes some agitation.)

A. I. Mikoyan: When the conditions are ripe, we will raise the issue of liquidation of all American bases abroad. And we will achieve that!

To prove how accurate our long-range missiles are I can remind you, comrades, that already four years in a row we have been conducting tests of our long-range missiles by targeting them to a certain region in the Pacific Ocean at a distance of 13,000 kilometers. The missiles drop [hit the target] precisely in the assigned region. Soviet ships deployed in that area observe the accuracy of the hit, and American ships come there as well. What can you do? Those are international waters! This example tells you that if we can strike a target in an assigned region of the Pacific Ocean with great accuracy, then we can easily deliver even more precise strikes against any American bases located at shorter distances.

The Americans do not have such missiles.

F. Castro: So you have a law that prohibits transfer of tactical nuclear weapons [along with other nuclear weapons] to other countries? It’s a pity. And when are you going to repeal that law?

A. I. Mikoyan: We will see. It is our right [to do so].

F. Castro: So you can deliver accurate strikes at the U.S. targets using your missiles from the Soviet territory?

A. I. Mikoyan: Yes, we can. However, if we strike at the United States, it would naturally cause an American strike against Cuba.

F. Castro: In the event of a world war, nuclear missiles will strike you, too.

A. I. Mikoyan: Naturally. The weapons, which will be transferred to you from Comrade Pavlov, will have great importance for the defense of Cuba in the present conditions. For example, you have T-34 tanks; Pavlov has the newest T-55 tanks. The cannons of these tanks are equipped with a gyroscopic mechanism, which would ensure the accuracy of targeted fire while the tank is moving. This is our most modern machine.

F. Castro: And the Soviet Union will transfer all Comrade Pavlov's weapons to us?

A. I. Mikoyan: Nuclear, no; all the rest, yes.

F. Castro: And what will happen with the military agreement?

A. I. Mikoyan: It is always easier to ask questions than to answer them. I already told you that I am going to inform the CC CPSU and Comrade Khrushchev. I think that your decisive position against any inspections in a certain sense turned out to be even useful for Cuba and for your prestige in the countries of Latin America. The American press writes that one cannot make a puppet out of Cuba. If it were possible to achieve multilateral controls in the region of the Caribbean Sea, it would be quite useful for Cuba.

F. Castro: We usually agree with your proposals.

A. I. Mikoyan: When the issue of creating our missile base in Cuba was raised for the first time, F. R. Kozlov told me jokingly: we should not agree to a base—for us it would be as some sort of handcuffs in Latin America.

F. Castro: But the decision was made anyway. We appreciate it.

A. I. Mikoyan: The emergency measures have been lifted in the Soviet Union. The same is being done in the United States. Are you, Comrade Fidel, planning to call demobilization? Not a full [demobilization], of course. In your circumstances, it is always necessary to maintain armed forces capable of repelling the enemy's incursions.

F. Castro: We also plan to do it. By the way, Comrade Mikoyan, I have one more question. Where could I buy bombers?

A. I. Mikoyan: We already spoke about MiG-21 planes. These planes are capable of carrying out all kinds of combat tasks, beginning from air combat, including storming of enemy troops and ships, and up to bombing concentrations of enemy forces. This is the most modern fighter; it is greatly superior to MiG-17 and MiG-19 planes. Of course, it cannot be used for bombing Chicago, but in the Caribbean Sea it can be used successfully. As far as Il-28s are concerned, you know yourself that they are outdated. Presently, it is best to use them as a target plane.

F. Castro: And why did you send them to us then?

A. I. Mikoyan: Accompanied by fighters, they can be used as means of defense.

F. Castro: Maybe we could use them to defend our commercial fishing ships?

A. I. Mikoyan: It doesn't make sense.

F. Castro: Our army, after it receives your equipment, which is present here, will become very strong. These forces will enable us to create a solid defense, but we believe that it is not enough. It would be good to have some means of deterrence.

The Soviet troops, of course, should be removed from Cuba gradually. Of course, it will have to be done because they bother the imperialists. Ultimately, we will cut the number of the Soviet personnel in Cuba to the minimum. We could, using our terminology, call the Soviet military advisers "specialists."

A. I. Mikoyan: I agree.

F. Castro: If we could ensure peace, then even the minimal number of military advisers would be enough. But I would like to repeat it—we are asking you not to rush with the troop withdrawal. We believe that our troops only cannot be counted upon as a deterrent. At the present time, the new conditions have emerged: The military agreement concluded by us continues to be in force, but the Soviet troops have to be withdrawn. It would be desirable to send a mission from Moscow to conduct negotiations on working out a new treaty, or to receive a Cuban mission in Moscow.

All the European socialist countries have military agreements with the Soviet Union. If we could also sign a new military agreement, then it would emerge as a strong deterrent factor, which together with the modern weapons received from you would greatly enhance Cuba's defense readiness. If we sign a military agreement with you, then we will be in the same situation as the rest of the European socialist countries.

A. I. Mikoyan: Comrade Fidel, do you have the Warsaw Pact in mind?

F. Castro: No. I am thinking about a bilateral military agreement.

A. I. Mikoyan: I have not thought about this aspect of the issue; I do not have the authority, and I do not feel myself prepared for conducting such negotiations. However, we should think about your proposal; obviously, such negotiations would be useful. I will report about it to the CC CPSU upon my return to Moscow.

F. Castro: If we replace the existing agreement with an agreement of a different type, then I think that the imperialism would not be able to use that fact as a political weapon against Cuba and the Soviet Union. At the same time, such a step on the part of the Soviet Union would considerably strengthen the trust of the Cuban people as well as of all the peoples of Latin America toward the Soviet Union. Besides, the imperialists would not be able to exploit the existing situation.

A. I. Mikoyan: As you know, N. S. Khrushchev said that we understand the responsibility of the Soviet Union for the defense of Cuba against the imperialist aggression.

F. Castro: I remember that the marshal of the Rocket Forces spoke to the effect that we should not limit ourselves to a declaration alone. We believe that it would be useful to sign a mutual defense agreement with the Soviet Union.

A. I. Mikoyan: We will do everything in order to strengthen the Cuban defenses. As far as deterrence means are concerned, they are located on Soviet territory. N. S. Khrushchev has already said that the missiles, which are being withdrawn from Cuba, would be targeted at Berlin.

Cuba has been recognized as a socialist state. We are forcing the imperialists to recognize the GDR [German Democratic Republic, i.e., East Germany] de facto. We are ready to try and achieve conclusion of a nonaggression pact between the Warsaw Pact and NATO. However, the American are scared of that. They are afraid that a pact of that nature could exert a significant influence in terms of relaxation of international tension.

F. Castro: Comrade Mikoyan, it would be very important for us to feel the shield in the form of a military agreement. We would ask [beg] the Soviet Union not to hurry with the withdrawal of troops.

A. I. Mikoyan: We are not in a hurry.

F. Castro: It would be good if you would not hurry with the withdrawal of the support forces either.

A. I. Mikoyan: So far, we have not started withdrawing them.

F. Castro: We are currently preparing a statement, which will be signed by the Revolutionary Government and by the ORO national leadership, and which will represent our response to the Kennedy statement at the press conference. In this statement, we will present our point of view, and we will emphasize that it is not ourselves but the Americans who bear responsibility for the tensions that developed in the Caribbean Basin, and that Cuba is not interfering with the progress toward the settlement—therefore, the version about Cuba allegedly opposing the negotiations does not correspond to the reality.

E. Guevara: This statement will be written in a calm, positive tone.

A. I. Mikoyan: Approximately in the same tone as your letter to U Thant from November 19 was written?

F. Castro: Approximately like that. I am concerned about the fact that as far as I can see, in the Soviet Union, there is very little information about what is happening in Latin America.

A. I. Mikoyan: What can we do? Our ambassador here is very young.

F. Castro: We have a very good rapport with Alejandro (talking about Alexeyev).

A. I. Mikoyan: We are satisfied with Ambassador Alexeyev. Comrade Kudryavtsev is a good diplomat, but he was not appropriate for Cuba.

F. Castro: Comrade Kudryavtsev is a good person; he always tries to do good. We respect him. However, he follows protocol, the tradition, too much. In a revolutionary country, it is better when the diplomat does not follow the protocol. Like we are talking here with you, very simple.

A. I. Mikoyan: I told N. S. Khrushchev—Alexeyev is still an immature diplomat, but the Cubans, as far as I can see, like him. N. S. Khrushchev accepted this proposal. And it was the right thing to do. I think that Cuba does not need a career diplomat as Ambassador right now.

F. Castro: I would like to say something about General [Aleksey] Dementiev. He is a wonderful person. He did so much in order to raise the level of combat readiness of our armed forces; he understands us perfectly, and he is a good revolutionary.

A. I. Mikoyan: I am glad that you like Comrade Dementiev, and that he was able to find the common language with you. I would like to say a couple of words about the commander of the group of Soviet Forces in Cuba, whom you know under the name of Pavlov. His real name is Pliev. I have known him since 1924. He served in the military school then, where Comrade Grechko, who is now marshal, was a cadet as well. Comrade Pavlov is a very good commander, and he has perfect nerves.

F. Castro: I had very little contact with Comrade Pavlov, but I worked constantly with Dementiev. He devotes a lot of energy to his work with the officer corps. We worked very closely together after the Playa Giron. It is bad that your officers come without their families.

A. I. Mikoyan: We only send officers with their families to the GDR [German Democratic Republic, i.e., East Germany], but there they have to serve for three years.

F. Castro: Maybe you should reconsider this procedure for Cuba as well. The Soviet comrades helped us a lot in creating a good army. At the present time, we have strong and well-organized military units. Officers from Spain also provide great assistance.

A. I. Mikoyan: [You mean] the Spanish comrades from the Soviet Union?

F. Castro: Yes. Please pass our gratitude on to Comrade [Dolores] Ibarruri.

A. I. Mikoyan: I will definitely do it.

F. Castro: Our people did not like the decision to withdraw the Il-28 planes from our territory. We anticipated that [reaction], and so we published it in small print. We tried not to do anything that could harm our common cause. Of course, we defended our point of view. But we always, when there was an opportunity, tried to do everything in our power to make it easier for the Soviet Union.

A. I. Mikoyan: We also try to do everything in order to help you. And even in those cases when something is not quite right, we always maintain our trust in you, our confidence in your honesty. It reassures us.

F. Castro: Well, I cannot always manage to stay calm. I lost my nerve twice, and I think it was not the interpreter's fault, but Mikoyan's.

A. I. Mikoyan: I agree.

F. Castro: What is Comrade Khrushchev writing to you?

A. I. Mikoyan: He is writing that he is satisfied, and that he sends his best regards to you and your comrades. The letter is calm, and confident in our power. He tells me that I should make the decision regarding the timing of my return myself. I think to stop by in New York on the way back, to have an official meeting with U Thant, to talk with him during the dinner at the U.N., to exchange opinions. I think I will also meet with McCloy.

F. Castro: Stevenson will be there, too?

A. I. Mikoyan: Quite possibly. He is my "old friend." I should feel him out, put some pressure [on him]. Probably I will also meet with Ambassador Thompson. I think he will ask for a meeting with me. If they ask me to meet with Dean Rusk, I will not object either. A meeting with Kennedy is a possibility as well. I would like to stay in New York for one day only. However, I might extend my stay there if necessary. And then—straight home.

I am thinking of leaving Havana on Monday, November 26, in the morning. I would be willing to make a TV statement before the departure. In addition, I will put a wreath at the José Martí monument.

F. Castro: It would be good if you could emphasize the Soviet Union's willingness to help Cuba in the future in your TV statement.

A. I. Mikoyan: Of course, I was thinking about saying that. Comrade Fidel, maybe our comrades could let Comrade Raul Castro know that I am flying to Santiago?

F. Castro: There is no need to do it, we will let him know ourselves. It is quite possible that Raul will return to Havana with you. The tensions are going down; we will start demobilization soon. The Americans have ceased their ground-shaving flights.

Ambassador Alexeyev A. I. was present at the conversation. The conversation lasted four hours. Recorded by V. E. Tikhmenev.

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