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LETTER DATED 24 APRIL 1961 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS TO THE UNITED NATIONS
ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

..... I request that you will kindly circulate, as a United Nations document,
the text of the attached message, dated 22 April 1961, from the Chairman of
the Council of Ministers of the USSR, Mr. N.S. Khrushchev, to the
President of the United States of America, Mr. J. Kennedy.

(Signed) V. ZORIN
Permanent Representative of the
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
to the United Nations

TEXT OF THE MESSAGE, DATED 22 APRIL 1961, FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE USSR, MR. N.S. KHRUSHCHEV, TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, Mr. J. KENNEDY

Mr. President,

I have received your reply of 18 April. You write that the United States intends no military intervention in Cuba. But numerous facts known to the whole world - and to the Government of the United States, of course, better than to any one else - speak differently. Despite all assurances to the contrary, it has now been proved beyond doubt that it was precisely the United States which prepared the intervention, financed its arming and transported the gangs of mercenaries that invaded the territory of Cuba.

United States armed forces also took a direct part in the accomplishment of the gangster attack upon Cuba. American bombers and fighters supported the operations of the mercenaries who landed on Cuban territory, and participated in the military operations against the armed forces of the lawful Government and people of Cuba.

Such are the facts. They bear witness to direct United States participation in the armed aggression against Cuba.

In your message you took the course of justifying, and even lauding, the attack on Cuba - this crime which has revolted the entire world. You try to justify the organization of a military attack on Cuba, committed for the sole reason that the way of life chosen by its people is not to the taste of the ruling circles of the United States and the North American monopolies operating in Latin America, by talk about the United States Government's adherence to the ideals of "freedom". But, one may ask, of what freedom are you speaking?

Of freedom to strangle the Cuban people with the bony hand of hunger through the establishment of an economic blockade? Is that freedom?

Of freedom to send military planes over the territory of Cuba, to subject peaceful Cuban cities to barbarous bombing, to set fire to sugar-cane plantations? Is that freedom?

History records many cases in which, on the pretext of defending freedom, peoples have been drowned in blood, colonial wars waged, and one small nation after another taken by the throat.

In the present case, apparently, the United States Government is seeking to restore to Cuba that "freedom" under which Cuba would dance to the tune of her more powerful neighbour and foreign monopolies would again be able to plunder the country's national wealth, to wax rich on the sweat and blood of the Cuban people. But it is precisely against such "freedom" that the Cuban people accomplished their revolution when they threw out Batista, who may have loyally served the interests of his foreign masters but who was a foreign element in the body of the Cuban nation.

You, Mr. President, display concern for a handful of enemies who were expelled by their people and found refuge under the wing of those who want to keep the guns of their cruisers and destroyers trained on Cuba. But why are you not concerned about the fate of the six million Cuban people, why do you not wish to pay regard to their inalienable right to a free and independent life, their right to arrange their domestic affairs as they see fit? Where are the standards of international law, or even of simple human morality, that would justify such a position? They simply do not exist.

The Cuban people have once again expressed their will with a clarity which should have left no room for doubt, even in the minds of those who prefer to close their eyes to reality. They have shown that they not only know their interests, but can stand up for them. Cuba today is not, of course, the Cuba you identify with the handful of traitors who have come out against their people. It is the Cuba of workers, peasants and intellectuals, it is a people which has rallied round its revolutionary Government headed by the national hero, Fidel Castro. And, judging from everything, this people received the interventionists in a fitting way. Is not this convincing proof of the real will of the Cuban people?

I think it is. And since this is so, is it not time for all to draw from it the right conclusions?

As for the Soviet Union, we have stated on many occasions, and I now state again, that our Government does not seek any advantages or privileges in Cuba. We have no bases in Cuba, and we do not intend to establish any. And this is well known to you, to your generals and your admirals. If, despite this, they still try to frighten the people by fabrications about "Soviet bases" on Cuba, that is obviously designed for consumption by simpletons. But there are fewer and fewer such simpletons, and that applies also, I hope, to the United States.

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By the way, Mr. President, I would like to express my opinion concerning the statements made by you and by certain other United States politicians to the effect that rockets and other weapons could be installed on Cuban territory for possible use against the United States.

The inference from this is that the United States has some alleged right to attack Cuba, either directly or through the traitors to the Cuban people whom you arm with your weapons, train on your territory, maintain with the money of United States taxpayers and transport with the resources of your armed forces, covering them from the air and the sea while they fight against the Cuban people and their lawful Government.

You also refer to some United States obligations to protect the Western hemisphere against external aggression. But what obligations can possibly apply in the present case? No one can have any obligation to defend rebels against the lawful Government of a sovereign State, such as Cuba is.

Mr. President, you are setting out on a very dangerous road. Think of it. You speak of your rights and obligations, and, of course, anyone can claim this or that right. But then you will have to admit that other States, too, can base their actions in similar circumstances on similar arguments and considerations.

You allege that Cuba can lend her territory for actions against the United States. That is your supposition, but it is based on no facts. We, on the other hand, can already refer to concrete facts, not suppositions: in some countries, bordering on the Soviet Union by land and sea, there are at present Governments following a policy that is far from reasonable, Governments which have concluded military agreements with the United States and have made their territory available for the establishment of American military bases. And your military say openly that these bases are spearheaded against the Soviet Union, as if this were not already sufficiently clear. So, if you consider yourself entitled to take such measures against Cuba as the United States Government has been resorting to lately, you must admit that other countries have no lesser grounds for acting in the same way with regard to States whose territories are the scene of actual preparations constituting a threat to the security of the Soviet Union. If you do not want to sin against elementary logic, you must obviously concede this right to other

States. We, for our part, do not hold such views. We consider that the arguments advanced on this score in the United States constitute, not merely an extremely free interpretation of international law, but, to put it plainly, open advocacy of a treacherous policy.

A powerful State can of course always find a pretext for attacking a weaker country, and then justify its attack by claiming that that country was a potential menace. But is this twentieth-century morality? This is the morality of the colonialists, of the brigands who once pursued precisely such a policy. Today, in the second half of the twentieth century, it is no longer possible to take the pirate morality of the colonialists as a guide. We all see, today, how the colonial system is crumbling and becoming a thing of the past. The Soviet Union, for its part, is doing everything to promote this process, and we are proud of it.

Or take the United States actions with regard to China. What standards of law can be invoked to justify these actions? Everyone knows that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China. This has been admitted even by the Government of the United States, whose signature appears on the Cairo Declaration of 1943. But later the United States seized Taiwan - took, in fact, the road to brigandage. The People's Republic of China announced its natural aspiration to reunite the territory of Taiwan with the rest of Chinese territory. But how did the United States react to this? It declared that it would use armed force to prevent reunification of this Chinese territory, seized by it, with the rest of China. It threatens war if China takes any steps towards the recovery of Taiwan. And this is being done by a country which has officially recognized that Taiwan belongs to China! Is not this perfidy in international relations? If such methods were to become the rule in relations between States, there would be no place left for law. Its place would be taken by lawlessness and arbitrariness.

So, Mr. President, your sympathies are one thing; but actions against the security and independence of other peoples, taken on the basis of such sympathies, are very much another. You may, of course, express your sympathy with the imperialist and colonialist countries; that does not surprise anyone. For example, you vote with them in the United Nations. This is a matter of your morality. But what has been done against Cuba is no longer morality. It is gangsterism.

I should like to stress that if the United Nations is really to become strong and fulfil the functions for which it was established - and at present this Organization, unfortunately, is a body already infected by the bacilli of colonialism and imperialism - the United Nations must resolutely condemn the banditry undertaken against Cuba. And the point here is not merely to condemn the United States. The important thing is that the condemnation of aggression should be seen to be a precedent, a lesson which other countries, too, might learn, so that aggression should never again be repeated. For if we were to take the course of approving or even, simply, condoning the morality of the aggressors, it could be adopted by other States as well, and this would inevitably lead to military conflicts, any of which might result in a third world war.

What you said in your last statement to the Press must fill the entire world with great alarm. For you simply claim, in fact, some right of yours to employ military force whenever you find it necessary, and to suppress other peoples each time you decide that their expression of their will constitutes "communism". But what right have you, what right has anyone in general, to deprive a people of the possibility of choosing their social and political system of their own free will? Have you never considered that other countries, too, might perhaps advance a demand similar to yours and might declare that you, in the United States, have a system which breeds wars and espouses an imperialist policy, the policy of threats and attacks against other countries? There is every ground for such accusations. And, proceeding from the principles which you now proclaim, one could, apparently, demand a change in the internal system of the United States. We, as you know, do not follow that road. We favour the peaceful coexistence of all States, and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries.

You allude to Budapest. But we can tell you openly, without any allusions: it is you, the United States, that crushed the independence of Guatemala by sending your mercenaries there, as you are now trying to do with regard to Cuba. It is the United States, and no other country, that still mercilessly exploits and keeps in economic bondage the countries of Latin America and many other countries of the world. This is known to all. And if, Mr. President, your logic is to be followed, actions from without could apparently be organized

against your country too, to put an end forever to this imperialist policy, the policy of threats, the policy of suppressing the freedom-loving peoples.

As for your concern for the émigrés expelled by the Cuban people, I should like to add the following. You are of course well aware that there are, in many countries, émigrés who are dissatisfied with the situation and the system existing in the countries from which they fled. And if the abnormal practice were introduced, in relations between States, of using these émigrés, especially with arms in their hand, against the countries they had fled from it can be openly said that this would inevitably lead to conflicts and wars. It would therefore be well to refrain from such ill-advised actions. This is a slippery and dangerous road which can lead to a new world war.

In your reply, you saw fit to touch upon certain questions unrelated to the subject of my message to you, including the question - as interpreted by you - of the historic inevitability of a communist revolution. I can only regard this as an attempt to evade the main question - that of aggression against Cuba. We are prepared, in appropriate circumstances, to exchange opinions on the question of the ways in which human society develops, although this question cannot be settled by debates between groups or individuals, however high their position may be. The question of whose system is the better will be decided by history, by the peoples themselves.

You, Mr. President, speak often and much of your desire that Cuba should be free. But that attitude is flatly contradicted by all United States actions with regard to this small country, let alone the latest armed attack upon Cuba organized with a view to changing Cuba's internal system by force. It was the United States which nearly sixty years ago imposed on Cuba the enslaving terms of the Havana Treaty and established its Guantanamo naval base on Cuban territory. Yet the United States is the most powerful country in the Western hemisphere, and no one in that hemisphere can threaten you with a military invasion. Consequently, if you continue to retain your naval base on Cuban territory against the clearly expressed will of the Cuban people and its Government, it is because this base is designed, not to serve as a defence against an attack by any external forces, but suppress the will of the Latin American peoples. It was established to fulfil the functions of a gendarme, to keep the peoples of Latin America politically and economically dependent.

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The Government of the United States is now fulminating against Cuba. But this indicates only one thing - your lack of trust in your own system, in the policy pursued by the United States. And this is understandable, as it is a policy of exploitation, a policy for the economic enslavement of under-developed countries. You have no confidence in your own system, and therefore fear that Cuba's example may prove contagious for other countries. But aggressive, bandit actions cannot save your system. In the historic process of the development of human society, each people decides, and will decide, its own destiny.

As for the Soviet Union, the peoples of our country settled this question finally and irrevocably over forty-three years ago. We constitute a socialist State. Our social system is the most equitable of all that have so far existed, because in our country all the means of production are owned by those who work. That is indeed a contagious example, and the sooner the need to go over to this system is realized, the sooner will the whole of mankind achieve a really just society. By this very development, an end will be put, once and for all, to war.

You, Mr. President, did not like it when I said, in my previous message, that there can be no stable place in the world if anywhere war is aflame. But this is really so. The world is a single whole, whether we like it or not. And I can only repeat what I said: it is impossible to proceed by adjusting the situation and putting out the flames in one area, and kindling a new conflagration in another.

The Soviet State has always been a consistent defender of the freedom and independence of all peoples. We naturally, therefore, cannot concede to the United States any right to control the destinies of other countries, including the countries of Latin America. We consider that any interference by one State in the affairs of another - especially armed interference - is a violation of all international laws and of the principles of peaceful coexistence which the Soviet Union has invariably upheld since the first days of its existence.

If it is now, more than ever before, the duty of every State and its leaders not to permit actions which are capable of jeopardizing universal peace, that applies with all the more force to the leaders of the great Powers. It is this that I urge upon you, Mr. President.

The Soviet Government's position in international affairs remains unchanged. We wish to build our relations with the United States in such a way that neither the Soviet Union nor the United States, as the two most powerful countries of the world, shall engage in sabre-rattling or push their military or economic superiority to the forefront, since that would lead to an aggravation of the international situation, not to its improvement. We are sincerely desirous of reaching agreement, both with you and with other countries of the world, on disarmament and all the other questions whose solution would promote peaceful coexistence, the recognition of every people's right to the social and political systems established by it, genuine respect for the will of the peoples and non-interference in their internal affairs. Only under these conditions can one really speak of coexistence, for coexistence is possible only if States with different social systems obey international laws and recognize the maintenance of world peace as their highest aim. Only in that event will peace be based on firm foundations.

22 April 1961

N. KHRUSHCHEV
