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**From the Journal of S.M. Kudryaytsev, 'Record of
Conversation with the Prime Minister of the
Republic of Cuba, Fidel Castro, 12 March 1961'**

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Summary:

Fidel Castro discusses Cuban foreign relations with Latin American states and addresses the state of Cuba's internal counterrevolutionaries and US support thereof.

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

12 March 1961

I met with Fidel Castro on Sunday evening at [my] apartment.

1. At the start of the conversation the discussion was about the foreign policy situation of Cuba which has developed in recent days and the domestic situation in the country.

Fidel Castro spoke about these questions in quite optimistic tones, stressed that, in his opinion, the threat of an invasion of the forces of external counterrevolution is receding into the background, but the hostile policy of Kennedy with respect to the Cuban revolution is encountering ever-growing resistance from both the broad public as well as a number of governments of the countries of Latin America.

Measures recently carried out by the revolutionary government to strengthen the defense of Cuban territory, nip a number of counterrevolutionary plots in the bud, and the approaching conclusion of the clearing operations to liquidate counterrevolutionary forces in the mountains of Escambray - all this, stressed Fidel Castro, has strongly demoralized both the internal as well as the external counterrevolution. This is demonstrated by a number of the following facts. In recent days the external counterrevolution has begun to make efforts to form an exile government. As is well-known, the external counterrevolution clamored much in October of last year and also at the end of [January or February?-ed.] of this year about their plans to create a Cuban "government" on Cuban territory or, at least, on the Isle of Pines. Now, stressed Fidel Castro, the counterrevolution is not talking any more about this and prefers to form an exile government either in the USA or in Guatemala. A conclusion can be drawn from this one fact alone that the external counterrevolution does not hope any more for an opportunity to reinforce its assault parties on Cuban territory and does not count on the ability to create a puppet government inside Cuba itself.

Fidel Castro continued, we have no doubt that in the event the external counterrevolution under American pressure nevertheless tries to land assault groups on Cuban territory they will be immediately defeated. The defensive measures carried out by the revolutionary government in recent months, the general growth of the combat effectiveness and the organizational level of the people's militia and the revolutionary army, and their combat spirit and readiness for self-sacrifice are a guarantee of this. Finally, the revolutionary enthusiasm of the Cuban people as a whole, who are ready to sustain any casualties in the name of saving the revolution, is a guarantee of this.

Fidel Castro continued, the revolutionary consciousness of the masses has risen considerably in recent months, and the constant threat from American imperialism and the forces of external counterrevolution help the revolutionary government rally the people to the defense of Cuba.

Fidel Castro stressed, the consolidation of the position of the revolutionary government inside the country as a whole and the further deepening of the revolution, moreover, cannot fail to aggravate the class struggle inside the country. That is why right now we are witnesses to a certain stepping up of the struggle of the external counterrevolution against us. This new outburst is rather a gesture of a blind desperation, rather than a sign of strength, and is occurring as a result of the constant pushing from without and the empty promises given by both counterrevolutionary organizations located outside Cuba as well as by the Americans themselves that the USA will supposedly support the actions of the internal counterrevolution. Faith in these promises of support from the US has recently begun to weaken, and the internal counterrevolution increasingly reacts to such persuasions increasingly coldly.

Fidel Castro noted, the following in particular tells of this. At our instruction, small "counterrevolutionary groups" have been created in a number of points of the country, part of which take refuge in the mountains under the "guise" of rebels and maintain communications with the external counterrevolution. The task of these groups is to identify counterrevolutionary elements inside the country and then liquidate them. It is characteristic that recently it has become much more difficult for these groups to recruit counterrevolutionaries. Many of those recruited declare that the revolutionary regime is stronger and that right now it is senseless to risk their necks, especially as the USA is only speaking of support.

On the whole, Fidel Castro said further, the internal counterrevolution is in a state of disarray, and its chiefs are trying to encourage them with desperate acts, but the main thing is to show the USA that the counterrevolution is still alive and [they] ought not to forget about it. Some days ago, Fidel Castro noted further, with the aid of one of our "counterrevolutionary groups" we managed to lure two aircraft of the counterrevolutionaries to Cuba, one of which was shot down into the sea and the other, after it threw out American weapons in the region of the Organos Mountains, was hit and forced to land in Jamaica.

At the present time, continued Fidel Castro, a large quantity of modern American weapons has fallen into our hands which were dropped and are being dropped right now on the territory of Cuba from American aircraft, and also from aircraft belonging to the Cuban counterrevolution. These weapons are enough to arm an entire regiment. It is probable that on 14 or 15 March the Cuban government will organize an exhibit of the captured American weapons. This exhibit will exert a demoralizing influence on the internal counterrevolution. Moreover, it will corroborate Raul Roa's speech in the General Assembly about the new aggressive actions of the USA against Cuba.

In Fidel Castro's words, one of these days the government intends to send a new note to the governments of the countries of Latin America to which will be attached photographs of the captured American weapons and new facts of the aggressive actions of the US against Cuba will be cited. This note will again declare Cuba's solidarity with the countries of Latin America and stress [its] readiness to develop and strengthen Latin American cooperation.

Fidel Castro stressed, with respect to the countries of Latin America we intend to pursue a more flexible policy in the future, skillfully using their differences with the US, and striving to draw those countries to our side who are ready to cooperate with Cuba. The Cuban government is quite satisfied with the firm favorable position of [Brazilian President] Janio Quadros with regard to Cuba; everything will be done from the Cuban side to strengthen and develop our relations with Brazil. The President of Ecuador, Velasco Ibarra, who bravely denounces the insidious intrigues against Latin America, takes a good position with respect to Cuba. Mexico and Uruguay are taking a good position. Even Argentina is now beginning to search for a way for a new

approach to Cuba, fearing being remaining alone. On the whole a new tendency in support of Cuba is taking shape right now in Latin America, and we are confident, stressed Fidel Castro, that Kennedy will now hardly be able to force the governments of all the Latin American countries to unconditionally support his hostile line toward Cuba.

If Kennedy agrees to the creation of a Cuban government in exile, which is obviously part of his plans, noted Fidel Castro, then for our part we will declare our right to form revolutionary governments in exile in Cuba of such countries as, for example, Puerto Rico, Guatemala, etc. The activity of the governments we have created, stressed Fidel Castro, which will be genuinely revolutionary governments, will be much more dangerous for the USA than the activity of the Cuban counterrevolutionary government is for Cuba.

In my 13 March speech, noted Fidel Castro, I will obviously make a statement about the conclusion of the operations in the mountains of Escambray, where we have taken about 400 people prisoner and killed about 40. There remain practically no more than 40-60 counterrevolutionaries in Escambray right now, who in time will be hunted down and handed over to court. The leaders of the insurrection in Escambray will be shot, but the people who joined them out of fear and opportunism will be sent to camps for re-education. Fidel Castro declared, our statement about the elimination of the counterrevolutionary breeding grounds in Escambray will inflict a new blow to the internal and external counterrevolution. It will demoralize the counterrevolutionaries even more and, at the same time, strengthen the morale of the people and thus the domestic political situation in the country as a whole.

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3. In the course of further conversation at his own initiative Fidel Castro touched on the question of his plans to visit the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. Fidel Castro said that he very much wants to visit the Soviet Union, of which he had read much and heard much good and interesting from his colleagues in the government who have already been there. Fidel Castro noted, I even somewhat envy my ministers who have already been in the Soviet Union or will make such trips in the near future. Moreover, I feel somewhat uncomfortable in connection with the fact that I speak much about my plans to visit the USSR and again and again I put off a final decision on this question I would like to openly admit, stressed Fidel Castro, that I am somewhat afraid of leaving Cuba for a long time. I do not exclude that my absence might be used by the Americans to organize some provocation against Cuba. Fidel Castro noted, the constant tense situation created around Cuba by Kennedy forces all of us, and especially me, to be on our guard all the time. We still have not yet created such a state apparatus which could act without trouble in the event of the absence of the prime minister if, for example, an extraordinary situation arose at this moment. Therefore, before I can leave Cuba for some time to pay state visits I have to finish a reorganization of the state apparatus, strengthen the armed forces of the country and the people's militia, train them militarily and politically, and more or less put an end to the counterrevolution. All this requires a certain [amount of] time, and therefore evidently it will be difficult for me to be absent from Cuba this year. Fidel Castro stressed, I would like for you to understand this correctly. Things are going not badly on the whole, but much more still needs to be done. Before making a final decision on the trip, Fidel Castro said in conclusion, I have to have full confidence in the fate of the country.

From this part of the conversation with Fidel Castro it was felt that he was speaking frankly and sincerely and that he first and foremost is seriously worried about possible provocative actions of the Americans at the time of his absence from Cuba.

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