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**From the Journal of S.M. Kudryavtsev, 'Record of a
Conversation with Prime Minister of the Republic of
Cuba Fidel Castro Ruz, 13 April 1961'**

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Summary:

Kudryavtsev and Fidel Castro discuss several points of business, including Soviet support Cuba against American aggression, an upcoming agricultural exchange between Cuban students and Soviet specialists, the establishment of a communications network that bypasses New York, and plans for the Cuban Minister of Public Works to visit the Soviet Union.

Castro expresses optimism that the US will not launch a direct military invasion of Cuba, but is wary over smaller acts of terrorism and sabotage by the US and counterrevolutionaries.

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S. M. KUDRYAVTSEV

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

13 April 1961

1. I met with Fidel Castro this evening and in accordance with instructions [I] had I informed him of the content of a conversation Cde. N. S. Khrushchev had with US Ambassador Thompson in which he touched upon the aggressive actions of the US against Cuba.

Having listened closely, Fidel Castro said that first of all he would like to ask me to pass his sincere gratitude to Cde. N. S. Khrushchev for the brilliant and firm defense of Cuba from the aggressive pretensions efforts of American imperialism. We never doubted, stressed Fidel Castro, that the Soviet Union would always be on the side of Cuba and support it at a difficult moment. We are confident that this statement of Cde. N. S. Khrushchev's will undoubtedly exert a sobering effect on the US government, and we do not exclude that Kennedy's statement that the US does not intend to carry out a military intervention against Cuba was a consequence of this firm warning from Cde. N. S. Khrushchev.

We believe in the Soviet Union, we believe Cde. N. S. Khrushchev, stressed Fidel Castro, and no American propaganda will deceive us which tries to instill in us an uncertainty about the possible position of the Soviet Union in the conflict between Cuba and the US.

Then Fidel Castro said that he especially liked the place in the conversation where Cde. N. S. Khrushchev drew a parallel with Iran and in that example convincingly showed all the absurdity and impermissibility of the aggressive actions of the US against Cuba. Fidel Castro stressed, in the person of Cde. N. S. Khrushchev Cuba and the revolutionary government have a loyal friend, and we are very appreciative of this aid and support.

Fidel Castro noted, information about such questions in a confidential manner touches us a great deal and is of great importance to us. These statements of Cde. N. S. Khrushchev will serve for us, the leaders of the Cuban government, as a good orientation and they will instill in us still greater confidence in the final victory of our just cause.

Taking advantage of this opportunity, Fidel Castro said that I would like to assure Cde. N. S. Khrushchev through you that our revolution is enduring. This revolution is strengthening and deepening with each day, and on the whole our matters are going well. Right now we have become considerably more organized, better prepared militarily, and more prepared in a political sense. Now neither external nor domestic enemies are frightening [strany - SIC] to us, although they are many. We are confident that these enemies will be crushed in the event of aggression or some other acts inside the country. The revolution firmly relies on the broad support of the popular masses, who will selflessly defend their achievements, just as the Soviet people did at one time.

Fidel Castro then asked [me] to pass Cde. N. S. Khrushchev, besides the open telegram he sent, his personal cordial congratulations on the occasion of the brilliant victory of Soviet science. The flight of a Soviet man in space made a strong impression on the Cuban people. Cubans rejoice at this success and speak of him as if they were part of this great achievement of the Soviet people. This achievement will undoubtedly have great significance for the cause of peace, and Fidel Castro said I would like to name Major Gagarin the cosmonaut of peace.

In the course of further conversation Fidel Castro stressed that, in his opinion, the Soviet government has acted very wisely making a new call for disarmament and peace on the day of such a brilliant victory of Soviet science.

2. In accordance with instructions [I] had I then informed Fidel Castro about the Soviet government's adoption of his proposal about sending a group of young Soviet people to Cuba with the object of exchanging experience in the field of agriculture. I noted that it is planned to send 150-200 young agricultural specialists - agricultural engineers, tractor drivers, etc.

In reply Fidel Castro said that this decision of the Soviet government makes him very happy, and the young Soviet people will be given the warmest reception in Cuba. It especially makes me happy, stressed Fidel Castro, that it is planned to send specialists of Soviet agriculture, which will be a great help for our public estates and cooperatives.

Fidel Castro then asked me why it is proposed to send only 200 people, and not 1000, as he had asked. I said in reply that we didn't want to create difficulties for the Cuban people inasmuch the housing and organization of the work of such a large group of people will be quite complex. In addition, the arrival of such a large group of young Soviet people in Cuba might be used by American propaganda for purposes hostile to Cuba.

Fidel Castro noted for his part that, in his opinion, the arrival of a group of 1000 people would not create organizational difficulties inasmuch as they would actually be distributed to cooperatives as one or two people to each cooperative. There are 300 public estates (state farms) and 600 cooperatives in the country right now. As concerns American propaganda then, in our opinion, special importance ought not be attached to it, inasmuch, as Fidel Castro noted, otherwise the Americans will find some excuse to attack Cuba all the same. The revolutionary government is not afraid of this propaganda and will be able to give it a proper rebuff in case of necessity. Fidel Castro asked that this group of young Soviet specialists be increased to 300, if possible, so that each public estate has at least one specialist.

Then Fidel Castro expressed a wish that the young Soviet specialists come to Cuba on the same motorship which is to transport 1000 young Cubans to the Soviet Union. He noted, this group of Cuban young people are preparing for a trip to the Soviet Union at the present time. We have selected 1800 candidates, two from each public estate and cooperative. Note [that] these 1800 people will go through a special selection [process] and the most politically reliable 1000 young Cubans of them will be chosen who are devoted to the cause of the revolution. They will arrive in Havana by 25 April where they will receive a minimum of knowledge about the Soviet Union over a month's time. Nunez Jimenez will personally take part in the assemblies if he recuperates by this time. Fidel Castro declared, by the end of May this group will be ready to leave, and it is very good that they will all be able to go on one motorship.

3. Then I informed Fidel Castro about the proposal of the USSR Ministry of Communications about holding talks between Cuba and the USSR on establishing radiotelegraph, telephone, and postal communications, bypassing New York.

Fidel regarded this idea approvingly, stressing that he attaches great importance to the establishment of reliable and continuous communications with the Soviet Union. He said that Minister of Communications Curbelo Morales would head the Cuban delegation, and asked that he be given an opportunity to also familiarize himself with the lives and achievements of the Soviet people.

4. I asked Fidel Castro how he regards a possible invitation to Minister of Public Works Osmany Cienfuegos to the Soviet Union to familiarize himself there with the methods of housing and industrial construction used in our country. Fidel Castro said that he considers this idea very useful and personally would completely agree if Osmany Cienfuegos is also very busy right now with military questions associated with the reorganization of the armed forces of Cuba. In view of this, in Fidel Castro's opinion, a trip by Osmany Cienfuegos ought to be organized somewhat later, for example, in the autumn of this year, that is, after the reorganization of the armed forces of Cuba is completed.

5. In the course of further conversation some questions of the domestic and foreign policy situation developing around Cuba were examined.

Fidel Castro evaluated the situation in quite optimistic tones, stressing that circumstances right now are developing in favor of revolutionary Cuba. Fidel Castro noted, the threat of an invasion of Cuba by the forces of the external counterrevolution, which hung over the country in the first days of April, has considerably lessened and is gradually receding into the background. According to information available to the Cuban government and also various symptoms in current conditions the forces of the external counterrevolution will hardly decide to organize a massive invasion when the revolutionary government has a well-trained army and people's militia. Fidel Castro said, there will obviously not be an invasion such as was contemplated in October of last year, in January, and finally in March of this year. Kennedy understands that the defeat of the of the counterrevolutionary detachments by the forces of the peoples militia might have irreparable consequences both for the counterrevolution itself as well as for the prestige of the US in Latin America. Fidel Castro continued, based on this, we think that the domestic situation in Cuba is strong and stable and is strengthening with each day. Kennedy cannot fail to know that right now the revolutionary army and people's militia represent a serious combat force which is capable to destroying any assault parties of the forces of the external counterrevolution, however large they are. Fidel Castro continued, the revolutionary government is forming the conviction that the US State Department and external counterrevolution are beginning to change the tactics of the struggle against Cuba. At the present time the main reliance is being made not on an invasion of large landing parties, but on infiltrating small groups of 15-20 men each in various points of the country, mainly in mountainous regions. Fidel Castro said, the main task of these groups, as is now becoming clear, includes a gradual accumulation of strength, and primarily the accomplishment of acts of terrorism, various [acts] of subversion, acts of sabotage, etc. We have already detected the appearance of such groups on Cuban territory who have arrived from the US. A number of saboteurs and terrorists have been arrested.

We are absolutely convinced, stressed Fidel Castro, that the Americans and the forces of the internal and external counterrevolution will act in the near future in just this very respect. The internal counterrevolution has become more organized right now, is more skillfully directed from the outside, and is striving to inflict blows on us primarily in the economic sphere. Recently the internal counterrevolution has managed to set fire to several large stores and warehouses with goods and food. Today, 13 April, the counterrevolutionaries set fire to El Encanto, the largest store in Havana. The total losses from subversion and sabotage in the past several days is already reckoned in tens of millions of pesos. The Cuban revolutionary government fully realizes that all the actions of Kennedy and the internal and external counterrevolution controlled by

the US government are directed at causing a breakdown of the economy of the country and to thus cause a growth of dissatisfaction of the broad masses with the policy of the revolutionary government.

Fidel Castro stressed, the revolutionary government, of course, is taking steps to combat the internal counterrevolution. However for now the possibility of subversion and acts of sabotage cannot be completely excluded. Fidel Castro stressed, we have decided to act against the internal counterrevolution decisively. Subversives, terrorists, and saboteurs will be mercilessly eliminated. The people understand such a need right now and even think that in a number of cases our government is acting too leniently with regard to the counterrevolutionaries.

Then the discussion turned on Kennedy's statement that the US supposedly does not intend to make a direct military intervention against Cuba. Fidel Castro said in this connection that this statement has positive importance only in the respect that to some degree it demoralizes the internal counterrevolution which, as is well-known, pins all its hopes on the arrival of American soldiers in Cuba. In reality, Fidel Castro continued, Kennedy will take the previous hostile line with respect to Cuba. Yes, this is what properly follow from his statement. Fidel Castro noted, it seems to me that this statement is a peculiar smokescreen to outwardly not compromise the US before the world and the peoples of Latin America, and in case of necessity to depict the whole matter as if the fight is not between the US and Cuba, but between Cubans of different political tendencies. In reality Kennedy, Fidel Castro continued, will continue the previous hostile line with respect to Cuba. Obviously, they will take steps to further intensify the economic blockade and give even broader aid to the external and internal counterrevolution. We are confident that the subversive activity against our government will be carried out as before. Kennedy hopes that he will be able to smother the Cuban revolution with the aid of this tactic. However, Kennedy is deeply mistaken.

Fidel Castro stressed, the Cuban revolution is developing successfully, and the political consciousness of the masses and their enthusiasm are growing, in spite of all the difficulties. Fidel Castro noted, I am especially happy that right now a consolidation of all the leftist forces in the country is occurring. A process of the merging of these forces is actually going on. At the same a peculiar polarization of forces is occurring - an alignment and some retreat from the revolution by the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie elements. This is a natural process, of course, and it does not frighten us. Fidel Castro noted, the bourgeoisie cannot be made a revolutionaries.

The main thing, Fidel Castro stressed in conclusion, is that we have firm support in the people. The peasantry and working class support the revolution right now, and every day the union of the working class and the peasantry becomes stronger, and this is the guarantee of our victory. Domestic political difficulties do not worry us right now as much as the economic difficulties created by the American blockade. Fidel Castro said, on the whole agriculture and industry are operating successfully, and the country will be supplied with all the necessary kinds of food and manufactured goods with the exception of fats and soap. Rationing will unavoidably have to be temporarily introduced. Fidel Castro stressed, in our opinion it will only further harden the people and teach them to deal with the difficulties with which they will have to cope more than once in the difficult and stubborn battle with the forces of American imperialism.

The rest of the conversation with Fidel Castro touched on several general questions.

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