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**From the Journal of S.M. Kudryavtsev, 'Record of a
Conversation with Fidel Castro, 31 August 1960'**

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Summary:

Fidel Castro speaks about Cuba's domestic situation since the revolution, plans for holding a Popular General Assembly in Havana in September, and his attitude toward the OAS and American imperialism.

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from the journal of S. M. KUDRYAVTSEV

RECORD OF A CONVERSATION

WITH FIDEL CASTRO

31 August 1960

Today I paid Fidel Castro an official visit.

After initial greetings I passed Fidel Castro a message of Cde. N. S. Khrushchev and also a small gift.

Listening closely to the message, Fidel Castro said that he was very touched by the warm words of N. S. Khrushchev and highly appreciates the support which the Soviet Union is giving Cuba in its struggle to strengthen [its] independence. First of all, continued Castro, I would like to ask you to pass [my] sincere gratitude for this message and for everything that he has done to save Cuba from American intervention. N. S. Khrushchev, continued Fidel Castro, made a statement about aid to Cuba at the moment when the direct danger of American military intervention hung over us. After N. S. Khrushchev's statement the US government was forced to retreat and seek new ways to repress the Cuban revolution. Continuing to develop this thought, Fidel Castro said further that N. S. Khrushchev's statement about aid to Cuba in the event it was subjected to aggression from the US made an indelible impression on the Cuban people. Fidel Castro stressed, when N. S. Khrushchev comes to us in Cuba he will be convinced of the love and sympathy he personally and the Soviet Union on the whole enjoy from our people. We understand perfectly well, continued Fidel Castro, that this statement obliges us not to misuse it, but on the contrary to act cautiously, not giving the Americans a pretext to draw Cuba into a provocation. You could be confident that we are acting just that way.

Fidel Castro continued, we would very much like for N. S. Khrushchev to come to our country and be among our people, for at least about two weeks. I am confident, Fidel Castro noted, that N. S. Khrushchev will be surprised by the deep socioeconomic changes which have occurred and are occurring in our country after the victory of the revolution. Fidel Castro stressed, the leader of the Soviet government will be given the warmest reception both from the people and from our revolutionary government.

Beginning a discussion about his plans with respect to a trip to the Soviet Union Fidel Castro said that he will be able to accomplish this cherished dream of his only next year since the rest of the current year will be difficult, and much needs to be done to strengthen the country so that in the event of sudden aggression from the US we should finish the formation of a people's militia, prepare for defense, and be well-armed so that aggression does not catch us unawares.

In the course of further conversation Fidel Castro noted that he is greatly indebted to N. S. Khrushchev inasmuch as he has received many warm messages from him to which he has not yet been able to reply. He will take the time without fail to write a reply to N. S. Khrushchev to this message of is in a calm situation, and tell in this letter about the situation in the country and share opinions about the future plans of the revolutionary government.

Fidel Castro noted in this connection that at a suitable moment he will publish the message of N. S. Khrushchev that I had passed to him in order to make a more perceptible blow to American imperialism.

Then Fidel Castro talked openly and in detail about the situation in the country and the policy of the revolutionary government. The domestic situation, in Fidel Castro's opinion, is strong and does not cause any concern. The peasantry and the working class unreservedly support the policy of the revolutionary government and all its measures. The peasantry and the working class are gradually developing a completely new consciousness, as an example of which might serve the fact that the workers do not raise the question of increasing wages, although they need this. The workers have refused to strike, understanding that at the nationalized enterprises they are working for themselves. The revolutionary government is pursuing wide-scale explanatory work among the peasantry and workers so that they understand the events occurring in the country better and [they] better realize the positive occurrences which the revolution has brought.

Deep social reforms and changes have occurred in the country. More than 50% of the land is in the hands of the cooperatives at the present time. The main industrial enterprises have now gone into the hands of the state. A considerable part of the private enterprises have been put under the control of the government and they can be nationalized at any moment when this is to the advantage of the revolutionary government in political terms.

Speaking of the forces of the counterrevolution, Fidel Castro stressed that these forces are disunited and do not present a serious danger to the Cuban revolution in themselves. However, they are actively used by the Americans for various acts of arson of sugar cane, acts of terrorism, and other provocations. They would have ceased to exist long ago without the support of these forces with weapons and money from the Americans for they have no support among the population.

Fidel Castro continued, in their struggle against Cuba the Americans have also placed hopes on the Catholic Church. However, taking their cue from the Americans, the Church's attempts to stir up a campaign against the revolutionary government has actually failed. The people have not supported the clergy and, on the other hand, the Catholic Church right now has to say prayers for my health, Fidel Castro noted jokingly. We permit these prayers because they are actually turning into rallies in support of the revolutionary government.

In the course of further conversation [the discussion] turned on the foreign policy plans of the Cuban government and the foreign policy situation in which the Cuban revolution is developing.

Fidel Castro said that he was completely confident that the US would never leave Cuba alone, and next year would be characterized by a fierce struggle of American imperialism against the independence of the Cuban state. The resolution of the OAS conference in Costa Rica does not present any danger to Cuba in itself but it will obviously be used by the US at the next stage of the struggle against us and, in particular, in order to seek the adoption of a new resolution with specific proposals about implementing sanctions against Cuba at the inter-American conference in Quito. Fidel Castro continued, of course we also won't sit with folded hands, but on the contrary will deal American imperialism blow after blow.

Fidel Castro talked in this connection about his plans with regard to holding a Popular General Assembly in Havana on 2 September, the goal of which is to give a proper response to the treacherous line of the countries of Latin America in Costa Rica and to again brand the American aggressor. At the same time the goal of the rally will to demonstrate to the whole world and primarily the Latin American public that Cuba is

not afraid of any threats from the US, and that it will pursue its own foreign policy. We attach great importance to this popular assembly, stressed Fidel Castro. We want to turn this assembly into a unique people's town meeting which ought to approve the policy of the revolutionary government and show the US and the Latin American countries that the policy being conducted by Fidel Castro is supported by all the people. Fidel Castro continued, at this rally I will ask our people whether they approve of the aid of the Soviet Union to Cuba. I have no doubt that all the people will say "yes". Thus our policy of developing friendly relations with the Soviet Union will be approved. As regards me personally, said Fidel Castro, as you know I have repeatedly spoken in favor of the comprehensive development of relations of friendship and brotherhood between the Cuban and Soviet peoples and henceforward will consistently put this policy into practice.

Then I will ask our people whether they approve the agreement in Rio de Janeiro "Concerning the Defense of the American Continent". Do the people approve the American-Cuban military agreement [?]

Fidel Castro stressed, I am confident that the people will vigorously declare "no", and we would tear up these agreements on the basis of this popular expression of will. At this rally we will also act on the so-called "Caracas" declaration "Concerning the Fight Against International Communism" and the anti-Cuban resolution adopted at the conference in Costa Rica. We will thereby knock out the legal basis for implementing sanctions against Cuba on the basis of these agreements and resolutions from under the Americans.

In the course of further conversation the question of Cuba's attitude toward the OAS was touched upon. Fidel Castro said that the revolutionary government does not plan to leave the OAS for now, but will use it as a tribune to denounce American imperialism. When he did so Fidel Castro noted jokingly that Cuba will remain in the OAS until it is expelled.

Our further tactics in the struggle with the US, continued Fidel Castro, will be to inflict the most painful blows on it at the most difficult time for them. At an appropriate moment we will squeeze them out of the military base in Guantanamo. We don't plan to do this in the near future in order not to give the US a pretext for an armed attack on Cuba. On one fine day we will organize a broad protest movement in Cuba against the American presence in Havana, even as far as organizing a general hunger strike, and force the Americans to leave Cuba under the pressure of world public opinion.

Dwelling further on the possible plans of American aggression against Cuba, Fidel Castro said that besides the use of counterrevolutionary forces the US will also strengthen the economic blockade. In particular, in 1961 they will obviously refuse to buy Cuban sugar at all and halt the supply of the goods that Cuba needs. Therefore we would like to ask you to give the us necessary help in the further development of trade with Cuba, and in this light we attach great importance to the upcoming talks in Moscow in October of this year in which Guevara will take part from the Cuban side.

The rest of the conversation was about ordinary topics.

Bidding goodbye, Fidel Castro said that he is often outside of Havana. Therefore, in the event we have urgent questions he would like to recommend raising them directly with Dorticos, Raul Castro, or Guevara, who will always find him and pass on the substance of conversations.

The conversation with Fidel Castro passed in an exceptionally friendly atmosphere; what is more, in the course of the conversation he repeatedly stressed his desire to comprehensively develop and strengthen relations with the Soviet Union.

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