

March 22, 1961

**From the Journal of S.M. Kudryaytsev, 'Record of
Conversation with the Prime Minister of the
Republic of Cuba, Fidel Castro, 3 March 1961'**

Citation:

"From the Journal of S.M. Kudryaytsev, 'Record of Conversation with the Prime Minister of the Republic of Cuba, Fidel Castro, 3 March 1961'", March 22, 1961, Wilson Center Digital Archive, AVP RF, F. 0104. Op. 17, P. 118, D. 3. ll. 110-113. Contributed by James G. Hershberg and translated by Gary Goldberg.

<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/188124>

Summary:

Kudryaytsev and Fidel Castro discuss Cuba's domestic political situation and the threat of a US supported invasion of Cuba by external counterrevolutionaries.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Blavatnik Family Foundation

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

from the journal of
S. M. KUDRYAVTSEV

Top Secret. Copy N^o 1
22 March 1961
N^o 87

RECORD OF A CONVERSATION
with the Prime Minister of the Republic of Cuba
Fidel CASTRO

3 March 1961

The conversation was held over a lunch which I held in honor of Fidel Castro. Besides Fidel Castro, Ernesto Guevara, Raul Castro, Martinez Sanchez, Armando Hart, Haydee Santamaria, and Celia Sanchez were at the lunch.

The conversation chiefly concerned the political situation developing in Cuba in recent days in connection with the new threat of an invasion of the forces of the external counterrevolution.

Fidel Castro said, we are absolutely convinced that Kennedy is preparing some big provocation against Cuba. From the first days the new American government has taken an even harsher and more hostile line with respect to the Cuban revolution than the Eisenhower Administration. The main efforts of the Kennedy government are being directed along two lines at the present time: first, through an all-round stepping up of the internal Cuban counterrevolution and second, through isolating Cuba from the countries of Latin America. Under the influence of the active assistance coming from the USA the internal counterrevolution has been unusually lively in recent days. Almost every day large batches of American weapons are dropped from American planes in various points of the country. Aircraft belonging to the counterrevolutionaries often violate Cuban airspace and drop counterrevolutionary leaflets with calls to overthrow the revolutionary government. In particular, just yesterday, for example, three aircraft flew over Cuba which threw out leaflets with calls to overthrow the revolutionary government. Unfortunately, noted Fidel Castro, we cannot yet take effective measures against the flights of these aircraft inasmuch as Cuban air defense does not have sufficient means for this. Orders are given in documents sent from the USA to local counterrevolutionary organizations to start insurrections throughout the entire country. In addition, propaganda through all American radio stations directed at Cuba has recently increased significantly; plus, once again the main thrust is being made on a call to rise up against the revolutionary government.

Fidel Castro said further, we have information that increased preparations are going on in Florida, Guatemala, and Costa Rica for an action of the external counterrevolution against Cuba. Information about the sailing of assault groups in the direction of Cuba which has been received from Guatemala has not yet been confirmed. However, for its part the Cuban government has taken all the necessary steps to increase the defense of the Cuban coast. Cuban patrols have not yet detected the movement of assault groups anywhere.

Fidel Castro noted, it is not excluded that the forces of the external counterrevolution concentrated in Guatemala, Costa Rica, and Florida are waiting until a more or less large uprising has been raised in Cuba which would serve as a specific signal for a general action.

These hopes of the external Cuban counterrevolution, Fidel Castro noted ironically, will remain pipe dreams. Our situation is strong right now, and there can be no talk of some broad, large uprising in the country. In recent days a number of quite large conspiratorial centers, which set as their goal the organization of uprisings in various parts of the country, have actually been discovered and rendered harmless. Therefore now attempts of the counterrevolution to begin an uprising have become even more unrealistic than before. Individual acts of terrorism are rather gestures of desperation and powerlessness than a sign of strength.

Fidel Castro said further, recently the Catholic Church, the center of all counterrevolutionary activity, has discredited itself even more in the eyes of the broad strata of the population with its statements hostile to the revolution. Therefore right now it is not in a position to lead the masses of believers. On the contrary, right now the government has to restrain the actions of the people against the Church for foreign policy considerations, for the hatred for the Francoist priests is extraordinarily high. The liquidation of the counterrevolutionary hotbeds in the mountains of Escambray, continued Fidel Castro, is being protracted to a certain degree by virtue of the fact that the counterrevolutionaries are hiding in caves and do not engage in clashes with either units of the people's militia or units of the revolutionary army. Therefore it is obvious that another two or three weeks will be needed for a final elimination of these hotbeds until Escambray is cleared of counterrevolutionaries. However, in a military sense Escambray does not present a problem for the Cuban government any more.

Fidel Castro noted, the USA will try to keep us in constant tension and direct its main efforts at undermining the Cuban revolution from within. Only after this will they probably move the forces of the external counterrevolution, who get direct American support, against Cuba. The actions of the forces of the external counterrevolution are also made difficult by virtue of the fact that Cuba is an island and does not have common borders with other countries. It's not a simple matter to move large assault groups by sea and evidently the relatively calm existence of the Cuban revolution is to a certain degree due to the geographical position of Cuba.

Fidel Castro said, in external terms, the situation is on the whole even better than the Cuban government expected. The 23 [sic; 24] February note of the Cuban government to the government of the countries of Latin America has received a positive reaction in a number of countries of Latin America, not only from the public but from the governments themselves. The Cuban government has received a number of reports from its embassies in Mexico, Ecuador, and Brazil that the governments of these countries regarded the arguments cited in this note with understanding and in all probability will not give in to the pressure of the US government, which is seeking the agreement of the countries of Latin America to a collective severance of relations with Cuba.

In the course of further conversation I asked Fidel Castro's opinion about the advisability of inviting some state and public figures, in particular Raul Roa and [his] son, [Labor Minister Augusto] Martinez Sanchez, [Rolando Díaz] Astarain, [Cuban National Bank President Raúl] Cepero Bonilla, and two or three other people to visit the USSR in 1961 for familiarization with the life of the Soviet people. Fidel Castro said in reply that he would be very grateful if these people were invited to the Soviet Union. These ministers ought to become acquainted not only with the life of the Soviet people, but also with the work of Soviet ministers so that they could adopt the best Soviet practices, which Cuba needs very much. Fidel Castro stressed further that, in his opinion, a trip by Cuban ministers to the Soviet Union will also be useful in political terms. This would help Cuba to implement even closer political cooperation with the USSR, and also help the ministers look at individual international problems more broadly. Concerning the question of the timeframes of the trips of individual Cuban ministers to the USSR, Fidel Castro expressed the wish that the Cuban government could decide itself when it would be more advisable for a particular

minister to go to the USSR after receiving the invitations. This is caused by the fact that the situation in Cuba is constantly tense and therefore the presence of a number of ministers in place is often required.

The rest of the conversation with Fidel Castro turned on ordinary subjects. Guevara and Raul Castro, who expressed approximately the same views, also took part in the discussion.

Embassy Counsellor Cde. B. A. Kazantsev was present at the conversation.

AMBASSADOR OF THE USSR IN THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA
(S. KUDRYAVTSEV)