

November 18, 1960
**Memorandum of the Conversation between Premier
Zhou Enlai and Cuban Revolutionary Government
Economic Delegation**

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Summary:

A discussion of Cuba's economic import/export and production capacities and other factors of the economic situation in Cuba.

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Translation - English

Secret

Memorandum of the Conversation between Premier Zhou Enlai and Cuban Revolutionary Government Economic Delegation

Time: 18 November 1960, 4:50-7pm

Venue: Fujian Hall, the Great Hall of the People

Present:

Chinese Side: Premier Zhou Enlai, Vice-Premier Chen Yi, Vice-Premier Li Xiannian, Ye Jizhuang, Li Qiang, Lu Xuzhang, Geng Biao, Song Yangchu, Shen Jian, Lin Ping

Cuban Side: Maj. Ernesto Guevara & all members of Cuban Revolutionary Government Economic Delegation

Interpreters: Cai Tongguo, Liu Xiliang

Recorders: Li Shude, Zhang Zai

Premier Zhou (Abbreviated as Premier below): Welcome to you.

Guevara ["abbreviated as Ge" in the original, not abbreviated below]: The wish to visit China, carried for years, is finally realized. Charged with the mission given by our government, we come to discuss some issues. We are very happy that we are the first country in Latin America to establish diplomatic relations with China [on 28 September 1960].

Premier: How is the health of His Excellency, the Premier [Fidel Castro]?

Guevara: He did not feel well, because there was an epidemic in Latin America not long ago.

Premier: Has it become well now?

Guevara: [It] has become good.

Premier: Has every friend come to China for the first time?

(All replied with yes.)

Premier: Welcome to you. Many of our delegations went to Cuba and received a warm welcome from Premier Castro and the Cuban people, for which I thank you again. (Speaking to Guevara) could you please introduce each member [to me]?

(Guevara presented all members of the delegation.)

Premier: [I] heard that [you] could stay in China for two weeks.

Guevara: Two weeks indeed.

Premier: [Then you] should organize your schedule well. [This is] our ambassador to Cuba, Shen Jian. [He] has already been presented, hasn't he? Have you already known all these people (referred to leaders on our side)?

Vice-Premier Li Xiannian: All were presented yesterday.

Premier: What do you want to see?

Guevara: We want to see too many [things], but the time [we have] is just too little. Besides, [we] also need to discuss [issues].

Premier: [You] could do these in parallel: discussing while visiting.

Guevara: Does the schedule contain a plan to visit Guangzhou?

Premier: It should have. [Guangzhou] is also close to a tropical area, similar to yours.

Guevara: Because Chinese descendents in Cuba all come from Guangzhou, [we] are very curious.

Premier: Is your sugarcane used for papermaking?

Guevara: Ramos [Lamosi][1] is an expert, specialized in researching this problem.

Premier: Even we haven't fully solved this problem. How much paper can you produce every day?

Guevara: Fifty tons for each day.

Premier: It appears that [you] have solved the problem.

Guevara: Yes, [we] have. We are now conducting research about adding other raw materials so to strengthen the paper.

Premier: Do you add wood pulp?

Ramos: In making newsprint paper, 100 percent raw material is sugarcane. To make blueprinting and writing papers, wood pulp is needed. Now [we] want to add a species of a plant that exists only in Cuba as another raw material.

Premier: You have solved all technological problems.

Ramos: Only the technological problem of making newsprint paper is solved.

Premier: Can you produce the equipment for [a] papermaking factory?

Ramos: Not yet. Machines are all imported.

Premier: You have iron but no coal.

Guevara: Yes.

Premier: Do you produce iron or steel yourself?

Guevara: [We] only produce some.

Premier: How much can [you] produce?

Guevara: We can produce forty thousand tons of iron annually. The Soviet Union is prepared to help us expand it to two hundred thousand tons. Other than that, [we] are setting up equipment [to produce] two hundred thousand tons. This is on our five-year plan.

Premier: What about coal?

Guevara: It still relies on import. We could produce anthracite, but coking coal needs to be imported.

Premier: Where do you import from? Latin America?

Guevara: Now we are importing from socialist countries, because imports from Latin American countries need to be paid for in US dollars.

Premier: So your machinery industry is not quite developed.

Guevara: Not developed at all. We plan to develop industries of automobiles, trucks, farming equipments, tractors, steel & iron, mining, basic chemicals, and agricultural products processing. Regarding the papermaking industry, [we] wish China could help. The textile industry belongs to the light industry in general.

Premier: How about the light industry?

Guevara: We have light industry on a small scale. More equipment is needed.

Premier: Do you sell sugar to Mexico?

Guevara: Mexico is a country that also produces sugar, [and it] now supplies the US.

Premier: In which case you can no longer buy cotton from Mexico.

Guevara: [We can,] as long as we pay in cash, indeed, in US dollars.

Premier: How do you solve the problem of fertilizers?

Guevara: There is now a chemical factory producing fertilizers, which processes domestic raw materials. Apart from it, [we] need to import fertilizers from the Soviet Union.

Premier: Are these ammonia fertilizers?

Guevara: Ammonia and potassic fertilizers can be produced by us. Yet the phosphatic fertilizers—one is calcium superphosphate and the other, triple superphosphate—need to be imported.

Premier: How much do you import annually?

Guevara: The imports of all kinds of fertilizers add up to one hundred thousand tons. In the five-year plan, we are prepared to expand the fertilizer producing capacity, by consolidating existing factories, and [to try to] establish an associated company.

Premier: How much [fertilizers] is it expected to produce?

Guevara: The multi-fertilizer producing company should produce two hundred thousand tons [annually], for our population is merely 6 million. Our ambassador will arrive within the following two days.

Premier: It is said that [he's] already in Moscow.

Guevara: When we left Moscow yesterday, [he] hadn't arrived yet.

Premier: Chairman Liu [Shaoqi], whom you have already met, is still in Moscow, and will be unable to accept the letter of credentials. Vice-Chairman Sun Qingling, i.e. the wife of Sun Zhongshan [Sun Yat-sen], is prepared to accept the letter of credentials from the Ambassador. Do you know her?

Guevara: I know the name.

Premier: She is the wife of Sun Zhongshan. Sun Zhongshan, the pioneer of Chinese democratic revolution, staged the Revolution in 1911, overthrew the feudalist monarchy and founded the Republic. But he failed in the end. Revolution has to go through constant failures before it succeeds. After the October Revolution, the Chinese Communist Party [CCP] was founded. Sun Zhongshan proposed that the Guomindang [GMD] and the Communist Party cooperate with each other. The GMD-CCP cooperation of 1924 advanced revolution, which happened during the period of the First Great Revolution, also known as the New Democratic Revolution. Thanks to the participation of the CCP, Dr. Sun Zhongshan's influence among the people became huge. Although one year and a half after the start of the GMD-CCP cooperation, he died, our present deputy head of the state, the Vice-Chairman, is his wife. At the death of Sun Zhongshan, Jiang Jieshi [Chiang Kai-shek] seized the power. The GMD-CCP cooperation then dissolved. We have fought for 22 years. The GMD suppressed and forced some CCP [members] to work underground. We learned the military way to deal with him. If we did not resist then, the heads of comrades present would have gone. At last, we drove away Jiang Jieshi in 1949. He was backed by the US, just like the tyrant [Fulgencio] Batista, the one you toppled. Given this fact, our anti-imperialist sentiments are the same. We drove away a representative of the US imperialists, you, too, drove away another. Without the military [approach], they wouldn't have left; without the military [approach], both of us wouldn't have been able to meet each other today.

Guevara: We have paid constant attention to learning from the Chinese experience. There were not so many Chinese books in Latin America. But not long ago, [we] came across two volumes of The Selected Works of Mao Zedong [Mao Zedong xuanji]. We carefully studied them and conducted a discussion. To our surprise, we found that China and Cuba share many things: China is a big country, Cuba is a small one, but both were colonies. There is so much in common.

Premier: This is the result of imperialist oppression. Our villages are extremely poor; cities have been colonized, which is discernible in Beijing, and most conspicuous in Shanghai.

Let's talk about detailed issues. Will everyone participate?

(Note from recorders: On [the] evening of 17th [of November], Guevara once told our reception staff that after the meeting, only 6 people will stay and join the discussion).

Guevara: Any form will do. If [we] will discuss trade issues only, then trade specialists could stay; if [we] will discuss all sorts of issues, then it will be also all right for everyone to stay. These people all could be trusted, even this journalist, who is not the kind of journalists [as] in Western countries.

Premier: All right. Regarding the meeting of economic cooperation between socialist countries, because we did not join the Council of Eight Countries' Economic Mutual Assistance [COMECON], we were present only as an observer. Yet we do know the content of the meeting.

Guevara: In this meeting, [the eight countries] mainly discussed the price of sugar and the issue of socialist countries purchasing our sugar. Because sugar is our main product, if sugar is not discussed, no deal could be possibly made.

During the meeting, we mentioned conditions that the US gave for purchasing our sugar, which were generous; [we ask] now socialist countries buy sugar at a price of four US cents for one pound, a price that is slightly higher than in the international market. This [proposal] is not tenable from the economic point of view, but we raised it from the political point of view. We have already put forth this idea in the meeting, and also discussed [it] with Chairman Liu Shaoqi. We don't know if there is a need to go through it again.

Premier: No more need to discuss. We all understand.

Guevara: Socialist countries in Eastern Europe will purchase three hundred thousand tons [of sugar], and the Soviet Union agrees to buy two million and seven hundred thousand tons; both prices are four US cents for each pound. All together there are three million tons. China, according to the agreement, will buy five hundred and fifty thousand tons. But we wish that the total could add up to four million tons.

Premier: On top of the three hundred thousand tons, could socialist countries in Eastern Europe buy an extra amount?

Guevara: They are almost all sugar-exporting countries.

Premier: How much sugar do you produce?

Guevara: Nearly six million. More sugar could be produced, but it is constrained by quota.

No more sugar should be produced. This is the first problem. The second problem is that [we] wish the sugar price could be set at four US cents per pound. The third problem is about purchasing German equipment in complete for a factory, which is raised based on the trade agreement established with the Vice-Minister of trade back in Havana. Also, [there is] the issue of repaying loans. Papermaking machines from China will help us a lot. We are not yet familiar with China's economy, which [we] could have a look at before making decisions. This is the focus of my speech.

The issue of technological aid is less important. Could you send agricultural specialists to Cuba to help us? Besides, we will send some students [to China] to learn Chinese, engineering, sciences and agriculture. Problems in this regard [of technological aid] have been solved in Europe, but [we] also hope that China could help [solve] a part [of the problems].

Premier: Other than papermaking machines, what else [do you] want?

Guevara: We want many things. [We] could let him (pointed to [Chilean economist Albán] Lataste) talk about it.

Lataste: Fertilizer equipment; [equipment] for factories of the automobile industry, such as a tire factory; a bulb factory; after these is equipment for the food processing industry, for example, for canning and agricultural product processing.

Premier: Do [you] have textile equipment?

Guevara: Machines [we have] were bought.

Premier: How many spindles?

Guevara: Two hundred thousand spindles. Besides, there will be another fifteen thousand spindle put into operation next May. The Democratic Germany [i.e., the German Democratic Republic; East Germany] will help us establish fifty thousand spindles.

Premier: Where did the cotton come from?

Guevara: From the US.

Premier: But now it is banned [by the US].

Guevara: The Soviet Union and Egypt could supply.

Premier: How about Pakistan? Could it supply [cotton]?

Guevara: [Pakistan] has no trade relationship with us.

Premier: The questions that [we] just discussed have already been discussed with you by Chairman Liu Shaoqi in Moscow. Cuba's situation was very difficult. [It] was of a colonial economy under complete US control, producing sugar only; the food produced by itself was not much; [its] industry was incompetent. Now new difficulties arrived. The US imperialists imposed an embargo, and perhaps a military blockade. Recently Eisenhower of the US ordered five warships from the reactionary governments of Guatemala and Nicaragua and one aircraft carrier to show off [its] muscle. Standing at the forefront of anti-US-imperialism, you are confronting these difficulties. Being on the same front, the Chinese people have a duty to support you. The problem now is not a question of whether the aid should be given or not, but a question of the possibility [of realizing the aid]. Indeed, any possibility [of giving the aid] should be exploited.

The first problem is the sugar price. Your demand is not unreasonable. On the contrary, it's reasonable. Because the international sugar price was manipulated by imperialism: the US bought your sugar at a slightly higher price, which made it possible [for the US] to sell goods back to you at high prices. Besides, these sugar factories, after all, were invested by them. With one hand, they gave, with the other hand, they took.

Guevara: What they took away was more [than they gave].

Premier: Now you are in charge. You have the power to propose the price. We don't oppose your price of four cents per pound [of sugar]. As long as other socialist countries, especially the Soviet Union, agree, we will surely follow suit. Indeed, if he [the Soviet Union] does not approve whereas we do, that won't be good. Because he is the bigger patron, purchasing two million and seven hundred thousand tons [of sugar]. For us the [price] problem is no problem.

The problem now is the one regarding the quantity of sugar procurement: how much [we] could buy. In terms of China's population, this [one million tons of sugar] is not much, which means less than two kilograms on average for each person, or some one kilogram and half. But this is not the problem. The problem lies in the Chinese

people's purchasing power and China's foreign reserve for international trade. Compared to Europe, America, or even some Latin American cities, the living standard of the Chinese people is still low. Meanwhile, the Chinese people are not used to consuming much sugar. For example, you need sugar when drinking tea, we don't. I heard that [personally], you don't have this habit, either. I knew this secret of yours. (The Premier smiled). Of course, habits could be changed too. Consuming sugar also has benefits, such as adding calories. The problem is the foreign reserves. The international market does not accept China's Renminbi. We therefore have to use our foreign reserves.

Guevara: We did not mention foreign currency.

Premier: This is [what we propose]: when we buy your sugar, you should buy goods from us of the same value which will be huge: 1 million tons [of sugar] means 88 million USD, and becomes more than 100 million with freight added.

Guevara: The delivery should be made at Cuban docks, because we don't have the ability to ship sugar to China. We are facing a blockade.

Premier: We are, too, facing a blockade. We share the same fate. We have the same difficulty. Of course, we will buy as we can, and underwrite the transportation expense. Paying freight also requires foreign currency, because we don't have our own ocean-going ships. Let's just temporarily leave the matter aside. With reference to the sugar procurement alone, i.e. 88 million USD, the problem then is whether China is able, or not, to provide the goods you need. I wish you could put forth a list of goods. We will examine the feasibility in practice, only by doing so could we ultimately decide the amount of sugar we buy from you.

Guevara: We are not familiar with China's possibilities, for example, variety, standard, and quality.

Premier: [You] could have a discussion with departments concerning foreign trade. Take a look at samples.

Guevara: The order of goods we need has already been raised back in Havana. We raise the same order of goods to all socialist countries.

Premier: In this case, given that [we] have already received something from you, will you please raise another list? Foreign trade minister, Lu Xuzhang, could discuss it with you. Who will be [in the discussion] on your side?

Guevara: [Alberto] Mora [Becerra], [Ramiro Fernando] Maldonado [Secretary-General, Revolutionary Social Party of Ecuador], Molei [sic]. When will the discussion take place? We would love to participate, if we have time, as observers.

Premier: Tomorrow could be the date of the discussion. This is about the problem of quantity and price of sugar.

The second problem is about the loan and equipment. You said that the Soviet Union has helped [solve] part [of the problem]. As to what China could provide, you are not clear. I suggest that you go to the industrial exhibition tomorrow, to see those suitable small and medium [pieces of] equipment. After the visit, [we] could speak of the feasibility and calculate the amount of money.

Guevara: Agree. When it comes to machines about to be purchased, [they] could not be included to be items paid by loans, instead, be put in the list for trade.

Premier: Those machines in no need of special design could be considered. Who are in charge of this on your part?

Guevara: Lateste, Ramos, Piniela[2] [sic].

Premier: On our side, Vice-Minister Li Qiang is responsible.

The third is the technological problem. Regarding the demands you raised for technological materials and learning [opportunities] of technological staff, we will help as we can. When the industrial exhibition is visited, [you] could raise detailed demands.

Guevara: Agree.

Premier: Fourth, about transportation problems, which you did not mention but it is a problem that exists.

Guevara: The Soviet Union has promised that transportation problems that other countries cannot solve could be left to them. The Soviet Union will help Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Bulgaria solve transportation problems. But in the [COMECON] meeting, [the Soviet Union] did not mention China's transportation problem, because China is not in the Council of Eight Countries' Economic Mutual Assistance.

Premier: The transportation of over one million tons [of sugar] is a big task. We are facing a blockade here, and there is also a blockade in your [place]. In the future, there will probably be a total blockade. This year's situation is comparatively good. We have transported to you two hundred thousand tons of sugar. Thirty-one ships have been chartered. From September onwards, cargoes of over twenty ships have been transported. Things have gone relatively well. How are the warehouses of your docks?

Guevara: Do you refer to the number of warehouses, or the condition of equipment?

Premier: [I refer to] the problem of storage.

Guevara: [We] have warehouses. Besides, we are constructing special warehouses for oil and ammonia. If you could sell oil depots, we want [them] too.

Premier: We don't have enough [depots] ourselves, and can't export and provide [you]. Does your oil come from the Soviet Union, or is imported from Romania?

Guevara: All is imported from the Soviet Union.

Premier: Can't Venezuela provide [you]?

Guevara: The oil of Venezuela means the oil of Mobil and Shell, etc.

Premier: The discussion of several detailed problems could stop where it is now. [We] can't reach conclusion today. [Let's] leave them to individuals specialized [in respective fields] who will discuss separately.

I want to talk, again, about our situation. Although China has been liberated for eleven years, its basis [for development] remains very backward. Industrialization was one hundred years later than the West. Out of eleven years [since 1949], the first three years went to recovery, after which [we] spent time on construction. Some

accomplishments have been attained, which however become a very few when such a big population is considered. The Chinese people are in desperate hope to get rid of the backward situation and have built up the country at a high speed. Over the last three years, construction has been accelerated. Despite these, [what we can provide] is not remotely close to what the people need. Both the heavy industry and the light industry could not provide the products needed by the domestic market. Therefore, no matter what happens, [we] have to squeeze out a part of agricultural and mining products and a fraction of industrial products (mainly agricultural and mining products) for exportation, and trade back mechanical equipment. It's impossible for our imports and exports not be influenced by agriculture. Sometimes we have a good harvest, other times a bad harvest. If counted in terms of rubles, the values of our imports and exports reach seven billion for each. The value of the ruble here is not estimated with reference to its exchange rate with the US dollar, but based on other [references]. If counted in terms of US dollars, the value of exports is approximately between two and three billion, the value of imports is [also] two and three billion. Our major trade is the one with the Soviet Union, accounting for 50 percent; nearly 25 percent goes to the trade with other socialist countries; the remaining one quarter goes to the trade with places beyond socialist countries, which does not exceed 600 million.

This is our situation. [The reason why] the trade with the Soviet Union accounts for half [of our international trade] is to repay loans. From 1950 to 1955, we received loans all together of five billion and six hundred million ruble. 60 percent of them is the expense for [purchasing] arms and ammunition to resist the US and aid Korea. Now [we] have to repay [the loans]. Along with interests, we have repaid over two thirds [of loans], with the remaining to be cleared within the next five years. On top of these, there has been a temporary incident: last year we encountered a natural disaster. Our food production this year will shrink by 30 percent of the planned [total]. This will affect a string of agricultural products, and the processing of them, such as tea, cotton, tobacco, and raw materials for industry. Our trade with the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries is unable to be carried out as the original contracts stipulated. [We] will have outstanding balances, reduction in agricultural production, [adverse] impact on industry. It's impossible to recover within one year from natural disasters of two years. Only by 1961 or 1962 could [we] recover. Despite these, as long as [they] are friendly countries, with difficulties bigger than ours, we will always do our best to help. Chairman Liu said you wanted rice. We could help you just by each person having one less bite of rice [meiren jian yikoufan]. You raised two figures: one is one hundred and twenty thousand tons of rice, and another, one hundred and eight thousand tons. Which is the figure [you ultimately want]?

(At this moment, Guevara left his seat for some reason. The Premier turned to Cuban deputy foreign minister, [Arnold] Rodriguez [Camps], for a word.)

Premier: Have you and your foreign minister [Raúl] Roa [Garcia] attended the UN General Assembly?

Rodriguez: No, we have two deputy [foreign] ministers: one went with the foreign minister to the UN General Assembly, and I stayed.

Premier: So the foreign minister is now still at the UN.

Rodriguez: Yes, he is still. The struggle in the UN is difficult. It will become easier if China gets into the UN.

Premier: Even if we get in, [we] will only be part of the minority. But gradually the minority will turn into a majority. When you start to lead Latin America, and twenty [Latin American] countries change, the situation will be different.

(At this moment, Guevara returned to his seat, and resumed the conversation with

the Premier.)

Mora: The two hundred thousand tons of rice we proposed earlier was based on the calculation of our production capacity and demand. Later on production capacity turned out to be bad, we proposed one hundred and eight thousand tons, which is not an accurate figure, either.

Premier: Your harvest this year is not good.

Guevara: The bad harvest this year is not due to a natural disaster. It is because [we] drove away bad elements. When the technological staff was gone, the production of pesticide dropped, and the production of rice also dropped. Nobody could be blamed for this.

Premier: This is only a temporary problem. No matter whether it's one hundred and twenty thousand tons, or one hundred and eight thousand tons, it's not much against China's population. [We] will be able to provide you [with rice] when everyone squeezes out a half a kilogram [of rice]. I just talked about China's production and trade situation. But as long as [we] could supply you, we will do our best to supply.

Guevara: We know our needs, and [we] also know the efforts made by China, although not quite thoroughly. Our demands are not going to exceed the possibilities. (The translation of this sentence might not be accurate. There might be an error.) [sic]

Premier: Concrete possibilities should be found.

Guevara: It's estimated that by 1961, we could be self-sufficient in rice, less so in soybeans and maize. We can't produce wheat, which is one of our problems.

Premier: Is rice your staple food?

Guevara: Yes, it's rice. [We] eat it every day.

Premier: Then [you are] the same as we are.

Guevara: Is eating rice China's tradition?

Premier: This mainly refers to the south of China. But in the north, [people] also eat rice, along with wheat and maize. What's the size of Cuba's cultivated arable land?

Guevara: [It] is impossible to estimate. There are no statistics. It's reckoned that 80 percent of territory is arable land.

Premier: Is the figure nation-wide?

Guevara: Yes.

Premier: That is large. I'm afraid that the cultivated arable land is far less, isn't it?

Guevara: [Yes,] it's far less. Some big sugar factories purchase land for sugarcane planting, but there is land, three or four times more [in size than the one for sugarcane planting], not for cultivation but for livestock raising. The US United Fruit

Company has seven thousand caballeria [ka] land, out of which only two thousand have been cultivated.

(At this moment, Lataste, official of the Industrial Division of Land Reform Commission of Cuba, produced the figure for the number of Cuba's arable land.)

Maj. Lataste said that Cuba has about nine million hectare [of] arable land. The cultivated arable land is about a million hectares.

Premier: That's a lot. On average, everyone has one hectare and a half.

Guevara: True.

Vice-Premier Chen Yi: Then you are the richest country.

Premier: We have only a hectare of arable land for five persons.

Guevara: If counting in terms of Cuba's rural population, everyone has three hectares of arable land.

Premier: The rural area has a population of three million.

Guevara: The rural population accounts for 42 percent of total population.

Premier: Less than three million.

Guevara: [Yes,] a bit less [than three million.]

Premier: [Your cultivation] relies mainly on machines or livestock?

Guevara: Cultivation relies mainly on machines.

Premier: How many tractors?

Guevara: [We have] twenty-three thousand tractors, while we use livestock to grow tobacco.

Premier: [You are using] mixed tractors [sic].

Guevara: 50 percent of the tractors have between thirty and forty horsepower, of various brands.

Premier: Are they mainly US tractors?

Guevara: [Yes, they are] mainly from the US, and then from Britain. Now we buy tractors from the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and the Democratic Germany [German Democratic Republic; East Germany—ed.].

Premier: Are there tractor repairing factories?

Guevara: The Soviet Union helped us build a repairing factory.

Premier: You didn't have one in the past?

Guevara: No.

Premier: When components broke, [you] shipped [replacements] from the US.

Guevara: Yes.

Premier: It's entirely a US colonialist solution, the pain that we all suffered. China is politically independent, not entirely economically independent yet. [We] are yet to be self-sufficient in main items. This needs time and this is why [we] said that we need construction and a peaceful international environment. You do understand this thinking of ours? A peaceful environment is good for construction. With ten years, or twenty years, given to us, we will construct the country well, and imperialism will in part dare not bully us. Modern imperialism describes China as militant. You could judge by yourself to see if China is really militant. If [we are] militant, for what did we build this auditorium? It would be gone with one bomb. All newly independent countries invariably need a peaceful environment. When construction is done, imperialism no longer dares to bully [us]. Imperialism refuses to let us develop, and bullies [us], saying that we are militant. Eisenhower recently ordered troops deployed in the Caribbean Sea, saying you were conducting subversive activities against Guatemala and Nicaragua. In fact, they wanted to encourage people to occupy your Binuo Island [Isle of Pines], just as they did to our Taiwan.

Guevara: They are pressuring us, and we bring troubles to them in return.

Premier: [You] gave them very big troubles. You are the vanguard. It's not that you are overthrowing Guatemala and Nicaragua, but that their people should learn from you and people of the world should all learn from you. Fire can't be snuffed out.

Guevara: In fact, we haven't done anything bad. They come to learn voluntarily.

Premier: Certainly [they] should learn. All are facing the oppression of US imperialism. [This situation] is created by the US. Let's call it a day. We will continue the discussion after [your] visits.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

19 November 1960

[1] Ed Note: Possibly Claudio Ramos, later Cuba's ambassador to Algeria—thanks to Carlos Alzugaray for help on this identification.

[2] Ed Note: Possibly Comandante Manuel Piñeiro Losada, the well-known Barbarroja (Redbeard). Ministry of the Interior Vice Minister in charge of the National Liberation Directorate. Thanks to Carlos Alzugaray for this speculation.