

RECORD OF CONVERSATION
N.S. Khrushchev with Minister of Revolutionary Armed Forces of the Republic of Cuba
Raul Castro, July 18, 1960

Present: Khrushchev, N.S., Mikoyan A.I. Ponomarev, B.N.

Raul Castro and Luis Mas Martin (head of the Propaganda
Department of the National Committee
Of the People's Socialist Party of Cuba)

N.S. KHRUSHCHEV greets Raul Castro and his colleague at the beginning of the conversation and says that he is ready to exchange opinions on all questions of interest to the Cuban comrades.

RAUL CASTRO states that he has instructions from Prime Minister of the Republic of Cuba Fidel Castro to express deep gratitude to the Soviet government and to Chairman of the Council of Ministers cde. Khrushchev in connection with N.S. Khrushchev's statement, which he made in his speech on July 9, 1960 at the congress of teachers. On instructions from his government, Raul Castro also invites cde. Khrushchev to visit Cuba.

Raul Castro says that he wanted to use his visit to the USSR to better learn about the life of the Soviet people, to study the experience of the Soviet people, which is so important for the Cubans who are building a new life in their country. But now, unfortunately, he has very little time for it and so he will try to do the most necessary things.

Characterizing the situation in Cuba, R. Castro points to the fact that the United States of America has not given up its plans to carry out an armed intervention against the Cuban Republic. For instance, recently, the U.S. Attorney General made a statement about the need for an armed intervention against Cuba, which is truly a shining example of imperialist justice.

Fidel Castro, stated R. Castro, passed on an oral request asking you to what extent actions of the USSR could be decisive in the spirit of what was said in cde. Khrushchev's statement.

We believe that after the statement of the Soviet government, the responsibility of the Cuban government has grown even more, and it must act with maximum caution. The government has authorized confiscation of all American property when necessary. In connection with the U.S. threats to cut the Cuban sugar quota, the Prime Minister of Cuba warned the American ruling circles that the Cuban government would confiscate all American property. The United States has already refused to purchase 700 thousand tons of our sugar, but we still have not taken the retaliatory measures mentioned above in practice so far. We are not doing it because we do not know how the Soviet comrades would react to it. We would like to know your opinion on all the issues relating to our actions.

Recently a grand rally was held in Havana, in which one million people took part. At the rally, we read the telegram from N.S. Khrushchev about the willingness of the USSR to buy the 700 thousand tons of sugar, which the USA has refused to buy, and all the people gathered there reacted with great enthusiasm. In this act, as well as in all the actions of the Soviet government, we see an expression of the solidarity of the entire Soviet people with the Cuban people. We do not have appropriate words to express our sincere gratitude to the Soviet comrades for all the actions I have mentioned. The Soviet Union is truly providing us with such assistance, which will forever be part of the history of our people and the history of other peoples of Latin American countries, because this assistance is saving the Cuban people from enslavement by the American monopolies and militarists.

MAS MARTIN confirms what Raul Castro said and says that the Cuban people want to see cde. Khrushchev in Cuba soon.

N.S. KHRUSHCHEV thanks the visitors for the high praise that the representatives of the Cuban Republic give to the actions of the Soviet government and asks them to pass his appreciation to Prime Minister of the Cuban Republic Fidel Castro. The Soviet people express deep solidarity with the struggle of the Cuban people, who decisively and bravely overcome all evil designs on the part of the imperialists and all the difficulties that arise on the road of strengthening of their national state.

We are confident, says N.S. Khrushchev, that all peoples will support the Cuban Republic and will help it to break down the circle of the economic blockade. The Government of the Soviet Union is ready to take responsibility for supplies of oil and other goods in the amounts that would fully satisfy Cuban needs in exchange for Cuban products. In our opinion, if the United States limits its actions to just the economic blockade, then, provided that the Cuban revolution is supported by the masses, this blockade is doomed to fail. The socialist bloc, at the present time, has everything that the United States has, and therefore, Cuba could replace its trade with the United States with trade with the socialist countries. Under modern conditions, an economic blockade is just baby steps. One can say that the United States is just as stupid as it is rich. As a result of their aggressive actions against Cuba, the U.S. ruling circles lose much more politically than economically. However, we should not feel sorry for the imperialists. The more foolishly they act, the closer is their assured doom. Recently, the people who rose to fight for their national liberation were pulling the British lion by its tail, and now they are shaking Uncle Sam by his beard.

When you, our Cuban comrades, ask us, what further steps might the USSR take, we want to tell you: do not be impatient to get an exact answer from us. There is no need for that. We will try to do everything to not allow intervention against Cuba. But we do not want war. However, one has to keep in mind that one could unleash a big war defending Cuba. But one can also defend Cuba and not allow war to erupt. In our opinion, now the United States does not want war either. We warned the United States seriously so that they would not even think about an intervention against Cuba. But you, the leadership of the Cuban Republic, should also restrain yourself so that you do not let yourself be provoked. By our statement, we, so to speak,

hung heavy weights on the USA, but in a way we also did it to you. We are counting on you not to let us down. If you had common borders with the USSR, events would have taken a different course, but as we know, you border the United States. And this [situation] demands a very thoughtful approach to all questions of foreign policy, including the question that you posed to me. All in all, in our opinion, your policy is correct. The policy of the Cuban government is revolutionary, correct and flexible. We believe, for example, that the Cuban government did the right thing by giving full authority to the President and the Prime Minister of the Republic to nationalize American property in response to cuts in the sugar quotas, but it is also right that you have not done it in practice. The United States, most likely, will not launch an intervention against you. The USA is making efforts to incite Latin American states against you through the Organization of American States. For example, Argentina has already made a bad statement. According to our information, Peru will follow the U.S. lead. But Peru has a bad reputation in Latin America, because it has an extremely reactionary regime. We have to take all possible measures in order to undermine U.S. plans to act through the Latin American states. It can be done, because not all Latin American countries support the United States against Cuba. The Cuban government did the right thing by appealing to the UN Security Council with a complaint about U.S. aggressive actions against Cuba.

RAUL CASTRO notes that the Organization of American States is under the influence of the American monopolists.

N.S. KHRUSHCHEV. Not completely. There is a struggle [in the OAS] between the pro-American elements and representatives of all Latin American states who do not want to be puppets in U.S. hands. The Cuban leadership is now facing the question whether it should participate in the activities of the Organization of American States or withdraw from it.

RAUL CASTRO. Maybe it would be better to withdraw?

N.S. KHRUSHCHEV. We should think about it; maybe it would be better to attend the session of this Organization; then your voice will be heard throughout Latin America. The absence of Cuba would benefit the imperialists, but if your representatives start exposing actions of American imperialism through this Organization, and, therefore, they say that you do not agree with the decisions of this Organization because it acts on orders of the American monopolies, then you will score political victories and your hands will be free. As a matter of fact, you have already left this Organization, but formally, you probably should not withdraw from it.

A.I. MIKOYAN notes that the Charter of this Organization says that it should not be permitted to interfere in the internal affairs of the Latin American countries or use economic pressure against them. This is a good point of this Charter and you should make full use of it.

Recently, there was a statement by the American ruling organs to the effect that the United States does not intend to launch an armed intervention against Cuba, and the press is using this statement widely.

N.S. KHRUSHCHEV. The U.S. statement that they do not have plans to invade Cuba is a great victory for the Cuban revolution. Today, you are greatly helped by [the events in] Congo, because [they are] generating great anger against the imperialist invaders who are encroaching on the freedom of the people who gained national independence.

RAUL CASTRO. The leadership of the Cuban Republic is trying not to rush. We understand that under present conditions it is especially important for us not to take the wrong steps, and we are asking you to give us all advice that you consider necessary. That is why I asked the question about the steps that the Soviet leadership could undertake in accordance with the Chairman of the Council of Ministers' statement about support for Cuba.

N.S. KHRUSHCHEV. We think it is right that the policy of the Cuban government is firm and flexible. For instance, in response to the economic blockade on the part of the United States, you stated that you would nationalize American property, but you have not done it as of yet. You have to give time for the American and world publics to process it. The most acute moment of the recent events was when the Soviet Union stated that our missiles would reach those who try to launch an intervention against Cuba. In this connection, the USA stated that they did not plan to launch an intervention. This is a big victory for you and for us. We believe that nothing will come out of the economic blockade either.

RAUL CASTRO. The economic blockade could even lead to the strengthening of the Cuban economy.

N.S. KHRUSHCHEV. Now the main thing is to not allow intervention on the part of Latin American countries.

RAUL CASTRO. The [revolutionary] process is progressing well in Cuba, very quickly. However, one has to say that the spirit of improvisation is common among the Cuban people. N.S. KHRUSHCHEV notes that the Soviet Union supported the Spanish revolution and it had a great chance for winning, but the anarchists, the lack of order and organization really hurt it in the end.

RAUL CASTRO. As far as the Cuban people are concerned, we are becoming more and more organized. The last year was especially difficult for Cuba—we experienced a struggle for the correct course of the revolution. And our presence here speaks to the fact that we chose the right course. But this—our growing closer to the Soviet Union—is the reason why the forces of imperialism are attacking us more and more. The leadership of the Cuban revolution understands well that at the same time a number of wrong steps have been made. Our leadership announced that in response to each aggressive step, we will take a step against them. This forced us to move a bit further and faster than we needed to. And this was understood incorrectly by some circles of the world public. And one has to say that there are great forces in the world who sympathize with the Cuban revolution. The situation of the Cuban revolution was becoming more and more difficult until the saving grace of the Soviet statement

appeared. For this we express our deepest gratitude to the Soviet people. This statement of the USSR has great importance for all Latin American peoples. It breathes new life into our people, and at the same time forces us to think about the interests of the international revolutionary movement, forces us to be cautious, reasonable. We have to always take your interests into account. Therefore, I believe, before taking decisive steps, we must find out the opinion of the USSR and consult with it, because it is the leader of the international revolutionary movement and the bastion of peace in the world.

According to our information, there are two trains of thought in the United States, although they agree on the ultimate goal: representatives of one approach—Pentagon officials—call for a direct strangulation of Cuba, for a direct intervention in Cuba; representatives of the second approach propose to act more multilaterally and flexibly. The Soviet warning saves Cuba from a direct armed intervention by the United States. Now our enemies are putting the main emphasis on the Organization of American States, aiming at using it against Cuba. But inside that Organization there are some serious forces acting contrary to the United States. The Mexican government openly supports the Cuban Republic. In the rest of the Latin American countries not one government represents the will of its people; they are just henchmen of the American imperialists and they stand against Cuba. In Uruguay, Argentina, Venezuela, Ecuador and in all the countries of Latin America, a powerful protest movement of the masses is growing against the U.S. pressure on Cuba. The trip of Cuba's President Dorticos exposed how the governments of Latin American countries feel about Cuba and how [differently] the popular masses of those countries feel. The governments of those countries organized a very cold reception for our President, but masses of people everywhere came out into the streets and demonstrated their heartfelt solidarity with the Cuban revolution, with the Republic of Cuba. People came out into the streets with slogans "Cuba—yes!", "Yanqui—no!" Only the Mexican government organized a good reception for President of Cuba Dorticos, and invited people to meet with Dorticos. Today we see a campaign of solidarity with Cuba in all Latin American countries. As N.S. Khrushchev mentioned correctly, the example of Cuba has great importance for the peoples of all Latin America. The United States used to consider Latin American countries as their deep rears and reserves. Now all this is crushing down.

N.S. KHRUSHCHEV. It seems [to me] that we should take the following position. The USSR made its well-known statement in case of U.S. aggression against Cuba. However, if the United States claims that they are not planning to attack Cuba, we should use [this opportunity]. If Fidel Castro is worried, it means that he believes that the United States will attack Cuba. Why doesn't Fidel Castro make it look like he believes the United States regarding the absence of aggressive intentions toward Cuba and thus he could direct the attention of the entire world public to this assertion of the U.S. government. This way, if the United States does attack Cuba after all, they would be exposed in front of the whole world as violators of their own word and as the aggressor.

RAUL CASTRO. One has to keep in mind that the ruling circles of the United States are aggressive.

N.S. KHRUSHCHEV. The Soviet Union rushed to make the statement about its support of Cuba because the United States could confuse the Latin American countries and launch an intervention against Cuba. We helped you. One should know how to act flexibly and quickly. For example, on the issue of Congo in the U.N. Security Council, the United States voted against Belgium, and France and Britain abstained. Both of them thought that the USSR would not vote for the resolution proposed by Tunisia, but the USSR voted for it, and therefore, we ended up [voting] together with the United States against Belgium, which, in this case, took the most aggressive imperialist position.

Today you have a more favorable situation than some time ago. The United States, according to all our information, is apprehensive about launching a direct intervention against Cuba, although, naturally, one can never be sure about them. The United States will act through Latin American states. Tell me, which Latin American states could threaten you with intervention?

RAUL CASTRO. Unless American soldiers wearing insignia of the Organization of American States land in Cuba, we are not afraid of anything else. In military terms, none of the Latin American states represent danger for Cuba today. But the United States could act as they did in Korea: to send basically their own troops under the banners of the Organization of American States (OAS).

N.S. KHRUSHCHEV. It would be hard for them to do so, the situation is different today.

RAUL CASTRO. Let me express special gratitude on behalf of the government for that special assistance, which we received from the USSR.

N.S. KHRUSHCHEV. If it is useful for you, we can provide even more.

As far as your invitation to visit Cuba is concerned, we will happily accept it, but most likely, it would be hard to do this year. We can confirm our agreement to visit Cuba once again in the communique, but when we will actually do it, is our own business; let the American imperialists think that this visit can happen at any time.

RAUL CASTRO. We want to assure you that the Cuban people will give you an exceptionally warm reception. The Cuban people have now realized what immense assistance the Soviet Union is providing to Cuba, and your [personal] role in it is exceptionally great. There are many Communists in Cuba now, and some of them occupy high state command positions, even though they do not have an official party card. It is done this way in order not to give foreign imperialists an extra excuse to say that Communists captured Cuba in their hands.

N.S. KHRUSHCHEV. So, like we say, that the U.S. actions are pushing Cuba toward the road of Communism.

RAUL CASTRO. The United States contributed greatly to the rise of anti-foreign imperialist sentiments in Cuba. For example, recently an old ammunition storage exploded in Havana. It did not do much damage, but the people reacted to it very well—people came out into the streets with protests against the subversive actions of the American imperialists.

One has to say that these actions by the United States help open the eyes of the peoples in Latin American countries, who now see in real life how the American imperialists want to strangle their freedom with their armed hand.

MAS MARTIN. All these years, the American propagandists were spreading false fabrications about the horrors of communism; now they are accusing the Cuban government of communism. However, the Cuban people, watching the measures undertaken by this government, are saying: “If all this is communism, one cannot even wish for the better.”

RAUL CASTRO. We were helped greatly by the organization of the Soviet exhibition in Cuba and by cde. Mikoyan’s visit to our country.

We would like to pose an additional question about a possibility to send our students [to the USSR] to study technological sciences.

A.I. MIKOYAN. The leader of the trade delegation of the Cuban Republic Jimenez raised this question, and we agreed to it. You can pass it on to Prime Minister Fidel Castro.

RAUL CASTRO. We believe that it would be useful to publish a joint Communique in the spirit of our negotiations and we would like to ask you, if you do not object to it, to prepare a draft of this Communique, which we would consider together with your representatives.

N.S. KHRUSHCHEV agrees with [the idea] to adopt such Communique and agrees with the procedure to prepare it proposed by R. Castro.

In conclusion, R. Castro and Mas Martin once again express their deep gratitude to the Soviet government, to the Communist party of the Soviet Union for the immense assistance, which was provided to the Cuban people.

*[Source: State Archive of the Russian Federation
Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya for the National Security Archive]*