

June 12, 1961

**From the Journal of S.M. Kudryavtsev, 'Record of a
Conversation with Prime Minister of the Republic of
Cuba Fidel Castro Ruz, 6 June 1961'**

Citation:

"From the Journal of S.M. Kudryavtsev, 'Record of a Conversation with Prime Minister of the Republic of Cuba Fidel Castro Ruz, 6 June 1961'", June 12, 1961, Wilson Center Digital Archive, AVP RF, F. 0104. Op. 17, P. 118, D. 4, ll. 68-71. Obtained by James G. Hershberg and translated by Gary Goldberg.

<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/188146>

Summary:

At a reception for the arrival of Soviet agricultural specialists in Cuba, Kudryavtsev and Fidel Castro discuss the upcoming educational exchange between the Soviet Union and one thousand young Cubans, invitations from the Soviet Union to host members of the Cuban government, and Yuri Gagarin's upcoming visit to Cuba.

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

Secret. Copy N^o 2
12 June 1961
N^o 223

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

6 June 1961

1. On 6 June we held a reception on the motorship Gruziya for the Cuban leadership in connection with the arrival of 300 young Soviet agricultural specialists in Cuba.

Raul Castro, ministers of the Cuba government in Havana during these days, the leadership of the friends [SIC} headed by Cde. Blas Roca, representatives of all other revolutionary organizations of Cuba, the leadership of young rebels, and also representatives of the National Institute of Agrarian Reform, under whose authority our young specialists will be, were also at the reception, besides Fidel Castro and President Dorticos.

The reception passed in an exceptionally cordial and friendly atmosphere.

Fidel Castro, President Dorticos, and others invited were familiarized with the motorship in advance. Fidel Castro expressed the most genuine admiration at everything [he] saw, saying that he was on this ship for the first time and envied the young Cuban peasants who would be sent on this motorship to the Soviet Union in several days to study agriculture and the Russian language.

Fidel Castro carefully asked the captain of the motorship how the ship was steered, inspected the wardrooms where the young Cuban peasants would be quartered, and even lay down in a cot, expressing his unfeigned admiration for everything he had seen.

In the conversation that then took place over a comradely lunch Fidel Castro said that the trip of the young Cuban peasants to the USSR is a very important political matter which will have invaluable importance for the consolidation of the Cuban state. These young Cuban peasants, he continued, will understand and tell others that they were granted an opportunity to go to the Soviet Union on such a wonderful ship only thanks to the fact that a revolution was accomplished in Cuba. For the majority of them have not even been beyond the bounds of their village, but now they will cross the ocean and be in the first great socialist state, the Soviet Union. Fidel Castro further stressed that he would like to ask me to again express his sincere and deep appreciation to the Soviet government for its decision to accept a thousand young Cuban peasants for study.

After the end of the lunch Fidel Castro spoke warmly with the captain, with representatives of our young people, and the instructors who will accompany the young Cubans en route. Right here he gave instructions to the leadership of the INRA [translator's note: expansion unknown, but probably the Spanish initials of The National Institute for Agrarian Reform] that the young Soviet agricultural specialists be used in Cuba more rationally, stressing that he will personally follow the progress of their work himself. Before leaving the motorship Fidel Castro shared his impressions about the conversations with our youth, stressing that they swept him off

his feet with their zest for life, innocence, and desire to help Cuba.

It was felt from all the conversation that Fidel Castro said this sincerely and with all his heart.

2. In accordance with instructions [I] had I informed Fidel Castro about an invitation for Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cuba Raul Roa to visit the Soviet Union with [his] family as a guest of the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs; Minister of Labor of Cuba Augusto Martinez Sanchez, as a guest of the Chairman of the State Committee for Questions of Labor and Wages; Minister of Finance Rolando Diaz Ast[a]rain, as a guest of the Soviet Minister of Finance; the President of the National Bank of Cuba Raul Sepero Bonilla, as a guest of the Chairman of the USSR State Bank; and the Minister of Public Works of Cuba Osmany Cienfuegos, as a guest of the Chairman of the State Committee for Construction Matters. Referring to my last discussion with him on this question, I told Fidel Castro that I would like to coordinate the timeframes of the trips of the aforementioned ministers with him right now, and also the times to send them the official invitations. When doing this I said that the Soviet side is ready in principle to send the invitations to the ministers at any time convenient to them. I continued, the invitees will be given an opportunity to travel around the Soviet Union, and also an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the work of the corresponding ministries and institutions of the USSR. I noted that, of course, the Soviet side would bear all the expenses associated with the invitations to the aforementioned people.

Fidel Castro said that first of all he would like to ask that the Soviet government be passed his sincere gratitude for displaying such friendly attention and granting the request of the Cuban government. Fidel Castro stressed, the trip to the Soviet Union of Raul Roa, Astarain, Sepero Bonilla, and Osmany Cienfuegos and their familiarization not only with the lives of the Soviet people, but also with the work of the Soviet ministries will be useful for them in their further activity in Cuba. Fidel Castro noted, Martinez Sanchez is unfortunately very seriously ill at the present time and he needs to be quickly hospitalized. Fidel Castro said that, in his opinion, the official invitations could have already been sent to the aforementioned ministers with an indication that they are being invited to the Soviet Union at a time convenient for them. But on the receipt of the official invitations the government of Cuba will discuss and approve the approximate timeframe for the trip of each minister separately. Fidel Castro noted, the problem is that we are still not accustomed to planning and we are not able to plan our lives and to schedule the work of the ministers.

Fidel Castro noted, I myself very much would like to go to the Soviet Union, but the situation still does not permit this to occur. Possibly I will go to the USSR right after the conference of the heads of state of neutral countries, that is, at the end of August or the beginning of September. Of course, this still is not final, and I will coordinate this question with the Soviet government beforehand. Further developing the thought about the plans of his trip to the Soviet Union, Fidel Castro spoke about how he does not yet have confidence about whether he will be able to accomplish this intention inasmuch as the situation continues to remain quite tense and fraught with certain dangers. He stressed, everything will depend on the further development of the situation, especially as right now it still is not clear how Kennedy will behave and whether he is organizing a new military provocation against Cuba during the summer.

3. In the course of further conversation I informed Fidel Castro about the granting of his request about the arrival of cosmonaut Yu. A. Gagarin in Cuba to take part in the national holiday of Cuba, 26 July.

Fidel Castro was very glad at this news. This is remarkable news, he said, and we will take every measure to give Major Gagarin a rousing and friendly welcome from the Cuban people. Fidel Castro noted further, the trip of Yu. Gagarin to Cuba will find an enormous political response not only among the broadest strata of the Cuban people,

but also among the peoples of Latin America. Fidel Castro continued, I would like to ask you to pass the Soviet government my cordial and sincere gratitude for agreeing to the arrival of Yu. A. Gagarin in Cuba. This decision of the Soviet government, he continued, will promote the further growth of a deep and sincere friendship of the Cuban people toward the peoples of the Soviet Union to an even greater degree.

Fidel Castro immediately informed President Dorticos, who was also present at the luncheon which I held in honor of the arrival of the 300 Soviet young agricultural specialists in Cuba, about this. For his part President Dorticos also expressed great satisfaction about the upcoming arrival in Cuba of Yu. A. Gagarin, stressing that his visit would impart special political importance to the 26 July holiday.

Fidel Castro asked me to consult with Moscow, whether the Cuban government can publish a report in the press in the near future about Yu. A. Gagarin coming to Cuba in order to begin a broad campaign to prepare for his reception ahead of time.

Fidel Castro said that all the people accompanying Yu. Gagarin will, like him, be guests of the Cuban government.

The entire diplomatic staff of the Embassy attended the reception.

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