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## Notes of Conversation between A.I. Mikoyan and Fidel Castro

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## Summary:

Soviet Ambassador to Cuba Alexeev reports on the conversation between Mikoyan and Fidel Castro. The Cuban leader expresses his disappointment that the Cuban leadership was not consulted on the issue of withdrawing Soviet weapons from Cuba and on the Cuban Missile Crisis in general, and emphasizes the negative impact it has had and confusion it has caused on the Cuban people.

## Original Language:

Russian

## Contents:

Translation - English

NOTES OF CONVERSATION BETWEEN A.I. MIKOYAN and FIDEL CASTRO This morning a two-hour conversation took place between comrade A.I. Mikoyan and Fidel Castro, where I [Soviet Ambassador to Cuba Aleksandr Alekseev] was also present. 3 November 1962... Unfortunately, A.I. Mikoyan said, some differences of opinion have arisen between the leadership of the Republic of Cuba and our leadership. Ambassador Alekseev has informed us about these differences, and about the speech by Fidel Castro on 1 November 1962, in which the latter explained to the Cuban people the position of the revolutionary government. The CC CPSU, Mikoyan emphasized, had sent me to Cuba to discuss in the most frank way all the unclear questions with the Cuban comrades. Judging by the welcome at the airport, the Cuban leaders consider this a useful meeting. I came here to speak to you sincerely and openly. And now it seems to me that it would be useful if you, comrade Fidel Castro, tell me frankly what the questions are that worry you. Only by speaking frankly is it possible to assure complete confidence and mutual understanding. As we agreed before, after this conversation a meeting will be organized with the secretaries of the National CDR [Committees for the Defense of the Revolution] leadership in order to discuss all the issues in detail. In response Fidel Castro said that the Cuban leadership was glad to see A.I. Mikoyan in Cuba once again, and to speak with him about questions that are important for both sides. We are aware, joked Fidel Castro, that N.S. Khrushchev once said: "there is a Cuban in the CC CPSU and this Cuban is A.I. Mikoyan." We can speak to you, Fidel Castro continued, very frankly. We profoundly trust the Soviet Union. Regarding the questions that caused some differences, as we explained it to our people, I [Castro] would like to say the following. These questions are motivated, first of all, by psychological factors. I would like to stress that in those days when a serious danger arose, our whole people sensed a great responsibility for the fate of the motherland. Every nerve of the people was strained. There was a feeling that the people were united in their resolve to defend Cuba. Every Cuban was ready to repel the aggressors with arms in hand, and ready to devote their lives to the defense of their country. The whole country was united by a deep hatred of USA imperialism. In those days we did not even arrest anyone, because the unity of the people was so staggering. That unity was the result of considerable ideological work carried out by us in order to explain the importance of Soviet aid to Cuba, to explain the purity of the principles in the policy of the USSR. We spoke with the people about the high patriotic objectives we were pursuing in obtaining arms to defend the country from aggression. We said that the strategic weapons were a guarantee of firmness for our defense. We did not classify the arms as defensive and offensive, insofar as everything depends on the objectives for which they are used... [Ellipsis in original.] Speaking of psychological questions, we would like to underline that the Cuban people did understand us. They understood that we had received Soviet weapons, that Cuban defense capacities had increased immeasurably. Thus, when Kennedy attempted to frighten us, the Cuban people reacted very resolutely, very patriotically. It is hard to imagine the enthusiasm, the belief in victory with which the Cubans voluntarily enlisted themselves into the army. The people sensed enormous forces inside themselves. Aware of the real solidarity of the Soviet government and people, Cubans psychologically felt themselves to be strong. The Soviet Union's solidarity found its material embodiment, became the banner around which the forces and courage of our people closely united. In observing Soviet strategic arms on their territory, the people of Cuba sensed an enormous responsibility to the countries of the socialist camp. They were conscious that these mighty weapons had to be preserved in the interests of the whole socialist camp. Therefore, regardless of the fact that USA planes were continuously violating our air space, we decided to weaken the anti-aircraft defense of Havana, but at the same time strengthen the defense of the missile locations. Our people proudly sensed their role as a defender of the socialist countries' interests. Anti-aircraft gunners and the soldiers protecting the missile locations were full of enthusiasm, and ready to defend these at the price of their own lives. The tension of the situation was growing, and the psychological tension was growing also. The whole of Cuba was ready for defense...[Ellipsis in original.] And suddenly--concessions...[Ellipsis in original.] Concessions on the part of the Soviet Union produced a sense of oppressiveness. Psychologically our people were not prepared for that. A feeling of deep disappointment, bitterness and pain has appeared, as if we were deprived of not only the missiles, but of the very symbol of solidarity. Reports of missile launchers being dismantled and returned to

the USSR at first seemed to our people to be an insolent lie. You know, the Cuban people were not aware of the agreement, were not aware that the missiles still belonged to the Soviet side. The Cuban people did not conceive of the juridical status of these weapons. They had become accustomed to the fact that the Soviet Union gave us weapons and that they became our property. And suddenly came the report of the American [news] agency UPI that "the Soviet premier has given orders to Soviet personnel to dismantle missile launchers and return them to the USSR." Our people could not believe that report. It caused deep confusion. People didn't understand the way that the issue was structured--the possibility of removing missile armaments from Cuba if the USA liquidated its bases in Turkey. I was saying, Fidel Castro continued, that in the post-revolutionary years we have carried out much ideological work to prepare people for understanding socialist ideas, marxist ideas. These ideas today are deeply rooted. Our people admire the policies of the Soviet government, learn from the Soviet people to whom they are deeply thankful for invaluable help and support. But at that difficult moment our people felt as if they had lost their way. Reports on 28 October that N.S. Khrushchev had given orders to dismantle missile launchers, that such instructions had been given to Soviet officers and there was not a word in the message about the consent of the Cuban government, that report shocked people. Cubans were consumed by a sense of disappointment, confusion and bitterness. In walking along the street, driving to armed units, I observed that people did not understand that decision. Why was that decision made unilaterally, why are the missiles being taken away from us? And will all the weapons be taken back? -- these were the questions disturbing all the people. In some 48 hours that feeling of bitterness and pain spread among all the people. Events were rapidly following one another. The offer to withdraw weapons from Cuba under the condition of liquidating bases in Turkey was advanced on 27 October. On 28 October there came the order to dismantle the missiles and the consent to an inspection. We were very worried by the fact that the moral spirit of our people had declined sharply. That affected their fighting spirit too. At the same time the insolent flights of American planes into Cuban airspace became more frequent, and we were asked not to open fire on them. All of this generated a strong demoralizing influence. The feeling of disappointment, pain and bitterness that enveloped people could have been used by counter-revolutionaries to instigate anti-soviet elements. Enemies could have profitted because the legal rules about which we had been speaking with the people were being forgotten. The decision was made without consultation, without coordinating it with our government. Nobody had the slightest wish to believe it, everyone thought it was a lie. ... Since then our people began to address very sensitively the matter of sovereignty. Besides, after the current crisis the situation remained juridically constant, as the "status quo" did not change: 1. The blockade organized by the USA administration is still in place. The USA continues to violate the freedom of the sea. 2. The Americans seek to determine what weapons we can possess. Verification is being organized. The situation is developing in the same direction as it is or was in Morocco, Guinea, Ghana, Ceylon and Yemen. 3. The USA continues to violate Cuban airspace and we must bear it. And moreover, the consent for inspections has been given without asking us. All of this seemed to our people to be a step backward, a retreat. It turns out that we must accept inspections, accept the right of the USA to determine what kinds of weapons we can use. Our revolution rests firmly on the people. A drop in moral spirit can be dangerous for the cause of revolution. The Soviet Union consolidated itself as a state a long time ago and it can carry out a flexible policy, it can afford maneuvering. The Soviet people readily understand their government, trust it wholeheartedly. Cuba is a young developing country. Our people are very impulsive. The moral factor has a special significance in our country.

We were afraid that these decisions could provoke a breach in the people's unity, undermine the prestige of the revolution in the eyes of Latin American peoples, in the eyes of the whole world. ... It was very difficult for us to explain the situation to the people. If the decisions had been taken in another way, it would have been easier. If a truce were suggested first and then the issues were coordinated, we would have been in a better position. Comrade A.I. Mikoyan made an observation that the threat of aggression was so critical, that there was no time for consultations. ... Then for half an hour A.I. Mikoyan discussed the issues about which Fidel

Castro had talked, but these explanations were interrupted by an incoming report about the death of Mikoyan's wife. The transcript of this part of the conversation will be transmitted with the notes of the next conversation. 3.XI.62 ALEKSEEV