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Telegram from Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko to the CC CPSU

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Summary:

Gromyko relays the results of a meeting with Dean Rusk where the two discuss Cuba, issues in Latin America and American acts or aggression toward Cuba.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

On October 18 a conversation with Rusk took place. Rusk, continuing my conversation with Kennedy, touched on the Cuba issue. He said, that President Kennedy considers that issue very important, that it carries great significance for the USA, since it concerns the security of the Western hemisphere. As the President said, the USA has no intention of intervening with its own armed forces in Cuba. But the USA proceeds from the fact that everything that is happening in Cuba is of a defensive nature and will not turn Cuba into an attack platform against the USA and the countries of Latin America. Besides this, Rusk announced, the USA, in defining its position on the Cuban issue, as announced by the President in his conversation with us, proceeds also from the fact that Cuba will not undertake actions aimed at foisting its system and regime on the other countries of Latin America. The government of the USA places extremely high significance on these two conditions. It would be hoped that neither the first, nor the second, would take place.

As far as the domestic regime on Cuba is concerned, the USA decisively views it as a regime which contradicts the interests of security in the Western hemisphere.

Having heard Rusk out, I said that the Cuban issue had been caused by the hostile policy of the USA towards Cuba. The USA for some reason believes that it must dictate to the Cubans the sort of domestic regime that should exist in Cuba, and the social structure under which the Cubans should live. But on what basis is the USA trying to appropriate for itself the right to dictate to the Cubans how to conduct their internal affairs? There is no such basis, and such a basis cannot be. Cuba belongs to the Cubans, not to Americans. Perhaps, I declared, Rusk can tell me, whither the principles of the UN Charter in American policy towards Cuba? They're not there. The actions of the USA are in flagrant contradiction with these principles. The USA is undertaking steps to cause hunger in Cuba. The actions which it is undertaking towards this end unmask the USA policy even more clearly. The Cubans, with ever more decisiveness, are speaking out and will continue to speak out in defense of their country and will strengthen its defenses. The Soviet Union is helping Cuba. It is trying to provide the Cubans with grain, and help to put its economy on a sound footing. This cannot present any danger to the USA. Soviet specialists are helping Cuban soldiers to master certain types of defensive weapons. This can't present any threat to the USA either. Overall, so far as the declaration that Cuba may present a threat to the security of the USA and countries of Latin America is concerned, such declarations are evidently intended for naive people. Even Americans themselves don't believe it. Rusk said that he does not agree that Cuba cannot present a threat to the USA. Cuba without the Soviet Union, he declared, is one thing; a Cuba where "Soviet operators" run things is something different. The USA government and he, Rusk, are baselessly scaring the American people with "Soviet operators," I answered. The Soviet Union is providing assistance to Cuba in only a few areas, including whatever we can do to strengthen its defensive capability. The Cuban themselves are running everything on Cuba, and the USA knows that perfectly well.

The situation has rapidly worsened, declared Rusk, since July of this year. Before July the situation caused no alarm. But from July, Soviet weapons have flowed into Cuba. So far it seems, according to U.S. Government data, that these are defensive weapons. But it is unclear how the situation will develop in the future. Besides this, declared Rusk, according to precise data in American possession, the Cuban regime continues to actively carry out subversive work against a number of Latin American countries. I said that the Cubans should have come to conclusions about their own defense from the intervention on Cuba by the immigrant riff-raff organized by the Americans and financed by them. They came to such a conclusion, deciding to strengthen their own defense capability. July has no significance here. Cuba represented no threat to the USA either before July, or after July. As far as the declarations regarding subversive work by the Cubans is concerned, I can only say that these declarations are in contradiction with the information which we possess. All the same, declared Rusk, in July some kind of sudden change took place. And that sudden change significantly complicated the situation.
Regarding the issue of the Cubans' subversive activities, said Rusk, the USA government has irrefutable proof of the assistance provided by them to various subversive groups in Latin America, up until the present day. For the government of the USA there is nothing to discuss. It knows for sure that the Cubans provide such help and are carrying out subversive work against a number of Latin American countries. Rusk expansively spoke of the "community of interests" of the countries of the Western Hemisphere. Not mentioning the "Monroe Doctrine," he

essentially tried to defend it, stressing the solidarity of the countries of the Western Hemisphere and the community of interests of their security. I said that in the policy of the USA and in Rusk's considerations regarding Cuba the countries somehow get lost, while the discussion is about the hemisphere. But in this hemisphere there are sovereign countries. Each one of them has a right to decide its own internal affairs upon consideration by its people. Cuba is one of these sovereign states. Besides that, I declared, if Rusk's reasoning and the entire conception which the USA government defends were to be applied to Europe and to Asia, then no doubt the conclusions which would flow from that would not please the USA. It comes out that the Americans consider themselves to have a right to be in a number of countries of Europe, Asia, and other regions of the world, if sometimes they don't even ask them about this, while certain others can not even respond to an appeal for assistance in providing its own people with bread and strengthening its security in the face of a threat of intervention. With such a conception the Soviet Union cannot agree. It is hoped that the USA government too will more soberly approach the entire Cuban issue and will reject a hostile policy toward Cuba. If the USA government has some sort of claims toward Cuba, for instance, financial, then it can bring them up with the Cubans at negotiations aimed at settling them, and the Cubans, as is known, are prepared for this. Yes, declared Rusk, but nonetheless Cuba has violated the peace on the continent, nonetheless, beginning in July, the situation has taken a dangerous turn. The Soviet Union appeared in Cuba. A large quantity of Soviet weapons appeared in Cuba. All this has complicated the situation. No matter how often Rusk repeats, I declared, the assertion about some sort of turn of events in July, about the danger allegedly emanating from Cuba, in actuality, the situation remains simpler. The Cubans want Cuba to belong to them, and not to the USA. Maybe Rusk will reject the presence of the USA, the presence of American military bases and numerous military advisers in such countries like Turkey, Pakistan, Japan, not even speaking about such countries as England, Italy, and a number of other countries of Western Europe, and also Asia and Africa. It appears that the USA can have military bases in these countries, conclude with them military agreements, while the Soviet Union can not even provide assistance in support of the Cuban economy and for the strengthening of the defense capability of Cuba. Rusk said that the Soviet Union is exaggerating the significance of American foreign military bases, believing that the USA has bases even in Pakistan, and practically in Iran. In many countries, on the territory of which, in your opinion, there are American military bases, in actuality there are none. Iran, for example, recently took a big step forward towards the Soviet Union. Overall, the significance of our bases is inflated. To this statement I answered in such a way, that the USA foreign military bases--this is a subject which is pretty well known, practically every day American generals and several ministers speak about it. Regarding Iran, I said to Rusk that we positively view the agreement between the Soviet Union and Iran that foreign missile bases will not be built on Iranian territory. But Rusk will not, apparently, deny that the Iranian Army is led by American military advisers, that Turkey has had such bases for a long time, that the territory of Japan has become an American military base, the territory of England and a number of other countries have been military springboards of the USA for a long time. About the same could be said about many other countries. Rusk declared that--whether I believe him or not--that's something else, but he categorically asserts that besides the territory of the USA itself, American missiles and atomic weapons are in only three countries. Here I said: without a doubt, of course, England is among those countries? Yes, declared Rusk, England is one of them. He didn't name the others. As far as Japan is concerned, declared Rusk, I categorically assert that neither missiles, nor nuclear weapons of the USA are in Japan. They don't have any of those weapons in South Korea either, if, of course, the actions of North Korea will not make it necessary to change that situation. In general, declared Rusk, the significance of American foreign military bases is greatly exaggerated, and they don't deserve it. In several countries, in actual fact there are not such bases, while you, Rusk said, believe that there are. In particular, the Scandinavian countries are among those countries. Responding to that, I said, that in certain countries maybe there are not today, physically, those or other types of weapons. You, Americans, know better. But the USA has military agreements with those countries which include an obligation to let these types of American weapons

into the country at any time. This is hardly different from the practical existence of American military bases in such countries, especially considering that certain types of weapons may at the present time be delivered very quickly. Rusk did not respond to that statement, and overall it was evident that precisely that is the situation in several of the participants in the military blocs of the Western powers. And so, I declared, the Americans have no grounds to reproach Cuba and the Cubans for steps of a purely defensive character, and, moreover, to conduct toward Cuba a hostile and aggressive policy. Cuba simply wants to be independent. That which the Cubans do to strengthen their country and its independence--that doesn't present a danger to anyone, all the more to such a great power like the USA. Any assertions about the existence of such a danger are just absurd. Rusk said that the USA is interested in Cuba just as the Soviet Union was interested in Hungary in 1956. I deflected this effort to introduce an analogy and I briefly pointed out the groundlessness of such an analogy. Rusk said that he did not agree with our interpretation of the question and rejection of the analogy. He then began to speak on the subject of the policy of the Soviet Union after the Second World War, partly trying to tie these musings with the Cuban issue and partly with the issue of American foreign military bases. He said that "in the Stalinist period" the Soviet Union conducted a foreign policy which forced the USA to create its bases overseas and to deploy its forces there. He gave an alleged example--Korea and the Korean peninsula. He said, that before the events in Korea the USA in fact did not have a single division up to strength. At that time the USA practically did not have a battleworthy army available. But the situation changed because of the Korean War. Before this there was such a thing as the Berlin Blockade, which also played a definite role in the change in the American policy. All this is reflected, said Rusk, in the armament program. He again began to speak about the influence of the "Stalinist policy" on the policy and actions of the Western powers. The Western powers, including the USA, cannot but take that into account even now. Responding to these statements of Rusk, I stressed that the Secretary of State of the USA had drawn an extremely depressing and one-sided picture of the foreign policy of the USSR in the postwar period, including during the Stalin period. No doubt Rusk, like other U.S. officials, will not deny a great historical fact: besides the fact that the army of the Soviet Union routed the Hitlerite army and as a powerful avalanche moved into Western Europe, it was not used contrary to the alliance agreements and had stopped following the defeat of Hitler's Germany. And in that situation, if the Soviet Union, the Soviet government, had had expansionist intentions, it could have occupied all of Western Europe. But the Soviet Union had not done that and had not started to do it. That already by itself is an eloquent answer to the attempt to cast doubt on the foreign policy of the Soviet Union and on its actions in the postwar period. You know, I declared to Rusk, that our CC and the Soviet government, at the initiative of N.S. Khrushchev, have taken a number of foreign policy steps which earlier had not been taken. You are familiar, no doubt, with that which has been done in the foreign policy of the USSR regarding the condemnation of Stalin's Cult of Personality. You know, in particular, about the signing of the Austrian State Treaty, which was evaluated positively throughout the world and which helped to make possible an improvement of the situation in central Europe. But we categorically reject any attempts to generalize or to draw conclusions about Soviet foreign policy in the postwar period, which USA government officials make with the intent, apparently, of whitewashing its own policy, in this case towards Cuba. Rusk did not challenge the declaration regarding the capability of the Soviet army to occupy all of Europe, if the Soviet Union had striven for that after the rout of Hitler's Germany. Nor did he challenge the significance of the foreign policy steps of the Soviet Union introduced after the condemnation of the cult of personality of Stalin. More to the point, he let it be understood that in general he shares these thoughts, although he did not make any direct comments. However, he at this point started to talk about the fact that the USA, at the end of the war, and also in the first postwar period to the greatest extent conducted itself well. It, declared Rusk, had not tried to use the advantage which it had at that time vis-à-vis its monopoly possession of the atomic bomb. I let him know that that, apparently, had not been so much because the United States had wanted to conduct itself well, as that the atomic bomb at that time could not play a decisive role in the serious standoff of the leading powers. Rusk did not

challenge this declaration, but all the same expressed the thought that the USA had had an advantage at that time in its possession of the atomic bomb and that it had not even tried to use it politically. In this connection he brought up the Baruch Plan, saying that he was wondering why the Soviet Union had not associated itself with the Baruch Plan. I gave an appropriate answer and briefly set forth our position. I stressed the point that the Baruch Plan was a one-sided plan, advantageous only to the USA, that it had not even envisioned the destruction of nuclear weapons, rather, under a screen of allegedly international control had left this weapon at the practical disposal of the USA, and even on the territory of the USA. Rusk did not go into details and limited himself to the above comments about the Baruch Plan. Suddenly Rusk jumped to the issue of the Communist ideology and the influence of the Soviet Union on other countries. He tried to assert that the main reason of all the complications in international affairs is that the Soviet Union by some or other means influences the situation in other countries, inspires dissatisfaction with the existing regimes and so on. He also complained because the USA does not assert such influence and cannot assert it, since it does not enter into its political plans. Vis a vis this reasoning he again returned to Cuba, but basically repeated what he had said earlier. He ended his argument by commenting again that July had brought a change for the worse to the events in Cuba, and that that greatly alarms the USA government and Americans. Rusk further said, wouldn't it be possible to consider the issue of increasing the number of Security Council member-countries from 11 to 13, that is, in other words, increasing the number of non-permanent members from six to eight. From his comments it was clear that he was talking about a change in the membership of the UN and introducing into the membership corresponding changes. I said that the step Rusk had mentioned was impossible to implement, simply because the PRC--one of the permanent members of the Security Council--is not participating in the work of the UN because of the policy of the U.S. Government. Without the PRC, I declared, we will not agree even to consider that issue. Rusk in fact did not challenge our declaration, understanding that the step he had recommended was not realistic in view of our objections. Here he noted that China, evidently has more than a few problems, including internal, economic ones. In response I said that they have certain difficulties, but the food situation had now significantly improved and was not as difficult as it was portrayed by certain organs of the American press. Rusk touched on the question of the Chinese-Indian border conflict. He asked what is going on there and why did the argument arise? I said, that the argument, as is well known to Rusk, was caused by mutual territorial claims in the border region. The Soviet government believes that the sooner the sides come to an agreement on a mutually acceptable basis, the better. I let Rusk know that our discussion of this issue apparently would hardly help the matter. Rusk agreed that yes, of course, this was an issue between the two countries--the PRC and India--but that nonetheless there is some old agreed boundary, which, considering everything, is the correct border line. Evidently, Rusk's own goal was to let us know that the government of the USA looks favorably on the Indian position. But he spoke about that as if offhandedly, obviously not wanting to create the impression that the USA was greatly interested in that issue. He also jokingly observed that the Chinese-Indian border conflict is, excuse me, the only issue on which the positions of the PRC and Taiwan correspond. With this, the conversation, which had continued with some difficulty for about two hours, ended. Further there was a conversation on the German Question, the contents of which are submitted separately. A short general evaluation of this conversation with Rusk: Rusk tried again to stress, obviously at Kennedy's behest, that the USA gives great importance to the Cuban issue and considers it the most painful for the USA. He only in passing touched on Kennedy's declaration, made in the conversation with us, about the fact that the USA has no intentions to intervene in Cuba (with a reservation regarding the threat to the security of the USA and the countries of Latin America). Rusk's reasoning revolved mostly around a circle of questions related to Soviet assistance to Cuba, primarily arms. By Rusk's behavior it was possible to observe how painfully the American leaders are suffering the fact that the Soviet Union decisively has stood on the side of Cuba, and that the Cubans are conducting themselves bravely and confidently. Kennedy managed to hide his feelings better. But he too, when he spoke about Cuba,

formulated his ideas with emphasis, slowly, obviously weighing every word. It is characteristic that Rusk, during our entire conversation with Kennedy, sat absolutely silently, and red "like a crab." In the conversation with him later he couldn't hide his feelings very well.