

November 5, 1962

Conversation between the Cuban Leadership and Mikoyan

Citation:

"Conversation between the Cuban Leadership and Mikoyan", November 5, 1962, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Institute of History, Cuba, obtained and provided by Philip Brenner (American University); translation from Spanish by Carlos Osorio (National Security Archive) <https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/111215>

Summary:

During Mikoyan's visit to Cuba, the Cuban leadership explains its position following the Missile Crisis. Fidel Casto suggests that, while the Cuban leadership still believes that the Soviet Union is sincere in its desire to protect the Cuban Revolution, mistakes had been made during the crisis. The Soviet decision to withdraw the weapons should was based on the exchanges between the Soviet leadership and US President John F. Kennedy, not on the previous agreements between the USSR and Cuba. Castro suggests that the USSR could chose to go back on its security guarantees to Cuba in order to safeguard the peace, but that the Cubans will resist American aggression nevertheless. The document only contains the Cuban responses to Mikoyan, without the Soviet leader's answers.

Original Language:

Spanish

Contents:

Translation - English

Conversation between the Secretariat and Mikoyan on Monday, 5 November at three in the afternoon.

After hearing Mikoyan, Fidel says:

We consider that the intentions of the Soviet Government cannot be determined only by the analysis of what happened in face of an unforeseen situation. Instead, they should be analyzed taking into account the set of agreements we have reached - the weapons were brought under those precepts. One of them is the military agreement that was to be published once all the weapons were brought in and once the Elections were held in the United States. These agreements represent a firm desire of the Soviet Union.[\[1\]](#)

That is why this has to be analyzed under the light of what we intended to do and not under the light of what happened.

If all the steps were carried out, we have no doubt that they would have served as a containment to the plans of the North Americans to attack our country. And the objectives of the Soviet Government and Cuba would have been attained.

At the same time, we knew that the deployment of missiles in Cuba had in sight the defense of the Socialist Camp. They were important not only in military terms, but also from a psychological and political point of view. Besides serving the interests of Cuba, they served the interests of the Socialist Camp as a whole, and we evidently agreed with that. That is how we have understood the step taken, and we also understand it was a step in the right direction. We also agree with the need that a war be avoided and we do not oppose that. In this case, all the measures oriented to attain the two objectives were undertaken. We are in absolute agreement with the goals sought by the Soviet Union, the misunderstandings arise as a result of the way they were attained. We also understand that the circumstances were compelling. They were not one hundred percent normal.

In assessing how the events occurred, we think they could have been dealt with differently. For instance, one thing discussed is the impact that my letter had on the Soviet Government's decision of the [October] 28th. And it is evident that my letter had nothing to do with the course of the events - given the messages that were exchanged between the Soviet and North American Governments on the 26 and 27. My letter's only goal was to inform the Soviet Government of the imminent attack, and it did not contain any hesitation on our part. Furthermore, we expressed that we did not expect an invasion. We expressed that the invasion was possible, but we understood that it was the least probable variant. The most probable event was an aerial attack to destroy the strategic weapons.

The Soviet Government's decision on the 28, is based on the letter to Kennedy and the response on the 27. The real basis for the 28 decision lies within these two documents. Kennedy's letter on the 28 was an agreement to the proposals Khrushchev sent on the 26 - in the sense that he [Khrushchev] was willing to resolve the issue of all the weapons if the U.S. ceased the aggression. The aggression was the only reason for the military strengthening of Cuba.

Once Kennedy accepted this proposal - which we did not know of - the conditions were set to carry it out starting with a declaration by the Soviets stating that their side was on board and that they would proceed to discuss it with the Cuban Government.

I think that such a declaration, instead of communicating an order to withdraw the Strategic Weapons, would have decreased the tension and would have allowed to carry the discussions in better terms.

But this is a mere analysis of what happened, it does not matter now. What matters

now is simply to know what to do and how to attain the main goals that are to stop the aggression and to secure the peace at the same time. If a true and effective peace are attained in the near future, then - under the light of the recent events - we will be able to judge better the steps taken. The future outcome - for which we need to struggle - will either credit or discredit the value of the acts of the present. It is evident that attaining that outcome does not depend so much on us. We are very grateful for all the explanations given and of the effort made for us to understand the things that occurred. We know they happened in abnormal circumstances. There is no question in our minds about the respect of the Soviet Union toward us, the respect of the Soviet Union for our sovereignty, and, the help of the Soviet Union. That is why what is important to discuss is what are the steps to take in the future. We want to reaffirm our trust in the Soviet Union.

COMMENTS OF MIKOYAN (transcribed by Dorticos)

Carlos Rafael: It is my understanding that companero Mikoyan talked about the inspection of the Soviet ships as a Minimum Minimum. But that inspection would take place in a Cuban harbor. They could well then request the inspection of other sites in Cuba - the forests for instance. They can claim that the missiles could have been diverted from their route between the base and the ships.

FIDEL: How would the inspection they propose take place?

Mikoyan: (transcribed by Dorticos)

FIDEL: Couldn't they do the same on the high seas? What is the difference?

Mikoyan: (transcribed by Dorticos)

FIDEL: Tell companero Mikoyan that I understand very well the interest of keeping U Thant on our side, but for us, that is a critical issue. It would have a disastrous effect on our people. The North Americans say that the inspection is inferred from the letter from Khrushchev to Kennedy on the 28 (Fidel is making reference to the letter of Khrushchev on the 27 where he accepts the inspection of the Missiles Bases by officials of the UNO Security Council, but making reference to Cuba and Turkey agreeing to it). [note in original--ed.]

Just because of this phrase of Khrushchev, they cannot take this as a concession of the Soviet Union. Companero Mikoyan says to hell with imperialists if they demand more. But on the 23 we received a letter [from Khrushchev] saying, to hell with the imperialists...(he reads paragraphs from the letter). Besides, on one occasion we heard of the proposal of U Thant about the inspection in Cuba, the United States, Guatemala, etc., we understand, that concessions should be made, but we have already made too many. The [U.S.] airplanes are taking pictures because the Soviet Union asked so. We have to find a way to provide evidence without inspection. WE DO NOT THINK OF ALLOWING THE INSPECTION, BUT WE DO NOT WANT TO ENDANGER WORLD PEACE, NOR THE SOVIET FORCES THAT ARE IN CUBA. WE WOULD RATHER FREE THE SOVIET UNION OF THE COMMITMENTS IT HAS [MADE] WITH US AND RESIST WITH OUR OWN FORCES WHATEVER THE FUTURE BRINGS. WE HAVE NO RIGHT TO ENDANGER THE PEACE OF THE WORLD, BUT WE HAVE THE RIGHT TO RESIST AGGRESSION. [capitals in original-ed.]

DORTICOS: What has been expressed by companero Fidel does not require a later discussion among us, for we all agree on this criteria (the companeros respond affirmatively)

MIKOYAN (Transcribed by Dorticos)

FIDEL: From our conversation yesterday, we had concluded that the Soviet Government understood the reasons we had to reject the inspection. That was a fundamental issue. That should have been the common ground to talk about common actions. If we do not agree on this, it is difficult to talk about future plans. That is the fundamental political issue. The North Americans persist in obtaining a political victory. The issue of the inspection is to affront the Cuban Revolution. They know there are no missiles. The verification on the high seas has the same effect as in the harbors. The only difference is the humiliating imposition that the U.S. Government wants to carry out for political reasons.

MIKOYAN: (transcribed by Dorticos)

[\[1\]](#) For the text of the draft agreement, translated from a copy in the Russian archives, see Gen. Anatoli I. Gribkov and Gen. William Y. Smith, *Operation ANADYR: U.S. and Soviet Generals Recount the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Chicago: edition q, inc., 1994), 185-8.