

Stenographic record of session of Presidium of the CC CPSU on agenda item I, II
“N.S. Khrushchev Report on conversations with F. Castro during visit in the South
of the Country and the trip to Yaroslavl.”

7 June 1963

(The beginning of the session was not recorded)

N.S. KHRUSHCHEV. Therefore, it was very good, and good because we did not argue with him, and he did not argue, he mostly tried to listen and ask questions.

He asked me: “and what about differences with China?” I said, “I am also asking this question—what differences? We are for peace and they are for peace, we are for coexistence, and they are too. So what’s the problem? So I want to ask you and others.” I said: “the issue of nationalism, the issues of egotism. This is the main thing. They want to play the first fiddle. But this is not decided by some kind of a vote. This is decided by the status and the reputation among other people. Even among friends, say five or ten people are friends and one of them is the leader: they do not elect him, they simply accept him as such for some qualities [that he has]. Obviously, this is how it happens, and this how it will be in the future. There will be no split into blacks and reds, there will be different colors, and different personalities, and different mental abilities of individuals, there will be differentiation, like in all species of nature.”

He is a young, thinking person, apparently he understood our position correctly.

I told him: “they say that we got scared. But if we were cowards why did we put the missiles in Cuba then? It is clear even for a fool that having deployed the missiles we were ready for a step that could lead to war. What is this, cowardice? No. Is this a retreat? No, this is an offensive. Who, apart from our party could have believed that your country, Cuba, could be saved, right next to the American imperialism, and with what means? Who?” I say, “Now, of course, there could be many smart ones, but I think, that when you just won and determined your course toward building socialism, nobody thought that America would tolerate you and would not smother you. Nobody believed in it, and we thought that it was a gamble, that you would not survive. And in order for you to survive, we deployed the missiles.” I say, “of course it would have been better not to take these missiles back: a fool understands it. That was our desire. But not everything works out as you desire it. It did not work out that way. But the main goal was realized. We wanted you to exist, [we wanted] socialist Cuba to develop. You are developing. This was the goal. The Americans, to the contrary, wanted to wipe you off the face of the Earth. So who was the loser then? The one, who did not achieve their goal. And we have achieved our goal, therefore, we won, we are the winners.”

I said, “some may say that we pursued some [other] goal. Well, what can we get out of you?! (laughter in the audience). Can you pay back our expenses? No. And in fact, we sent our own people. And how can you pay back, if there had been an attack, for the blood spilled by our men? No payment would have been appropriate, but we decided to do it. How can one call it

cowardice? You think about that. And then, now it turns out that the people who believed that you cannot trust the imperialists—and we do think that they would eventually deceive [us] by all means—they were wrong, and they would be very happy now, if the Americans had in fact smothered you, because that would have been a confirmation of their prognoses.”

I said, “instead of concentrating our revolutionary efforts against the enemy, they opened fire against us. Who benefitted from it? The revolutionary forces? No, it was the imperialist forces who benefitted from the disintegration and fragmentation of the revolutionary forces.”

In short, we talked a lot, along these lines. We dropped the subject and then picked it up again. And then, it seems, it all, naturally, came together.

He told me several times, “please believe me, we all thought that you deployed the missiles in the interest of the entire socialist camp, not in the Cuban interest [alone].”

I say, “what the hell do we need 9 thousand square kilometers for, 11 thousand kilometers away from the Soviet Union, to drag the missiles there, when we can reach our enemy from our own territory even better; why would we need to take your territory. If you thought that, I regret that we did not explain the necessity to you sufficiently well.”

He says, “well now I understand that it was done on your part for our benefit.”

I told him, “You wanted to come visit us a year ago.” We told you” “do not come, it is dangerous.” And now we wrote to you: “you can come.” And now you and I are walking and talking [here] and everything is just fine over there. (Laughter in the hall) Therefore, our prognosis was correct.

I said, “Read our letter, we wrote to as soon as we agreed, that today the economy is the main thing, and we have guarantees that there would be no invasion for 2 to 6 years. Of course, we cannot give you absolute guarantees as long as imperialism exists, but it seems that our estimate is correct.”

He says, “yes, I see that this is correct, we just understood it incorrectly.”

M.A. SUSLOV. That’s what he was focusing on in the last part.

Yu.V. ANDROPOV. And in fact, he directly referenced the conversations, “Khrushchev said this and that, and then he confirms that it was correct.”

A.N. KOSYGIN. Colossal work had been done.

B.N. PONOMAREV. This should be shared widely in all the countries, especially in those, where there are moods similar to the Chinese.

N.S. KHRUSHCHEV. You cannot get around it. One can say that, of course, Cuba is the country that is closest and most vulnerable to imperialism and also the most dangerous for imperialism.

Castro was very satisfied. Then he raised the issue about maybe signing some military treaty. I said, “we could sign, but, I think, that it would not be in your interest. They will vilify you, they will call you satellite, they will insult you, say that you lost your independence and so on.” I say,

“it will affect Latin American countries.” I say, “here, there will be a memorandum where we will undertake obligations: this will be almost the same thing. But not you before us, not us before you—we will have no treaty. It would be easier for America to live with than if we have a special military treaty.”

He did not insist.

I talked with him a lot about the economy, I talked about a metallurgical plant. I say, “here, you want to build a metallurgical plant; we can build it, but how much would it cost to produce a ton of pig iron [in Cuba]? Do you know how much it would cost? How competitive would it be? You do not have coking coal. Where are you going to get coal? From us? Are you going to transport coal or coke from 11 thousand kilometers away? So tell me, how much would a ton of pig iron cost [in Cuba]?”

He has no idea.

When you build something, you have to know what profit you would get. So what kind of profit would you get? What goals do you set yourself? To build defense industry relying on your own resources?

He says, “No.”

“Then what?”

“We need cans for preserves.” (Cheerfulness in the room)

“This is a different matter, I say. How much does that cost? We could either sell them to you or organize a tail operation [in Cuba]: we can sell you rolls [of metal], and you will roll it out and produce tin for cans. And again, we should calculate all this.”

I say, “I am afraid that I don’t become Guevara’s enemy.” (he proposed the idea). “But, I say, every economic problem should be justified on economic grounds. If it cannot be justified, it means that it is a subjective [judgment] and not a [decision] justified by economic calculations. And you cannot build economy on subjective basis. And here I told him: Are you familiar with our Program?”

“Yes, of course, I read your report three times; I read it there, and I am reading it now in Spanish.”

I say: “read it, we prepared it here.” (cheerfulness in the room)

“Here?”

“Yes, here.”

I say, “[it is a] good program, but we plan it for 20 years, although if we could carry out this program in one year, it would be so great.” But if we set ourselves such a task, that would have been unreasonable, because it is unrealistic. This is a wish. But who cares what I wish for, [what are] the possibilities. That’s why we planned it for 20 years. Probably we will finish it earlier, but still, for 20 years. You cannot do it another way.

Look at the Chinese, they set the task to catch up with the British in 2 years, and then to pass us. And what now? Now they gave up industrialization altogether.”

I say, “take the Chinese; some time ago they listened to us, they came to us when they developed their five-year plan. We lowered [their goals] by half, they agreed, and then they lowered them even more. But then they said that they did not need our advice, that they understand it better. And where did it lead to?”

“Therefore, I say, justified economic calculations must be made; those who ignore them will be punished.”

I say, “they wanted to build communism instantly, to overtake us. And what now, where did they get with overtaking? So they were punished. And everybody will be punished who does not take economics into account.”

The Chinese are criticizing us that we excluded the [principle] that our state is based on the dictatorship of the working class from our Program. I say, “here you traveled around our country, [you saw that] we have a classless society, we don’t have exploiters, everything belongs to the people. Then whose dictatorship would it be and dictatorship over whom? Dictatorship assumes the existence of exploiters. And [it exists] during a period of transition when there are still remnants of exploiters. And today we are in a period of transition too, but it is in its highest stage, when we have already transformed our state on the socialist basis. Today, our socialist cup is already full. When can this process be completed? In 20 years? No. One can say that this process is continuous, because technology and science will grow continuously and will enrich people; the demands of people will grow continuously as well. And therefore, like a baby bird, until it grows up, it will open its beak so that everything would be put into its mouth. And it will be like this in our country too, because now they have one thing, but tomorrow science will create other possibilities. But this is a different character of demand already.

Take for example what in the past only the most well-positioned boyars had in this country; now a worker has more than that. But at that time, in comparison with the level that the people had, it was unreachable. Is that right? Take the fact that the boyars did not know how to write, and today every worker has secondary or higher education. Where are the tsars and boyars in comparison with our worker?

However, there is still not enough knowledge. But all this is determined by the growth of demands, by the continuous growth of science.”

He understood it well.

He says, “Yes this is stupid.”

And we say this is stupid. I say: dictatorship would mean to give satisfaction to our enemies, [who say] that communism cannot live without dictatorship, that even after having the Soviet political system for 45 years, they still rely on dictatorship.

We do have swindlers, we have thieves, we have militia and we have courts. But this is not dictatorship, those are public organs that ensure order and safety. So why would we need a

special organ—dictatorship—when we have enough normal state organs in order to struggle with those remnants, which would accompany our building of the communist society for a long time, the remnants of the bourgeois capitalist regimes.”

He understood all of that.

In other words, as soon as I finished breakfast, he would come in and wait for me. We sat down [together] and [sat] like this until 2pm. Then we ate, sometimes together. We did not have too many days. But he was very satisfied in the end.

I spoke with him quite in depth on the sugar cane. Here I pulled out Shevchenko. I say: “your method doesn’t work, you should do it this way. Here is the method, here is the machine.”

He listened all the time.

“Is this possible [to obtain]? – he says, if it is possible, I will the people this. You could what it would mean for the people?”

I say, “We will solve it in two years.” I think, in a year, but I say carefully—in two.

I called up Ezhevsky, called up Strokin, told them about it. I went out to the forest, carved out parts for such a machine, and told him how the machine would work. He understood. I say, all the parts that I mentioned to you, we have them for other machines, therefore we just need to put it all together and to adjust it for the conditions of processing of sugar cane. There will be no new joints and the machine will work, I guarantee you, and instead of one tractor and two people there will be one tractor and one person working [on it].

He says: well you know that you can make it work.

And this is truly a revolution.

Yu. V. ANDROPOV. He says: it is time to stop being communists-idealists.

N.S. KHRUSHCHEV. I say, you see how it is, what is the main thing now, after the victory? Lenin is not letting us “breathe.” So I proposed that now we should create some new organs and that those organs should have some general party and state significance. And I thought that we just invented something new. We dug around a little bit, and turns out that Lenin [already] spoke about it. (Joyful stir in the audience). He managed to speak even about this. Here is our “chagrin.”

Therefore, our thoughts are going in the direction that Lenin expressed in his time. If we have not read it in our laziness, or for other reasons, or read but forgot—it is Lenin who said it [first]. This is a test that we are thinking in the right direction, that we are developing our state organs in the right directions. This is Lenin. But some want to correct us. Let them try. They do their own, we do our own, we shall see.

Then I say: some people start sliding to the left, not because leftism is necessary, but because of their lack of trust in their capabilities. And there he starts. But this is a wrong position.

Take the movie “The Russian Miracle.” What we used to be and what we became? We used to be in the last place, and now we are the second in the world, and now nobody even doubts that we will become the first in the world. So how do you affect the minds of the people? Because there are few capitalists, but many many workers ... Then there is the service personnel, they always serve the strong ones, and when capitalism is strong, they hold its hand, and when we are on the offensive and show all the world, these people are thinking people, and they will start thinking and contemplate who they should serve and who hand to hold.

Then I say, what do you mean, one cannot come to power in a non-violent manner? You can come to power, but it would be hard to hold it. The reaction will impose a civil war. Take the example of Spain. In Spain, victory was achieved by the parliamentary means, but then they were fighting for three years. But it was another time and imperialism was stronger than one socialist state, and it won. What if it happened now? It would be a different case. And so you are now. You are in Cuba, 11 thousand kilometers away, and you are alive today, and there is no war against you. What does this tell you?

He says, yes.

In short we bared our souls to each other.

A.N. KOSYGIN. Of course, very big work and useful too.

VOICE. He completed a university [course].

N.S. KHRUSHCHEV. When I spoke about intra-party issues, about the Stalin period, he says, “thank you, I listened to a lecture.”

M.A. SUSLOV. And he spoke about the role of party very well.

N.S. KHRUSHCHEV. I said, “who wanted to weaken the role of the party here?” Stalin himself mainly did it. In reality, he gradually pushed it to the secondary positions; there were no party congresses. And then he even prohibited to allow party committee secretaries to visit some [industrial] plants. And then Molotov also wanted to weaken in too. Remember? And Beria wanted to destroy the party completely. Why did he need to do it? He was pursuing his own goals because he was a capitulator, a restorer of capitalism.

He says, “here is your multinational state ...”

I say, “if one pulls the soul—the ideas of Marxism-Leninism—out of our multinational state, and then our state will fall apart, there will be an internecine war. But it is our party that unites and cements everybody on the basis of the higher goals, and if somebody exhibits nationalism, it would point to it, and that one would be ashamed of themselves.”

N.V. PODGORNYY. He speaks well about this too.

N.S. KHRUSHCHEV. The party is the soul of everything, and that is why are now strengthening the party.

He spoke to me a lot about our cadres, about party members, where he visited, what kind of people they are, how educated they are, how they know their work. He says, “what people you have.” He told me a lot about them, named specific names and made general observations.

Therefore, he left with a having received a great energy reserve.

I have not watched a single movie while there. When I am on vacation, I watch movies in the evening, and this time, I have not watched even a single preview, let alone a movie. I did not have time. As soon as I finish a conversation, I had to read my mail. And sometimes we spoke even in the evenings.

Thus, it was very interesting and it is in our interest. This is a small state, and it has won.

He was very satisfied, and said all the time, “now I will come back and say this, I will tell my people.”

VOICE. And he did say.

N.S. KHRUSHCHEV. He says: “you will come ... If you could come for January 1, it is our holiday, five years, it would be so wonderful; we entered Havana on January 1, we will have a celebration.”

[Source: Source: Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI), published in A.A. Fursenko, ed. *Presidium of TsK KPSS, 1954-1964*, Vol 1 (Moscow: Rosspen, 2003) pp. 720-726

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