

**March 20, 1965**

**Minutes of Conversation between Cuban Defense  
Minister Raúl Castro and Polish Leader Władysław  
Gomułka, Warsaw, 20 March 1965**

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**Summary:**

During his visit in Poland, Castro relates Cuba's position on a conversation taken place in Moscow and why it may be of interest to the Cubans. Gomułka raises the issue of the missiles. In Gomułka's opinion two factors were decisive: contradictions which arose within the socialist camp and the policy which was conducted by Khrushchev. Gomułka is assured that US is capable of conducting a war with Cuba by way of conventional weapons, it does not have to use nuclear weapons. It is clear that the socialist camp and the USSR cannot defend Cuba in any other way but by using nuclear weapons. If a conflict is meant to be, then it will be a nuclear conflict, there is no other way. Gomułka further raises a question whether to go into a nuclear war or not. Castro disagrees with a manner nuclear weapons were withdrawn from Cuba by Soviets. Khrushchev explained that he did not have time. Per Gomułka, Khrushchev conducted a policy which was not thought-out and which was all-out. Gomułka further discusses his talks with Chinese and Vietnamese comrades re: nuclear weapons issue.

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Translation - English

Present

Cdes. J. Cyrankiewicz

Z. Kliszko

M. Spychalski

M. Moczar

G. Korczyński

A. Werblan

J. Czesak

From the Cuban side

Cdes. R. Castro

Carlos Olivares Sanchez - Cuba's ambassador in Moscow

Fernando L. Flores Ibarra - Cuba's ambassador in Warsaw

After exchanging a few remarks on the subject of the destruction in Warsaw and its reconstruction, and about a number of Polish citizens who died in the last war, Cde. R. Castro wishes to express his thanks one more time for the invitation to Poland extended by Cde. [Zenon] Kliszko and states that he highly values cooperation with the Polish delegation, with which he had a few conversations at a meeting in Moscow. Cuba's position is undoubtedly known to us, but he would be willing to inform or explain what may be of interest to us.

Cde. Gomułka

We are delighted with your visit. Cde. Kliszko invited you on behalf of our Political Bureau - he consulted with us on this matter. We advised that he take advantage of this opportunity and invite you. What can be of interest to us? Generally, we know a lot and we are well-informed, even though some matters were not clear to us. We did not have a clear picture as to your position regarding the controversy [spór]<sup>1</sup> within the international workers' movement. When this dispute manifested itself in the harshest ways, it seemed to us that you were positioning yourselves somewhere in the middle and that you were not declaring yourself clearly. We would readily listen to how this looks now. The position assumed by you in Moscow is uniform with ours, with the CPSU [Communist Party of the Soviet Union], and with most parties which participated in the meeting.

I recently read Cde. Fidel Castro's speech to students in Havana. Besides, we published it in our press. This speech was directed against the aggression of the US imperialists towards Vietnam. It was not difficult for us to decipher to whom it was addressed. It contains a sharp criticism of the CPC's [Communist Party of China's; CCP's] position towards Vietnam, as well as its position toward the international workers' movement.

It seems to us that, due to your familiarization with the actual state of affairs, some evolution took place regarding your positions.

The second issue is not quite clear to us: We do not know your ideas as to the prospects of legalizing the Cuban revolution, organizing the organs of the local authority as well as building a party which, as we know, is in the process of being built. You surely must have some ideas regarding these matters. Such matters are hazy, not clear to us. If we may, could you also perhaps say a few words about the economic situation and the prospects with regard to this issue?

Raul Castro

The news about the [Sino-Soviet] divergences [rozbieżności]<sup>2</sup> reached us in 1960. We saw how they were developing and how the polemics were sharpening, how it turned into a heated [ostrza]<sup>3</sup> struggle and what damage it caused to the unity of the socialist camp and the international workers' movement. We saw a fractional tendency being developed. We could not assume any position at that time, as not everything was clear to us. Besides, our comrades also had contradictory opinions. Some were leaning to one side while others to another. At that time our main task was the consolidation and protection of our revolution.

We cannot help but appreciate the activities of counter-revolutionaries in the United States of America as well as those in countries of Latin America which are conducting intensive training for counter-revolutionaries. The social base in their countries is very weak for their activities. We also made some efforts in the field of the economy. We now know that the course towards such an abrupt liquidation of monoculture was a mistake.

It was difficult for us to distinguish [rozeznąć się]<sup>4</sup> within the polemics which were conducted; the positions taken by the CPSU and the CPC [CCP] on the same issue were extremely different. We did not possess sufficient knowledge [lit. components or elements] in order to take any position. Given the abovementioned reasons we could not drag the country [i.e., Cuba] into these polemics. We never placed our national interests before the interests of the international workers' movement and the socialist camp. We understood that placing missiles in Cuba was in the interest of the socialist camp as well as that of Cuba. If it were only for Cuba we would have never agreed to it. We agreed to their installation since we believed that it was in the interest of the socialist camp.

One could ask us: How could it have been possible when this [installation of missiles] placed the world at the brink of war?

We agreed in absolute confidence without demanding any detailed definition of its causes. Here we demonstrated a total lack of experience. After signing the agreement with the USSR regarding this issue, Khrushchev was to visit Cuba within 6 months and to disclose, to legalize this fact publicly, as this was to assume an official nature. We had many doubts. I went to Moscow at that time [2-17 July 1962] in order to clear up the matter. We were convinced that we could not hide this fact from foreign intelligence, which was conducting activities on our soil, and that this fact would be known before it was officially announced. I presented these doubts to Khrushchev: What will happen if this comes out? He answered at that time that we had nothing to fear. The Soviet Union is surrounded by US military bases and if Americans start acting up we will send in the entire Baltic fleet to your rescue. We then came to the conclusion that the crux of the matter was surely the bases and thus creation of a pretext for a discussion with the US regarding the liquidation of their bases surrounding the USSR.

The fact of the missile installation could not be hidden, since in order to transport them to certain places roads had to be built. Besides, this was a very visible transport, a line of trucks whose cargo reached 20 meters in length. We demanded that an agreement with regard to this matter be announced officially at an earlier date. We were told not to be afraid. I must say that we were very concerned despite this [assurance]. We know what happened next. Cde. Fidel suddenly found out at breakfast [on 28 October 1962] from the American press about the decision of the USSR to withdraw the missiles as well as about Khrushchev's proposition with regard to establishing international inspection whose task was to monitor whether everything was withdrawn.

We had already realized a little earlier that the Americans were up to something. Our intelligence informed us about a sudden meeting in Washington and the fact that

senators had been brought down by planes and helicopters. We were convinced that this had to do with us. After a meeting we decided to announce mobilization. Everything became clear. We presented the issue before the ambassador of the USSR, [Aleksandr Alekseyev]. After lunch, on the same day [22 October 1962], Fidel decided to announce the mobilization. I wanted to postpone it for a few hours since such a mobilization is very costly, but Fidel did not consent to it and he was right. After a few hours Kennedy gave his speech and this is how a crisis in the Caribbean Gulf [Sea] began. The result of the crisis was such that Khrushchev became the champion of peace, its defender, and we instead became advocates of the thermonuclear war. And how do the guarantees for our security look like on the US side? Kennedy is not alive, and [US Secretary of State Dean] Rusk has recently stated that nothing like this exists.

We had never placed and will not place our national interests before general interests; that is, the interests of the socialist camp. We are separated from you by 6 thousand km; we do not have any alliance of a broader nature, or even a bilateral one. Our security is contingent on an oral agreement with a president who is already dead.

A big misunderstanding arose when our nation found out about the withdrawal of the Soviet troops. At that time the necessity arose to reveal before the nation the fact of a divergence between the USSR and us. We said that we would clear up the matter during the international talks. This position of ours was not met with any understanding either, but if we did not do this, it could have been worse. After all we could not cover the sun with one finger.

Since this time we have not had any points of misunderstanding, except perhaps a letter from Khrushchev which alluded to the necessity of stating our position towards the divergence within the international workers' movement. In connection with this, we sent Cde. [President Osvaldo] Dorticos to Moscow [in October 1964], but at the same time Khrushchev was removed from power. This fact was explained to Cde. Dorticos with regards to [Khrushchev's] health; we were not told anything else. We took offence at that; we did not believe it. It would have been better if they had told us that they could not talk at the time and that they would explain later, but not like this. This matter was explained to us at a later time.

We do not want to talk about Khrushchev. We have much respect for him, and we are much indebted to him. He was our friend. However, he made many mistakes, and because he was directing the party, thus the party also made mistakes. This had been already overcome, but some issues remained as to which we did not persuade the Soviet comrades nor did they persuade us. We will not go into them now. The experience, however, tells us to be cautious and not to trust anyone blindly.

This is what our attitude looks like towards the dispute. We could not be influenced by information flowing from this or that source. We did not take any position due to all these reasons.

In the presence of the existing situation, we began [the talks] with the parties in Latin America where there were also specific divergences; some which were our fault and some which were not. We have our own opinion regarding the process of revolutionary struggle and tactics, but each party has to work out its own policy. The meeting in Havana [of Latin American Communist Parties in late November 1964] had a concise agenda: the exchange of experiences, development of the revolutionary movement, the position with regard to the divergence as well as bilateral relations.

As a result of the meeting we cleared up a series of contentious issues. Some differences still remained as far as some other matters are concerned, but we established norms of mutual relations which would preclude deepening of differences. We also decided to dispatch a delegation [headed by Carlos Rafael Rodriguez] to Moscow and Beijing, which consisted of representatives from nine parties, in order to

present our position with regard to the divergence within the international workers' movement.

Our delegation was very well received in Moscow and they agreed with our position. In Beijing, however, as soon as they sat at the table after preliminary niceties, the assaults and accusations began, directed at both present and absent parties. Mao Zedong thought up three "little devils" directed at us: that we are afraid of imperialism, that we are afraid of the People's Republic of China, and that we are afraid of the Cuban people.

He asked Cde. [Rodney] Arismendi, the secretary of Argentina's [sic; actually Uruguay's] CP: How many are you in Argentina [sic; Uruguay]? One and a half million, he answered. Then, you join us. There will be more of you.

He asked how parties in Latin America can develop without any leadership. The point was not understood. After all, the comrades said, we are working, we are fighting, etc. Yes, yes, but you need leadership. He stated that polemics have to be public, that one can wait for resolving the dispute for eight thousand years, and so on. One could not discuss anything in light of such arguments. In addition, he would shout every now and then that he was a dogmatist.

After this meeting we decided to dispatch our own delegation. Cde. Guevara went there [in February 1965]. Both sides maintained their own point of view. Mao did not receive Cde. Guevara despite the fact that up until this point he received all Cubans who possessed authority to a larger or a lesser degree.<sup>5</sup>

This is our own personal experience.

After this, the Albanians published an article in which they called the meeting of the parties from Latin America in Havana the Soviet Union's stratagem. They stated that revisionist parties want to take advantage of the Cuban revolution, but that they were convinced that the Cuban party would not allow itself to be dragged into this.

We did not agree with the nature of the previous meeting in Moscow and we did not intend to go. We decided to go when we were informed about the change. We recognized that our absence could seriously damage the cause of the international workers' movement, and that our absence could be read as if we shared a mutual line with the CCP. These justifications<sup>6</sup> influenced the change of our position.

A series of divergences still exist in the relations between the USSR and Cuba, but they are indeed bigger with China. Nobody, until now, could persuade us as to the benefits flowing from the hitherto polemics as well as to the fractional activity. On our continent, we have a series of parties working underground devoting most of their work to fighting the fractional activity.

Here, Raul Castro refers to the details of foreign student demonstrations in front of the US Embassy in Moscow, stating that he sees this incident as a planned provocation.

All these Chinese actions are taking place at a time when North Vietnam is being continuously bombed by the US. In this situation, difficulties are being made for the Soviet Union in sending aid and the refusal to allow passage of the Soviet planes.

All these facts lead to the conclusion that the CCP is assuming erroneous positions. This unhealthy attitude of the Chinese as to polemics points to the fact that it will be very difficult to attain unity. Actually, they do not desire it. One can wait 8-10 thousand years, as long as fractions evolve everywhere and until there are two

centers. They desire unconditional surrender of all parties, including the CPSU, and until this takes place, unity is impossible.

We are interested in the active operation of the CPSU. Just as other parties, we cannot help but appreciate the role and the position of the CPSU in the international movement. The new Soviet leadership had already done much good. It had undertaken a series of steps which we highly approve of.

There was once a problem regarding Khrushchev's [proposed] visit to the FRG. At that time [i.e., the summer-autumn of 1964] we expressed our negative opinion regarding this matter. We also conveyed our remarks with regard to a series of other issues and we will continue to do so.

At the moment the Chinese evoke xenophobia and national hatred through their activities; we saw this among foreign students in Moscow. They strive towards a hegemonic role within the workers' movement. The distance which separates us will increase. On the other hand, a series of steps undertaken by the USSR made us closer to the Soviet Union. This is the situation in which we currently find ourselves.

The divergences could be resolved through a series of conferences. A mutual line of struggle against imperialism will contribute towards overcoming the divergences. The Chinese will not participate in any conferences. We are convinced of that. Due to these considerations we put forth the inexpediency of designating a place and time for the conference, and we suggested the necessity of creating a friendly atmosphere.

We are particularly interested in the parties which are different from us, but which do not take the same position as the CCP. There are such Asian parties with which one can cooperate. There are different opinions and trends within the Vietnamese party.

We are very concerned about the situation in Vietnam, since the imperialists are attacking it by using new elements. We are divided. The Chinese talk so much about a paper tiger, but they have an example in Vietnam of what this paper tiger looks like. Not only are they not doing anything themselves, but they are also impeding the USSR from providing aid. Perhaps the Soviet aid deprives the Chinese of yet another argument in the quarrel. What will happen if the imperialists start a limited aggression against us?

The U2 planes are still flying over Cuba. We are not using missiles against them in accordance with the agreement with the USSR. The American imperialists are incessantly organizing provocations against us. From the time of the crisis we counted five thousand provocations of a different sort. Recently they seriously wounded our soldier. He was shot through a small window in a fortification with a precision rifle. We moved our fortification on the border with Guantanamo by 50m, thus creating a 500-meter dense belt. The aggressors set out into this territory by one or in groups of a few; they busy themselves and go back. Our country is small, we cannot push up-country, as in the end we would fall into the sea.

The aggressiveness of the enemy intensifies with the degree of the increase of divergences within the international workers' movement and within the socialist camp. We debated this matter, we conducted a detailed analysis of the enemy's capabilities and we concluded that we need to revise our plans. We accepted the fact that we could become an object of a local war and the territory of the retaliation of imperialism. We decided to make preparations for such a possibility. These are very expensive undertakings. The majority of facilities have to be built and hidden underground. Even though our country is small we cannot be strong everywhere. In order to carry out the designed program we were forced to stop a series of works in other fields. The condition, which they are giving us, is to entirely cut off relations with the socialist camp. Such a condition precludes all conversations.

There is still one more brigade of Soviet soldiers in Cuba. We asked that it not be withdrawn since this may cause mistaken calculations on the part of the imperialists, and this could lead to who knows where [Nie wiadomo dokąd]. This brigade serves as a symbolic force, but it is important psychologically. The USSR consented. I am talking about all this in order to facilitate the understanding of our position.

We did not sign the treaty banning exercises using nuclear weapons since the US base exists on our soil. As to the agreement itself, we received it positively.

This is how our cause and our position present themselves.

W. Gomułka

In most matters our views are convergent. Perhaps we see some matters differently, e.g. the issue of the missiles. It is difficult for us to know all the details of this issue. In my opinion two factors were decisive: contradictions which arose within the socialist camp as well as the policy which was conducted by Khrushchev.

You trusted Khrushchev's policy. They perhaps did not want to specify a series of details. Nevertheless, the issue was clear from the very beginning. American imperialism is capable of conducting a war with Cuba by way of conventional weapons, it does not have to use nuclear weapons. It is clear that the socialist camp and the USSR cannot defend Cuba in any other way but by using nuclear weapons. This is clear and you are aware of this. If a conflict is meant to be, then it will be a nuclear conflict, there is no other way.

In my opinion, Khrushchev conducted a policy which was not thought-out and which was all-out [va-bank], and when his scheme was not working out, then he had to withdraw. Besides, there was no other way. If one makes a mistake, then one needs to do one's best in order to minimize the consequences. The withdrawal did not strengthen, but weakened the socialist camp. But what could be done if not doing one's best to turn around this setback to one's benefit and to that of the socialist camp? The evidence that this is a peaceful policy of the USSR was enhanced by influences within the world opinion. Everyone is aware today that if this fact<sup>7</sup> did not exist then things would be better.

It is not, as you say, that you subordinate your policy to the interests of the socialist camp. The party and the government of a country are responsible for that country's policy. I am convinced that if there were no divergences then one would not even have the Soviet propositions regarding the missiles. Here, perhaps, exists the seed of Cuba's misunderstanding of the situation. Cde. Fidel and the leadership resented the fact that the withdrawal of the missiles took place without any consultation. This is correct. One can feel resentful or feel offended by the fact that Khrushchev did not consult with you prior to that, but on the other hand, this attests to the assessment of the situation by the Soviet comrades. The situation at the time was very tense. There was a problem: to go into a nuclear war or not? One should not exclude the fact that such a situation may arise, but as long as one can avoid it then one should avoid it. One day, history will assess this and it will educe pros and cons. One must say that Fidel was against the missiles' withdrawal and that he adheres to this position even today. In a real situation, Cuba would have to be the first one to face the consequences of nuclear repression. The US is capable of attacking Cuba by way of conventional weapons, thereby destroying it.

Cuba's position towards the dispute and [its] certain tendencies towards supporting these or other Chinese arguments were contingent on this missile issue. If the Chinese reasoned according to the categories of Fidel and the Cuban leadership, then perhaps their position could have been right. But they reason according to other

categories. We also had some illusion as to our Chinese comrades. Nevertheless, we tried to understand them and to get to the core of their argument by following the principles of proletarian internationalism. Afterwards, based on the evidence, we concluded that the Chinese comrades are subordinating their international policy to that of their narrowly understood national interests, or more specifically, to their great-power tendencies. We do not deny their position as a great power country. We repeatedly stated that China is a grand country and that they deserve this position. The means and methods chosen for this goal are typical of all nationalistic countries. We also did not praise the arguments which were used in the polemics between the CPSU and the CPC, and in our publications and speeches we did not use them. We stated at our congress what we think of the policy conducted by them. It seems to us that our assessment is correct. Besides, this confirms a series of later events.

During the visit in Moscow, on the occasion of the October Revolution [in November 1964], we talked twice to Chinese comrades and, while over there, we also presented twice the situation in Vietnam as a central issue which required an agreement and establishing some kind of a line of action. There is no decisive answer on the part of the socialist camp with regard to the aggressive undertakings of imperialism and to the bombing.

Our Chinese comrades did not take up this problem. They did not want to discuss this subject. It became clear to us that the existing situation suits them. Besides, this is in accord with the line of an interview which Mao Zedong gave to [American writer Edgar] Snow.<sup>8</sup> It seemed as if in the interview Mao Zedong was inviting Americans to take aggressive actions by stating that the People's Republic of China will not undertake any steps that would involve it in the Vietnam conflict and that they would react only then when they are attacked and when the Chinese border is crossed. He even invites the US imperialism towards the People's Republic of Vietnam by stating that if they took the entire North Vietnam, then they would have 30 million Vietnamese conducting war against them. This interview is very interesting. I am not sure if the comrades had read it (R. answers that he did not read it). It is worth reading. This testifies to the fact that the situation which exists in Vietnam suits the CPC. That is why the Chinese position is not a surprise to us. The comrades are undoubtedly familiar with the conversation between Mao and Kosygin [on 11 February 1965]. In this conversation Mao clearly states: you take care of Europe and do not poke your nose into Asia. Given this, there is nothing peculiar about the fact that they refused to agree to let the Soviet planes fly to Vietnam. Neither the Chinese party nor the Chinese government wants to take a single step which would give the US an excuse to attack them.

Imperialism cannot help but decipher the policy which attacks the Soviet Union for not providing aid in the situation when one himself does not do anything. One can draw various conclusions from such a policy.

The party as well as the government of China are afraid of US imperialism. The basic premise of the Chinese policy is not to let US imperialism attack China directly. They have the right to be afraid of this, but what type of steps are they taking against this? It is a great conciliation towards US imperialism. Even the official Chinese statements regarding the incident in the Gulf of Tonkin corroborate this. The first one was already mild, and in the recent ones the expression that "they would give aid" even disappeared. How to explain this? They say more and more that the Vietnamese nation does not need help and that it will take care of itself. It is so strong that it will conquer American imperialism on its own. And how could they protect themselves against imperialism? Only through a unity with the USSR and the socialist camp. Not only are they not thinking about it, but they are doing everything in order not to create any impressions that they would go for such a unity. One of the examples of this is the student demonstrations in front of the US embassy in Moscow, in front of the USSR embassy in Beijing, as well as the return of 4 students to Beijing. This was an act of outright provocation. After all, there is a British diplomatic post in China.



England is in solidarity with the US in its actions against Vietnam due to its own interests. They could have made such a demonstration in Beijing, and to vent all their hatred. But not only did they not do anything in their own country, but they also created provocation in Moscow. And this when? At a time when they are aware of the USSR's official request for help, and after the refusal for the passage of the Soviet planes. It is clear that they want to turn the world opinion and that of their own nation in a different direction; that is to portray the USSR as a partner of the US, and themselves as the only advocates of the struggle against imperialism. We had intelligence that these 4 students got on the plane in a normal manner in Moscow, and in Beijing one of them had forgotten his part and started climbing down the steps. They quickly dragged him inside and got him out on the stretcher along with others. These may be amusing facts, but they testify to what methods Chinese propaganda is clinging to.

We had certain illusions, but also many reservations, as to the policy conducted by Khrushchev. We expressed this repeatedly and we did not hold it inside. We also think today that what Khrushchev was doing gave the Chinese excellent reasons, but he was right on one thing, and that is, that currently no agreement is possible with them. Later events proved this thesis. At the time when the Chinese party went for the aggressive and street polemics, it was already being guided by the policy which is being conducted today in a different situation. One could say a lot on this topic. Why are they conducting such a policy? There may be many reasons. One should see it as certain means of pressuring the US in the fight for their interests as a great power. "The conflict in Vietnam can be resolved only when we, the Chinese, agree to it." This is some kind of a trump card. And this is how they present the issue. This is how it currently looks.

We talked with [North Vietnamese Prime Minister] V.[sic; P.] V. Dong during the visit in Moscow [in November 1964]. At the time he suggested that we look for a way, that we take advantage of our capabilities towards the facilitation and acceleration of a political solution with regard to the Vietnam problem. Not so long ago there were good possibilities for such a solution of this issue, and as we see it, the US would have gone for it. Today, the [North] Vietnamese government, being under the influence of the Chinese position, refuses a political solution. In other words, it is counting on a military solution. We talked with him by stating that if they see a possibility of co-opting the South Vietnamese Army, then perhaps one could count on such a solution. However, if the US and the South Vietnamese government can organize an army of half a million and not allow a massive crossing to the other side, then one cannot dream of some military solution.

They now put forth such conditions that one can only hold talks if the Americans withdraw, and when they do withdraw, then the talks can occur only with the National Liberation Front and not with the North Vietnamese government. This is an unconditional demand for capitulation. If one wants to do so, then one needs to place the enemy in such a situation that one has to destroy and crush the enemy as was done with Hitler in Berlin in order to be able to place conditions for absolute capitulation. I am not inclined to believe that this fight suits the United States. We have several grounds on which to base our assumption that they would readily withdraw while saving face. In these conditions, however, they cannot do so. As for now they are conducting a policy of harassment, exacerbating the situation and bombing North Vietnam. It is a dead-end street that they are stepping into. It is difficult to conjecture that they would act in a manner as to strive for a world conflict. But this can last for a few years. This is not a trifle. The bombings may be meaningless from a military point of view, but they will exhaust the country economically. From a strategic point of view this has a full justification. If this were to last for 2-4 years, then one could easily imagine the consequences, as not only a military problem, but also an economic problem would arise. After all the economy of this country is relatively weak. Vietnamese comrades said themselves that before the liberation they were eating rice once a day and now they eat it twice a day. This is a great progress. This is an important issue, as people have to eat, and this in turn requires developing the economy.

I am afraid that our Vietnamese comrades may miss the current opportunity. I am

afraid that in 2-3 years there will be such a situation in which they will have no choice but to agree to a worse conditions [for a deal]. This would be in accord with the Chinese line since one would be able to attack the USSR for not wanting to help, for conducting a revisionist policy, and so on. This is at times a catchy slogan especially at a time when people are badly off. When Khrushchev withdrew the missiles such slogans were also catchy in your country. A great nation comes and it says: "Here are the guilty ones; we had already been saying this for a few years, we demonstrated even in Moscow, and they beat our students."

The Albanians are already writing that the United States informed the USSR that they would be bombing North Vietnam. Indeed, this occurred. The Soviet Union was informed about this an hour before. This was to signify that they were not starting a war. The Albanians did not write, however, that the Chinese had also been informed about this. The Albanians did not know that the USSR had been informed; the Chinese told them. They did not say, however, that a British charge d'affaires in Beijing [Donald Hopson] also informed the Chinese at the same time. The British Ambassador in Warsaw [Sir George Clutton] told us about this referring to an Albanian letter [newspaper].<sup>9</sup> The notification was simultaneous in Moscow and in Beijing.

The Chinese want something to bargain with. What I am saying here may seem brutal, far away from the principles of the proletarian internationalism and Marxism-Leninism, but this is what it is. This is how I see them.

We understand the policy of Cuba. Some time ago we had put forth before the Soviet Union that one had to indispensably come into an understanding with the Chinese and to establish a mutual line and in this way protect Cuba. What will we do if imperialism attacks your country? We do not have any strategy for such an eventuality. If we presented this issue to the Chinese today, they would refuse all discussions. I don't know if an attack would not be in their interest. What to do then? Start a nuclear war? Such a situation already existed and it was decided that "No." How can one work out a mutual strategy without China? Two systems exist and one should think and plan according to these categories. If one country is attacked, this means that the entire system is being attacked. The Chinese do not want to think of it by following such a framework. Many communists do not understand this. In my opinion, many communists in Cuba also did not, and still do not, understand this. We are in a difficult situation. We cannot even publicly state that China does not allow the passage for the planes and they know about this.

We are divided by a large precipice; we have no chances for unity. How will this further develop? Much depends on the position of the entire communist movement. If such a situation arose in which out of 81 parties, 80 or 79 parties would come to the conference while 2 or 3 parties, including China, would not participate, this would force the CPC into changing their tactics. Politics is not a free-art type of issue, it has to be adjusted to the situation. The Chinese do not understand. These are wise and experienced people. They have a large tradition of statehood. They think that as long as they can continue this line, they will do so.

There is no point to play at prophesizing. I agree with what you say, and that is, that a joint conference with the Chinese is not realistic. This is an opposite pole of their policy.

I understand you. I read the most recent speech by Fidel Castro in which he states that one has to give all the assistance to Vietnam. This statement suits the Chinese (the surprise of R. Castro). Well, only a small group of people knows at whom it is directed, right? As a matter of fact, the Chinese are saying the same thing on the outside. I would not exclude the fact that some day the US would try to encroach on China's territory with its bombs, perhaps by mistake, I don't know. Even if it were only for the purpose of examining their reaction.

Mao says that a war would unite us and that it would create conditions conducive to unity. Such statements are not serious. They do not suit the situation. This is a fatality. One can avoid the war, but in order to do this one needs unity.

We realize that your country is like an outpost. What is decisive in your country? How do we see this based on our own experiences? Of course, it is difficult to compare. These are different countries and different conditions; nevertheless fundamental and mutual matters exist. Armed forces are very important to the fight against the internal, and also external, counterrevolution. But no less decisive issue is creating such conditions in which one could not, under any circumstances, restore a capitalist system.

I read somewhere about an estimate that Cuba, based on its own climactic and other conditions, is able to feed 50 million people. The essential matter is to improve the economy. For Cuba to help improve the well-being of its own people, thereby becoming an example for the entire Latin America in this respect, would mean projecting the revolution. This is more than any propaganda. A people which connect their well-being with a revolution will not go back to an old [system] under any circumstances.

Looking at your conditions, this is not comparable, even despite the fact that although we are not most advanced relative to our neighbors, there is no possibility in our country to go back to capitalism under any conditions. There are no people, there is no one worker, who would say that a factory which was either made into a public property or built by him is to be returned to private hands. Each country should conduct such a policy that would take advantage of its reserves to the maximum. Such a course of industrialization during the first years, while neglecting agriculture, was false. One also has to industrialize a country. The main issue, however, is agriculture, and it is good that Cuba is following such a line. We know how much of an effort this takes, but perhaps it will be faster given your conditions. It seems to me that unless appeasing the need of the people is resolved, then there will be opportunities for a counterrevolution. Discontent grows precisely on such grounds. A revolution can only be carried out under a great emotional impulse, but even under such emotionalism which characterizes Cubans and in general the nations of Latin America, it is not an inexhaustible source. Life is difficult and often ungrateful. One needs fuel for enthusiasm and when it goes out then the enthusiasm is exhausted.

In 1960 a Cde. [name whited out-Blas Roca?] came to visit us. In a conversation with him I put forth a suggestion that Cuba must hold elections, and that it has all the chances for a big victory. It could even let in some bourgeoisie party. The 22 [sic; 26] July Movement can join in a united front with the Communist Party and go together into elections. It will undoubtedly receive 90% of votes. One can work out a plan and guarantee Fidel Castro's rule, e.g. following the example of a president in the US. One has to legalize the revolution. It is necessary both for the people and for external necessities. The Cuban revolution had not yet been legalized. Currently the conditions are worse. Today you would not gain 90% of votes.

At the time, Cde. [name excised] answered that this was not necessary, and that in your country, as well as in other countries in Latin America, there is no parliamentary tradition, that there were still bribes, corruption, and that these were complex issues, etc. This was our first conversation with someone from your side.

Clearly, each party decides on its own as to its policy and it learns from its own mistakes. We are also not copying anyone indiscriminately. After all it is known that every country has its own specificity. Nevertheless, this poses a problem and the strengthening of a revolution, internally and externally, is not without any meaning.

I was not able to catch one thing that Cde. Castro was talking about, namely, on what are the current divergences with the CPSU contingent?

R. Castro

I personally agree with most of your views. I consider the meeting very useful. In addition, your experiences offer a great help to us. Our party is still young and immature, although the CP had existed for 30 years.

Gomułka

When an old party comes to power it then confronts entirely new problems. Of all things that are valuable within it, only one remains, namely a valuable discipline.

R. Castro

I consider continuing this type of contacts, either in Warsaw or in Havana, as indispensable.

One word regarding the missile withdrawal. We do not consent with the manner of their withdrawal. We do not agree to any concessions, no matter what. Khrushchev explained that there was no time. He has done much to patch it up, especially during Fidel Castro's visit in the USSR [in May 1963]. After all, we could have been copied on all the correspondence that was going to the US. The point here is not that we want to impose our prestige. When we were confronted with a world crisis, our own dignity did not matter. What I said had to do with the method of action.

In a letter to the US, Khrushchev proposes an international inspection in Cuba. This is not right not only because we were not asked for our opinion, but also because this would be a precedent which would be very dangerous for us. If he had written that the inspection was previously agreed to upon consultation with Cuba, then everything would be fine.

Gomułka

I do not have any reservations on this issue.

R. Castro

The Americans reacted to our refusal in such a way that they conducted their own inspection from the air. This is why there are all these U2 planes. All our reservations are with regard to a group of methods with which we do not agree.

The connection between October [1962] and the divergences, as well as a bow to China, are not a childish offence, but a mistake. And as you said yourself, we are learning from our mistakes. The Chinese reactions taught us to see how things look like in reality. I agree that there were, and still are, comrades in Cuba who either had or still have a different opinion. It may be that perhaps they had undergone an evolution after recent events. It is good, however, that when a party makes a decision then everyone is in agreement.

I do not want to take your precious time. I regret that we cannot discuss longer.

W. Gomułka

The point here is not our time, but the fact that your program does not allow it.

R. Castro

We will further discuss with comrades and Cde. Kliszko during the trip. I will explain in conversations what you had inquired about.

[1] Spór can have the following meanings: contestation, dispute, controversy, quarrel, and altercation. The spór refers to the Sino-Soviet split or rift.

[2] Rozbieżności could also mean disagreements and clashes.

[3] Ostra also means sharp, caustic, severe and harsh.

[4] Rozeznąć się could also refer to recognize, discern, or discriminate.

[5] [On this episode, see Yinghong Cheng, "Sino-Cuban Relations during the Early Years of the Castro Regime, 1959-1966"-ed.]

[6] More natural way to say this could perhaps be: "On these grounds we decided to change our position."

[7] "This fact" appears to refer either to the Sino-Soviet rift or the occurrence of the Cuba Missile Crisis.

[8] [For a report of his 9 January 1965 interview, see Edgar Snow, "Interview with Mao," The New Republic, 26 February 1965-ed.]

[9] Pismo can mean both a letter and a newspaper in Polish--transl.