

83. Message From Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy [0](#)

Moscow, December 11, 1962.

Dear Mr. President, It would seem that you and we have come now to a final stage in the elimination of tension around Cuba. Our relations are already entering now their normal course since all those means placed by us on the Cuban territory which you considered offensive are withdrawn and you ascertained that to which effect a statement was already made by your side.

That is good. We appreciate that you just as we approached not dogmatically the solution of the question of eliminating the tension which evolved and this enabled us under existing conditions to find also a more flexible form of verification of the withdrawal of the above mentioned means. Understanding and flexibility displayed by you in this matter are highly appreciated by us though our criticism of American imperialism remains in force because that conflict was indeed created by the policy of the United States with regard to Cuba.

More resolute steps should be taken now to move towards finalizing the elimination of this tension, i.e. you on your part should clearly confirm at the U.N. as you did at your press conference and in your messages to me the pledge of non-invasion of Cuba by the United States and your allies having removed reservations which are being introduced now into the U.S. draft declaration in the Security Council and our representatives in New York should come to terms with regard to an agreed wording in the declarations of both powers of the commitments undertaken by them.

I believe that you already had an opportunity to familiarize yourself with the text proposed by us [1](#) of a brief declaration of the Soviet Government in which the Soviet Union main commitments resulting from the exchange of messages between us are formulated. We proceed from the assumption that an analogous brief declaration should be made by the U.S. Government and that the main U.S. commitments resulting from the exchange of messages will also be fixed in it. Have a look, Mr. President, at this proposal submitted by us through your representatives in New York.

But notwithstanding what the agreement on the concrete texts of our declarations at this concluding stage will be, anyway the basic goal has been achieved and tension removed. I will tell you frankly that we have removed our means from Cuba relying on your assurance that the United States and its allies will not invade Cuba. Those means really had the purpose of defending the sovereignty of Cuba and therefore after your assurance they lost their purpose. We hope and we would like to believe—I spoke of that publicly too, as you know—that you will adhere to the commitments which you have taken, as strictly as we do with regard to our commitments. We, Mr. President, have already fulfilled our commitments concerning the removal of our missiles and IL-28 planes from Cuba and we did it even ahead of time. It is obvious that fulfilment by you of your commitments cannot be as clearly demonstrated as it was done by us since your commitments are of a long-term nature. But it is important to fulfil them and to do everything so that no doubts are sown from the very start that they will not be fulfilled. I already told you at one time that our friends, especially those of them who regard us

with certain lack of understanding, are trying to convince us that imperialism cannot be trusted, that is that you cannot be trusted, as a representative of such capitalist state as the United States of America.

It goes without saying that you and I have different understanding of these questions. I shall not go into details as to what my understanding is because in this regard you and I cannot have common opinion since we are people representing different political poles. But there are things that require common understanding on both sides and such common understanding is possible and even necessary. This is what I would like to tell you about.

Within a short period of time we and you have lived through a rather acute crisis. The acuteness of it was that we and you were already prepared to fight and this would lead to a thermonuclear war. Yes, to a thermonuclear world war with all its dreadful consequences. We took it into account and, being convinced that mankind would never forgive the statesmen who would not exhaust all possibilities to prevent catastrophe, agreed to a compromise although we understood—and we state it now—that your claims had no grounds whatsoever, had no legal basis and represented a manifestation of sheer arbitrariness in international affairs. We agreed to a compromise because our main purpose was to extend a helping hand to the Cuban people in order to exclude the possibility of invasion of Cuba so that Cuba could exist and develop as a free sovereign state. This is our main purpose today, it remains to be our main purpose for tomorrow and we did not and do not pursue any other purposes.

Therefore, Mr. President, everything—the stability in this area and not only in this area but in the entire world—depends on how you will now fulfil the commitments taken by you. Furthermore, it will be now a sort of litmus paper, an indicator whether it is possible to trust if similar difficulties arise in other geographical areas. I think you will agree that if our arrangement for settling the Cuban crisis fails it will undermine a possibility for manoeuvre which you and we would resort to for elimination of danger, a possibility for compromise in the future if similar difficulties arise in other areas of the world, and they really can arise. We attach great significance to all this, and subsequent development will depend on you as President and on the U.S. Government.

We believe that the guarantees for non-invasion of Cuba given by you will be maintained and not only in the period of your stay in the White House, that, to use an expression, goes without saying. We believe that you will be able to receive a mandate at the next election too, that is that you will be the U.S. President for six years, which would appeal to us. At our times, six years in world politics is a long period of time and during that period we could create good conditions for peaceful coexistence on earth and this would be highly appreciated by the peoples of our countries as well as by all other peoples.

Therefore, Mr. President, I would like to express a wish that you follow the right way, as we do, in appraising the situation. Now it is of special importance to provide for the possibility of an exchange of opinion through confidential channels which you and I have set up and which we use. But the confidential nature of our personal relations will depend on whether you fulfil—as we did—the commitments taken by you and give instructions to your representatives in New York to formalize these commitments in appropriate documents. This is needed in order that all

the peoples be sure that tension in the Caribbean is a matter of yesterday and that now normal conditions have been really created in the world. And for this it is necessary to fix the assumed commitments in the documents of both sides and register them with the United Nations.

You, Mr. President, do not want to agree with the five conditions put forward by Prime Minister of the Republic of Cuba Fidel Castro.² But, indeed, these five principles correspond fully to the provisions of the United Nations Charter which is a legal basis for the relations among states, a sort of foundation for securing peace and peaceful coexistence. I will tell you frankly that such position of yours is surprising. Maybe you have some difficulties. But, Mr. President, we who occupy such responsible position in the world and who are endowed with high trust have to overcome those difficulties. The peoples will appreciate that because for them it means insuring lasting peace on earth.

I would like to express to you my disapproval of certain things. We read now various articles by your columnists and correspondents, and we are concerned that in those articles they are widely commenting on the confidential exchange of opinion and it is being done by the people who as it would seem have no relation to confidential channels set up between us. Judging by the contents of these articles it is clear that their authors are well informed, and we get an impression that this is not a result of an accidental leak of the confidential information but a result of benevolence for those people into whose hands gets the information they make public. This evidently is done for the purpose of informing the public in a one-sided way.

Frankly speaking, if we use the confidential communications this way, it will be far from facilitating confidence in those channels. You yourself realize that if your side begins to act in the way that our exchange of opinion by way of confidential channels will leak through fingers these channels will cease to be of use and may even cause harm. But this is up to you. If you consider that those channels have outlived themselves and are of no use any longer, then we also will draw appropriate conclusions in this respect. I tell you this straightforwardly and I would like to know your opinion on this matter. I have been denouncing American imperialism. But on the other hand I consider it useful for us to continue to maintain the possibility of confidential exchange of opinion because a minimum of personal trust is necessary for leading statesmen of both countries and this corresponds to the interests of our countries and peoples, to the interest of peace all over the world.

Let us, Mr. President, eliminate promptly the consequences of the Cuban crisis and get down to solving other questions, and we have them in number. As far as nuclear test ban is concerned this is a minor question on the whole. I am going to address to you a confidential letter³ and proposals on this question and I hope that we will overcome difficulties existing in this question. The problem of disarmament is a different matter; it is a major and difficult question now.

But, of course, the main question is the German question, and it is an easy and at the same time difficult one. I say that it is an easy and at the same time difficult question. But this is really so. It is easy because our proposals for concluding a peace treaty do not demand any concessions from either side, neither do they demand any losses from either side. These proposals only fix the situation which has developed as a result of World War II.

After the talks that our Minister of Foreign Affairs A. Gromyko had with your Secretary of State D. Rusk, only one question in effect remained unresolved—that of troops in West Berlin: troops of what countries, for what term and under what flag will be stationed there.

I would like you to understand me correctly on this question. Let us solve it. We will not escape the necessity to solve this question anyway. To tell the truth, this question is not worth an eggshell if a realistic approach is employed in appraising the situation in Germany where two sovereign German states have developed and if a course followed is aimed at an agreement on West Berlin and not at leaving it to remain a dangerous hot-bed of collision between states. Should really you and we—two great states—submit, willingly or unwillingly, our policy, the interests of our states to the old-aged man who both morally and physically is with one foot in grave? Should we really become toys in his hands? By concluding peace treaty we would lose nothing but we would gain a possibility to strengthen friendly relations between our states, would untie the knot in Europe which is fraught with danger for the whole world only because most extreme aggressive militarist forces in West Germany are interested in this.

Please, excuse me for my straightforwardness and frankness but I believe as before that a frank and straightforward exchange of opinion is needed to avoid the worst.

Please, convey to your wife and your family wishes of good health from myself, my wife and my entire family.⁴

1. Source: Kennedy Library, National Security Files, Countries Series, USSR, Khrushchev Correspondence. No classification marking, but the Department of State classified the message Top Secret and Eyes Only. (Department of State, Presidential Correspondence: Lot 77 D 163)[↵]
1. Transmitted in telegram 2179 from USUN, December 6; see [vol. XI, Document 234](#).[↵]
2. In Prime Minister Castro's October 28 letter to U Thant; for text, see **American Foreign Policy: Current Documents, 1962**, pp. 447-448.[↵]
3. [Document 85](#).[↵]
4. Printed from an unsigned copy.[↵]

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