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**Cable of V.V. Kuznetsov on 1 November 1962
conversation between CPSU CC Politburo Member
A.I. Mikoyan and acting UN Secretary General U
Thant**

Citation:

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Summary:

Kuznetsov relays the results of a conversation between Mikoyan and U Thant. The bulk of the conversation between the two concerns U Thant's recent visit to Cuba and his conversation with Castro. Mikoyan stresses lifting the quarantine around Cuba.

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2 November 1962

CC CPSU

Transmitting the record of conversation of com. A.I. Mikoyan

The conversation took place with U Thant on 1 November 1962 in the U.N. mission [of the USSR - trans.].

At the start com. Mikoyan passed to U Thant regard from com. N.S. Khrushchev as well as on his own behalf. He told U Thant that N.S. Khrushchev recalls with warmth the conversations that he had with the acting Secretary General. Personally N.S. Khrushchev and his colleagues believe that U Thant took a good initiative with the aim of resolving the Cuban crisis and that in this regard we are acknowledging his large contribution. This raises the authority of U Thant himself as well as of the United Nations that could express itself in such a dangerous situation.

He remarked then that although the immediate danger of war has ebbed, nevertheless there are political and diplomatic difficulties and they should be resolved according to the ideas and proposals advanced in the letters of N.S. Khrushchev [and] Kennedy and in the declaration of Castro. He stressed that for its part the Soviet Union was ready to continue its efforts to achieve final resolution of the Cuban issue. He remarked that the acting Secretary General could exercise a certain influence, using his authority, in the process of ultimate settlement of the conflict.

He informed that he was heading for Cuba to meet with the Cuban friends, and decided to stop in New York in order to see U Thant and hear his considerations with regard to his recent trip to Cuba.

U Thant welcomed com. Mikoyan. He reminded him of their meetings in Yalta in November 1955 when U Thant accompanied [Burmese leader] U Nu, and then in Burma. U Thant recalled with warmth his meetings with N.S. Khrushchev in 1955 in Yalta as well as during the trip of N.S. Khrushchev to Burma, and also in the United Nations in 1960 and again this year in the Soviet Union. U Thant expressed his sincere gratitude to N.S. Khrushchev for his encouraging words passed to him in his letters to U Thant and also through our representatives in the UN. He values highly and rejoices at the assessment that the Soviet Union gives to his efforts in the resolution of the Cuban issue.

U Thant stressed that the position of the Soviet government and its head N.S. Khrushchev in the Cuban crisis was gratefully received by the vast majority of the peoples of all the world and met with gratitude by the whole mankind. He remarked that the people now see much more clearly the sincere desire of the Soviet Union to have the UN as an efficacious instrument for maintaining peace and for preventing war.

After that U Thant turned to his trip to Cuba and said the following.

The trip was taken in connection with the exchange of letters between him and Fidel

Castro. In his first appeal to Castro, U Thant called on him to cooperate with the UN in the name of securing peace. In his reply, Castro invited U Thant to visit Cuba personally in his capacity of acting UN Secretary General and to discuss with him the issues concerning the attitude of the government of Cuba on the question under consideration of the Security Council.

U Thant accepted this invitation and visited Cuba, staying there on 30 and 31 October. He held two meetings with Prime Minister Castro, when the Cuban issue was discussed. In Havana he met some diplomats accredited by the government of Castro. The most useful conversations were ones with the Ambassadors of Brazil, Yugoslavia, the UAR [United Arab Republic], and the USSR.

One of the issues on U Thant's agenda during the trip was to clarify the reaction of the Cuban government concerning the agreement of the Soviet Union to allow U.N. observers to check on the fulfillment of the commitment to dismantle Soviet missile launchers in Cuba and to return them to the USSR.

Castro said in categorical form that Cuba is a sovereign and independent state and it would not allow any external organization - be it the UN or anything else - to interfere in the internal affairs of Cuba. Imposition of inspection on the part of the UN would be considered by the Cuban people as an infringement on its sovereign rights and would be considered as a humiliation of the people of Cuba. Such a step cannot be accepted by the Cuban government. If the USSR wants to meet the announced goals of sending the groups of inspectors, then Castro believes that such inspections might be carried out outside of the territorial waters of Cuba.

Castro informed U Thant that on Thursday, 1 November, he was going to speak on radio and television with a speech where he intends to mention this issue. U Thant reportedly advised Castro to postpone this speech, since it is very delicate and would be assessed as a declaration of policy with all consequences that flow out of it. Castro responded to U Thant that he had already put off making of this speech with regard to [U Thant's] visit in Cuba. If the speech were delayed one more time, then people would not understand it. Therefore Castro could not once again postpone his speech.

The U Thant asked Castro not to mention in his speech the position of the government of Cuba regarding the [issue of] UN inspection, to which he gladly agreed, saying that he would remove this paragraph from the text he had already prepared.

U Thant asked com. Mikoyan, having in mind the confidential character of his conversations with Castro, not to raise this issue on his own initiative.

As Castro pointed out, in his speech he planned to lay out the entire foreign policy of Cuba and in particular to emphasize the five points on the settlement of the Cuban crisis he had advanced on 28 October. To this U Thant responded that in view of the deliberations on the Cuban issue in the Security Council and his own speech he could not do it. The Security Council did not authorize him to discuss with the sides issues of permanent or long-term character of settlement of the conflict in the Caribbean sea.

To this Castro responded that a temporary resolution of immediate problems did not resolve the Cuban issue as a whole. The resolution of these immediate questions, in the opinion of the government of Cuba, had to be linked to resolution of the longer-term problems. The Security Council had to discuss also and resolve the issue about a lasting peace in the area of the Caribbean sea. If the Security Council were preoccupied with resolution of only immediate problems, then similar problems would

emerge in the foreseeable future again, and they could create a situation similar to the current one. Therefore the government of Cuba is convinced that to ensure lasting and secure peace in the whole world it is necessary that the Security Council should preoccupy itself with the issue of ensuring lasting peace in the Caribbean region. In case the Security Council would be convened, Castro intends to send to the UN Minister of Foreign Affairs Raul Roa so that he would present the viewpoint of his government on the entire Cuban issue. The delegation of Cuba would address the Security Council with a request to find a lasting and final solution to this issue. The government of Cuba is firmly convinced that such a solution can be found only on the basis of 5 points advanced on 28 October by Premier Castro.

U Thant told Castro that at that point he was not competent to discuss this issue, although he received with understanding the viewpoint of the Prime Minister of Cuba.

Then in the conversations U Thant and Castro touched on the issue about "the UN presence" in the region of the Caribbean sea during the period of the crisis.

U Thant told Castro that in the interests of the government of Cuba and the Cuban people themselves it would be useful to have in Havana UN representatives, and, if Castro agrees, he was ready to leave 2 to 3 of his officials to establish contacts and to follow-up on their dialogue.

Castro responded that had the government of Cuba agreed at the present moment to the presence of UN representatives in Cuba, it could have been interpreted by people as consent to the presence of inspecting groups of the United Nations. While saying so, he referred to American radio broadcasts which affirm on an hourly basis that the U Thant mission had exactly the inspection goals in mind. Under such terms people might have misperceived such a step. Castro asked U Thant not to insist on this proposal.

He then declared that, if the Security Council accepted some kind of formula to resolve the Cuban issue on a permanent basis, then he, Castro, would be glad to have some kind of UN presence on the reciprocal basis. However, this cannot be done in the present phase.

In conversations with Castro, U Thant raised the question about the return to the USA on humanitarian grounds of an American pilot who, according to press publications, had vanished without a trace in the area of Cuba. Castro told him that the USA aircraft of the type U-2 had indeed violated the aerial space over Cuba in violation of international legislation and the UN Charter. It was shot down by the Cubans, the pilot died, since he could not bail out. Castro would have been ready to return the pilot, and alive, but he is dead, therefore he is ready to return the body under auspices of the UN. (This information U Thant passed to the Americans).

Castro also said that any further violation of the aerial borders of Cuba would be dealt with in a similar way.

The next question that was discussed between U Thant and Castro was about a voluntary suspension by the Soviet Union of its supplies of weapons for Cuba for a period of 2 to 3 weeks and the simultaneous voluntary suspension of the quarantine on the part of the USA.

U Thant informed Castro about the acceptance on the part of the Soviet Union of such a voluntary commitment, and also that the USA would have also agreed to suspend the quarantine for 2-3 weeks, on the condition that there would be a mechanism for checking if Soviet ships heading for Cuba were not carrying arms.

U Thant informed Castro also that the Soviet Union had agreed that the Red Cross should deal with inspection of vessels outside of the boundaries of the territorial waters of Cuba. He said that for the Red Cross it would have been more convenient to inspect ships in the ports of arrival, and not in the open sea, if, of course, the government of Cuba agreed to that.

Castro said to this, that his government would not allow groups of the Red Cross to inspect Soviet ships on Cuban territory, but if the USSR agreed to the inspection, then the UN should start organizing this business on the open sea.

Responding to the question of U Thant about a possible time of convocation of a next session of the Security Council on the Cuban issue, Castro said that he would have preferred that the Council convene no sooner than next Wednesday, i.e. after the elections in the United States.

Com. Mikoyan thanked U Thant for interesting and useful information, stressing that this would facilitate his talks with Prime Minister Fidel Castro.

He observed that the Americans were now trying to focus all attention on the dismantling and withdrawal of missile equipment, doing nothing on their part concerning the guarantees of Cuba's security.

Therefore Castro is right when he speaks about the need to solve the Cuban issue on a permanent basis. Now it is important to move from general declarations to concrete steps for cardinal solution of the entire issue on the basis of the letters of N.S. Khrushchev [and] Kennedy, and also the just and constructive proposals of Fidel Castro. Naturally, the Americans will object to some proposals of Castro, but his proposals face in the right direction.

On the time of convening the Security Council, com. Mikoyan remarked that we understand the considerations of Fidel on this score. We also would like to say that since general principles of complete liquidation of the conflict has been adopted and declared by the interested sides, and also by the UN, since the acting Secretary General is taking active part in this, then, in our opinion, the Security Council should be convened at the moment when the current negotiations would approach the phase of an agreed-upon document finalizing this crisis. Until then convening of the Security Council would hardly assist in this matter.

Com. Mikoyan voiced the idea that after the end of talks of the sides, some kind of document might be passed for approval to the Security Council and on its basis and in following up on it the Council might take a decision on subsequent practical steps. Such a document might have the character of a protocol which would describe talks that would have taken place between the sides with participation of U Thant on the basis of the letters of N.S. Khrushchev and Kennedy, and also the declarations of Fidel Castro, and that would inform about the achieved agreement that, thereby, would have been sealed by the Security Council.

[Mikoyan] said to U Thant that we learned with great interest about his initiative concerning the practicality of having observers in Cuba, in the USA, and in other countries neighboring Cuba for a duration of some period. He informed [U Thant] that N.S. Khrushchev was delighted to see this initiative of U Thant and considered it to be interesting and useful. It is good that Fidel Castro took it in a positive way. This proposal contains in itself the principle of reciprocity, and the USSR is ready to support such a proposal. It could be included into a draft protocol.

He asked U Thant if he had spoken to the Americans on this subject and if so what

was their attitude toward this idea.

U Thant said that in conversation with Soviet representatives he advanced several formulas for solution of the issue in its entirety, and the problem of guarantees in particular. At one of these meetings with com. Zorin he indeed proposed that, provided the agreement of the sides, the presence of the UN in the Western hemisphere, in the flashpoints, would be useful. Were it to prove acceptable, then, in the opinion of U Thant, such a measure would have facilitated a settlement of the situation in the Caribbean region on the permanent basis.

U Thant discussed this idea with heads of missions of Latin American [countries] in the UN even before his trip to Cuba and they seemed interested. Some Latin American delegates not only were interested in this idea but also let U Thant understand that such a measure would be desirable.

The USA so far does not want to openly express its attitude towards this proposal of U Thant. Its reaction was reduced to the argument that, well, since this arrangement concerns all the countries of Western hemisphere, this issue should be discussed in the Organization of American States.

Com. Mikoyan asked U Thant about his opinion regarding a possible form of the document stating the reached agreement.

U Thant said that if the sides agree in general, then the goal will be reached through any such document in the form of protocol, joint declaration, separate declaration of the sides, agreement and even in the form of summing-up declaration of the chairman of the Security Council.

Com. Mikoyan asked U Thant also to express his personal considerations on the time of convocation of the Security Council.

U Thant said that it should be done after the elections in the USA, but everything depends on the sides' agreement. If the sides come to agreement, the Council can be convened at any time.

Then U Thant passed his wish to thank the Soviet Ambassador in Cuba for his genuine and wholehearted cooperation during the trip of U Thant. In particular, U Thant noted that our Ambassador in Havana and the Soviet officer informed him without delay about the time when dismantling of the missile units began, about the time when work will be finished, and about the fact that ships are commissioned for withdrawal of these units. In this regard U Thant asked as a matter of personal interest about the time of arrival of ships to Cuba to pick up the mentioned materiel.

Com. Mikoyan confirmed what our Ambassador in Havana had told U Thant about the time-frame of dismantling. Concerning the time-frame of withdrawal he said that those ships that are now in Cuba will not suffice. However, with regard to the continuing quarantine Soviet ships cannot sail to Cuba. Therefore it is necessary to lift the quarantine, so that Soviet ships could enter Cuban ports, unload their cargoes and load on them the dismantled units [ustanovki]. If one does it in speedily, then perhaps 10-15 days will be required. He promised to raise this issue in the forthcoming conversation with McCloy.

U Thant said that he addresses the Americans every day with appeals to suspend the blockade. And yesterday, having returned from Cuba, he did the same, making the Americans aware that he was convinced that the dismantling had begun and was under way as it had been promised, and that it would be finished by the announced

date.

Com. Mikoyan thanked U Thant for his useful and exhaustive information. They agreed that for the press they will announce about useful exchange of opinions and the friendly atmosphere of the conversation.

At the end of the conversation U Thant said that if A.I. Mikoyan would come back via New York, he (U Thant) would be glad to meet again and learn about the results of the trip. He would like that time to be a more generous host than now and to invite A.I. Mikoyan for lunch and breakfast.

The conversation was recorded by com. Zherebtsov V.N.

2.XI.62 V. KUZNETSOV