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**From the Journal of A.I. Alekseyev, 'Record of a
Conversation withwith Ernesto Guevara Serna,
Secretary of the National Leadership of the ORO and
Minister of Industry, 25 February 1963'**

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Summary:

Guevara praises recent letters from Khrushchev, expresses irritation at the timing of a trade memorandum, and describes Fidel Castro's excitement for his trip to the USSR.

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A. I. ALEKSEYEV

RECORD OF A CONVERSATION
with Ernesto GUEVARA SERNA, Secretary of
the National Leadership of the ORO and Minister of Industry

25 February 1963

Today I talked with Guevara at a reception in the Embassy on the occasion of the 45th anniversary of the Soviet Army.

Guevara said that he had come to the Embassy in spite of the fact that he had to leave a meeting in JUCEPLAN in order to express his personal appreciation for the speech of Marshal Malinovsky and to thank the Soviet leadership for the actions which have promoted the restoration of the previous cordial relations between them.

Bearing in mind that Guevara has been outside of Havana for several weeks, I asked him whether he was familiar with the recent letters of N. S. Khrushchev.

Guevara said in reply that he had read all these letters, and also our memorandum about the Soviet-Cuban trade talks. In Guevara's opinion, the letters of N. S. Khrushchev are an example of the wisdom and calmness in relations with friendly countries. Guevara declared, we view the memorandum itself as an annoying private statement provoked by either non-objective information or irritation. However, inasmuch as the letters of N. S. Khrushchev, which are different in sentiments and tone from this document, were received after the memorandum, then there was no injury to us in it, and it did not hurt our national feelings. We were only surprised that it was sent at a moment when there was no longer any need for it.

Then Guevara said that the idea of a trip to the USSR at the time proposed by N. S. Khrushchev sparked Fidel Castro. He is counting on first vacationing with N. S. Khrushchev and A. I. Mikoyan, and then attending the May 1st demonstration in the Soviet capital. At the last meeting of the National Leadership of the ORO he even asked whether there would be the Soviet practice of speaking from the reviewing stands of the Mausoleum and whether to ask the Soviet comrades for permission to speak during the demonstration.

In reply to my question, whether he plans to go to the Soviet Union together with Fidel, Guevara joked it away, saying that it would hardly be useful, inasmuch as they consider him "an ugly duckling" and "a troublemaker".

To this I replied that, as far as I know, things are just the opposite, that we value him for [his] very integrity and openness, for firmness in the defense of his convictions, even if they were sometimes mistaken, and for the courage to be able to admit his own mistakes. We do not view [his] cockiness as a defect.

I told Guevara about my recent discussion with R. Castro in which the latter, speaking of the integrity of Guevara, declared Guevara has only to detect one fine day that he

did something dishonest with respect to the revolution, and he would put a bullet in his forehead.

In response Guevara laughed sincerely, and then said that however "thorns" sometimes hurt state figures.

USSR AMBASSADOR IN THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA □ (A. ALEKSEYEV)

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