

RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Between F. R. Kozlov and M. A. Suslov and member of the Executive Bureau of the National Committee of the Peoples Socialist Party of Cuba Comrade Flavio Bravo, March 3, 1961

After mutual greetings, comrade Bravo passed greetings from Fidel Castro, Blas Roca and all the leaders of the people's communist Party of Cuba to comrades N. S. Khrushchev, A. I. Mikoyan, M. A. Suslov and other members of the Central Committee of the USSR.

Comrade Bravo. I arrived in the capacity of a spokesman for Fidel Castro and the Cuban government, on the one hand, and as a spokesman for the National committee of the National-socialist party of Cuba (NSPC), on the other. I was entrusted with the duty to head the delegation of military specialists, which includes comrade Calderon, who is practically the commander of Cuba's Navy, and comrade Roberto- a military specialist representing the Communist party of Spain in Cuba. This assignment attests to the fact that I am responsible for the military matters in the Executive bureau of the National Committee of the NSPC.

Before the start of the discussion of specific military issues with the leaders of the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff of the USSR, I would like to report to the leadership of the Central Committee of the CPSU about the situation in Cuba, about the goal of our mission, and also to inform you about a few problems related to Poland and Yugoslavia.

The revolution in Cuba continues to develop and intensify. For this reason, we believe that it will succeed politically, as well as in educational, economic, and even in the military realm.

One of the most important economic successes in the recent past was the emergence of a remarkable change of workers' attitude to work. Workers and peasants, participating in the harvest of sugar cane on Saturdays and Sundays (in a number of regions Cuba now does not have enough work hands, whereas previously there was high unemployment everywhere), exhibit a new attitude toward work, resembling how it was in the time of the communist *subbotniks*, in which V. I. Lenin participated. We have achieved undeniable success in solving

many economic problems and we now we can thank the socialist camp and, most of all, the USSR for their big help.

The influence of the socialist camp in relation to the Plan in Cuba has been noted, even by Fidel Castro. It was not until too long ago that F. Castro did not understand the significance of the plan. Now he openly admits that the economy of Cuba must develop on the basis of plans. He approved the development plan of the village economies in 1961, prepared by the NSPC. That plan became the State plan and is already being implemented. Now we have developed a general plan for national economic development in 1962, in which we pay more attention to industry. In truth, until this time, we have not decided whether or not this would be an independent plan or part of a longer-term plan for 3-5 years.

In the realm of politics, we are enjoying definite success in gradual consolidation of revolutionary authority. A major sign in this regard is the creation of Soviets [local councils] for coordination, control and leadership in a few provinces of the country. Spokespersons from all revolutionary organizations have entered into the Soviets. The NSPC holds the leading role in these Soviets (especially in the province of Oriente). The Soviets play a major role in implementing control over the intended direction of the central government. They are gradually becoming the fundamental organs of power in those locations.

The major problem of today's Cuba is organization. Deficiencies in this regard are glaring. They can become apparent to an even a greater degree in the near future in the supply, production, and defense capacity of the nation. We understand our own backwardness in organizational matters and we are in a great need for advice. The USSR's help in deciding these issues would have special significance.

We have achieved a few successes in the military realm. The mobilization of the national militia in January 1961 brought good results all together. The people now have a better understanding of their own responsibility for the fate of the nation. Our deficiencies became clearer during the time of the mobilization.

We managed to mobilize upwards of 300,000 people. In Oriente, we armed 50,000 people in the shortest time. The mobilization had a great significance for the education of the

masses. The soldiers read newspapers and they discussed many pertinent problems. They have obviously matured in their political attitudes, and understand the meaning of the conflict to strengthen the unity of all revolutionary forces much better now.

But there are still more obstacles on the path to unity—with regard to the successful development of the revolution, [because] the hostile elements are still persistently attempting to change the course of events. There continues to be a clear class division in Cuba. Part of the right wing of the petty bourgeoisie and part of the rich peasants have joined forces as enemies of the revolution. We are now living through the period, which to some degree resembles your period of 1927-30, the years of war against the Kulaks.

The notable problems of our unity arise from these conditions. Our trade unions, as well as the women's and the youth unions are growing stronger. There continues to be discussion about the creation of a united party of the Cuban revolution on the Marxist-Leninist grounds. Fidel Castro and other well-known leaders of the revolution are ardent supporters of such a party.

At the present time we created 12 party schools. In these schools, there are more than 600 students, including many leading workers from the "July 26 movement" and members from the "March 13 Directorate." The instruction is based upon the principles of Marxism-Leninism. These schools prepare practical cadres for a future united party of the Cuban revolution.

To describe the progress of our party, recently a meeting of the Executive Bureau of NSPC, in which Fidel Castro took part, adopted a resolution about the creation of a commission to control the press, television and radio in Cuba. We adopted all these measures so that the press would not be used to the detriment of the revolution.

Cuba's press is making progress. For example, documents from the Conference of Communist and Workers Parties were published in all the Cuban newspapers. We immediately printed 300,000 copies for circulation.

Comrade Kozlov What is Fidel Castro's reaction to the results of the Conference?

Comrade Bravo He is very satisfied with the results of the conference. After receiving information about the results of the Conference, F. Castro expressed his sincere happiness about the gradual consolidation of unity among the national communist movement. At this time, he again turned his attention to the need for the maximum consolidation of unity of Cuban revolutionary powers in the face of the growing U.S. aggression against Cuba.

In our opinion President Kennedy has taken a more aggressive position in his relations with Cuba than did Eisenhower. Suffice it to say that in his short time in power he has issued open denouncements against Cuba 5 times. He is clearly nurturing the idea of some kind of direct US attack against Cuba. Of course, for them to launch an attack against Cuba under an American flag is almost impossible, even the aggressive Americans understand that this could lead to the danger of worldwide conflict. The resolute announcement from the Soviet government about its support for Cuba has played an important role in forestalling such an attack.

But Kennedy will look for another way of attacking under another flag. One of the ways it might happen would be an attack against Cuba by a mercenary force formed in Guatemala, Nicaragua, Santo-Domingo, or Miami (USA). The inner reactionary forces in Cuba have been suppressed to a great extent. They cannot bring about a serious action. There are a few groups totaling about 4-5 thousand reactionaries active in the Cuban territory. The largest of these was formed with the help of the American secret service and hides in the mountains of Escambray (Las Villas province, central Cuba). There were up to 500 people in it. But it was defeated in the past. The rest of them are hiding in the mountains and hard to access caves. They are surrounded on all sides by more than 50,000 national militiamen from various provinces of the country.

In the past, there were also a few gangs defeated in the provinces Oriente, Matanzas, Pinar del Rio, in which they seized a million dollars worth of weapons, and in other regions of the country. The counter-revolutionaries tried to create a network of their organizations all over Cuba. With the help of the organs of state security, it was discovered and destroyed. The American secret service must have spent much time and energy on its creation.

The reactionary forces depend on, above all things, an outside intervention of mercenary forces. Therefore, they are nurturing a plan to seize parts of the Cuban territory and to create a puppet government within them. That government would immediately turn to help from the USA and the governments of a number of Latin American governments, like that of Ydigoras Fuentes in Guatemala. The Guatemalan government can even declare war on Cuba and make all its resources available for these goals defined by the United States. Ydigoras Fuentes is trying to achieve, on behalf of the State Department, a collective breaking of diplomatic ties between Latin American countries and Cuba. According to our information, he succeeded in one form or another to win over 11 Latin American nations to his side; however, the more important Latin American nations like Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and even Argentina, declined Ydigoras' proposal. However, one cannot discount a possible change in their policies [and possible] collusion of a number of Latin American puppet governments in the OAS and the UN. Some are already trying to discuss Cuba's positions in the context of the events in Congo. [We see] an intensification of preparations of mercenaries in Central American nations, especially in Guatemala,. According to our information, there are from 5 to 8 thousand people [training] there. The Cuban government is taking measures to expose the plans of the enemies of the Cuban revolution. One of these measures is a brief note from the Cuban government to the Latin American governments.

Comrade Kozlov We published it in full in yesterday's newspapers.

Comrade Bravo And today there was another big article about Cuba in *Pravda*. It is very good! We need this kind of support and attention very much.

Continuing the discourse about the actions of the counter-revolutionaries, we would like to note that there is no exceptional activity or domestic reaction. With regard to the weakening of its social base, it relies more and more on the Catholic Church, which has been turned into a blatant agent of imperialism. The main instrument of the Catholic church is the private Catholic schools, where children are instructed in a counter-revolutionary spirit and dynamite and weapons are stored. We are now discussing the issue about nationalizing such schools. It is impossible to permit the blatant preparation of future counter-revolutionaries

any longer. Besides, we want to help the poor bourgeoisie and save them from the cost of educating their children in private schools.

A serious situation exists in the churches themselves. They have been turned into warehouses of dynamite, weapons, and counter-revolutionary pamphlets. Not long ago, Fidel Castro announced that the patience of the government could run dry. It will simply deport the majority of the priests, who are basically the Spanish Phalangists. For the time being we will not turn the force of the police and the army against the church. We are organizing public opinion against it.

In the past, the Jehovah Witness sect tried to adjoin itself to the Catholic hierarchy. Many Jehovahists were relying completely on the support from the American secret service. They tried to use them as ties with the domestic counterrevolution and the outside world. We are engaged in a fight against the Jehovahists with the overwhelming support of the masses.

The national masses have evidently matured in their political outlook. Anti-communism has lost its footing in the country. Moreover, the Cuban working people, who were influenced by anti-Communism during the course of decades, have now come to the perception of the idea of socialism as legitimate. And more and more, they are deliberately embracing the Marxist- Leninist ideology.

Fidel Castro has played a huge role in the development of this process. We have already said to him a number of times that he was the original leader of the Cuban communists. But Fidel is definitely part of the party leadership to a great degree. He almost always implements the decisions of the party. In the near future there will be a meeting of the Executive bureau of the NSPC, in which F. Castro, Raul Castro, Dorticos and Ernesto Guevara will participate. We want to discuss a number of questions over the course of the week in connection with the daily development of the revolution in Cuba and in Latin America as a whole. There is a number of preliminary considerations based on the questions indicated in this document (he presents the document). Our party leadership would like to discuss this document with all the leaders of the Cuban revolution, and then, on the basis of such a discussion, present our considerations to the meeting of Latin American communists, which

will be held in Cuba during the May Holidays. But before we bring this [document] to such a discussion we would like to hear the comments and advice of the USSR regarding the prepared document. This would be of considerable help for us.

These questions here have a great significance for other Latin American nations. In many of these nations, those who are not critical of the Cuban revolution, value it and consider that it is necessary to copy it. We resolutely stand against such an attitude. There is still a lot of confusion with regard to the question about the path of conflict for the liberation of Latin America. Some consider that after Cuba, a violent overthrow of the existing regimes is the only way to go. We do not share such a point of view. There are different conditions in other nations, and it is not an unlikely case that in some Latin American states, victories could be achieved along a peaceful path. We seriously criticized Ernest Guevara for his ultra leftist attitude in relation to the expansion of the Latin American revolution. It became known that he gave money to a notorious Maoist organization related to a partisan conflict.

Comrade Kozlov Clearly, the Chinese influence is being felt.

Comrade Bravo. Yes, he repeated many of their positions, although he appropriately acknowledged the criticism from the leadership of the party.

I would like to once again return to the main goal of our trip. A comprehensive consolidation of solidarity with the Cuban revolution will have an extraordinary significance for the augmentation of Cuba's defense capability. Its subsequent triumphant development is having a huge effect on the revolutionary process in all Latin American nations. It is necessary to turn Cuba into a real invulnerable fortress. We received momentous and far-reaching help from the USSR and the socialist camp to this end, which included the provision of many first-class weapons. Your military specialists, and comrades, channeling your assistance via the Communist party of Spain, helped us solve difficult questions.

However, now a number of difficulties and deficiencies in this regard have presented themselves. Big organizational problems and deficiencies of personnel- these are the most pressing problems of modern Cuba and we want to ask you about sending a new group of military specialists. It is desirable that they not come in the form of a military mission, but in

the capacity of engineers and technical specialists, etc. It is clear that in the past the Cubans have long struggled against foreign military forces, and it is better not to use old terminology.

We have big problems with the air force and the navy. We have practically neither an air force nor a navy. Meanwhile, considering the insular position of Cuba, we cannot manage to do without these types of forces. American planes fly freely over Cuba. Now they are throwing out leaflets, but tomorrow they can toss bombs at the factories. For now, they protect them, they used to be American property, and they hope they would be returned [to previous owners] in the future. We need a navy for patrolling and protection. We need planes for this goal as well.

We especially need your advice and the advice of your Soviet military specialists on a plan for the general defense of Cuba. Without it, it is impossible to overcome the organizational confusion among our personnel, provisions, and the very management of the fight against the revolution. Up to this day, we have not created a general staff and were unable to overcome Fidel Castro's resistance in this regard. Your advice will help persuade him more quickly.

A defense plan is necessary for the determination of our needs for weapons and specialists. Without it we don't have an idea about our real necessities or possibilities. We ask for your help in answering these questions. We tell you directly that we can't solve them ourselves and that we don't have the necessary experience or personnel for this. Comrade Raul Castro told us before our departure "Communicate with our Soviet comrades with regard to the formulation of the plan, they must approve it and think of Cuba as part of their own territory."

Comrade Kozlov It is difficult to decide such questions at such a great distance. Maybe it would be better to send specialists to Cuba?

Comrade Suslov. In Cuba, our specialists could make decisions on such questions more adequately.

Comrade Bravo Of course, it would be good to dispatch more Soviet military specialists to Cuba.

Comrade Kozlov. We asked you for detailed information. Very important questions were raised here. We discussed them in a comprehensive fashion. It is clear for us that Cuba needs assistance. If equipment is necessary, we will equip it. If specialists are needed, we will find the specialists. It is possible to send them under another title. Soviet military specialists will help in the in the creation and status of a defense plan. Today I will meet with Marshall Malinovsky at once. I'll ask him to take concrete steps in this direction. It is clear that your defense questions must be discussed with our military experts. And then we will convene again and discuss them here. We will first concentrate on that document that you gave to us; after it is translated, we will study it carefully and then meet again and talk about the issues raised in it.

Comrade Bravo Comrade Blas Roca asked to me to inform you that the NSPC leadership is prepared to hear additional criticism. It will be a big help for us.

Comrade Suslov You wanted to tell us something about Poland and Yugoslavia?

Comrade Bravo On behalf of the leadership of the NSPC, I would like to tell you about two instances.

Firstly, after Moscow I must go to Warsaw in order to file a protest from our party with the Polish Comrades. The matter is that according to a report from our ambassador, there is a strange attitude toward our revolution there. The ambassador proposed to publish Fidel Castro's speech at the "XY" session of the UN General Assembly in Poland. The Polish comrades stated that they considered it pointless to do this because the American embassy could use this as an excuse to worsen American-Polish relations. When the ambassador stated that he was publishing F. Castro's speech on his own expense, they informed him that certain difficulties will arise in circulating it. When there was a conversation about a small loan from Poland to Cuba, the Polish spokesman asked that there should be less talk about this since it could have an effect on Poland's relations with the USA. We consider such a position strange. It is possible that it is being overstated. I am trying to sort this out with our Polish comrades.

Comrade Suslov Of course, it is necessary to work this out in a comradely fashion.

Comrade Bravo In a comradely manner, as it befits communists.

As far as Yugoslavia is concerned, they chose to make an open attack against the National-Socialist Party of Cuba. They were particularly agitated after the publication in *Noticias de Hoy* of the material from the Xinhua press agency, which criticized the Yugoslavian position on the Cuban issue. The Yugoslavian embassy sent to us a number of articles about Cuba from Yugoslavian newspapers. Although these were specially selected articles, they contained an idea that Cuba could be sacrificed in an inter-bloc conflict, and here is the source of many unpleasantries.

In short this is what I would like to tell you on the instruction from Fidel Castro and the leadership of the National-Socialist Party of Cuba.

Comrade Kozlov We are very happy to have met with you. The questions you raised are very interesting and we will continue discussing them in the future. We will meet again after talking with our military comrades.

Conversation transcribed (A. Kalinin).

[Source: Archive of the President of the Russian Federation. Translated by Adam Mayle and Svetlana Savranskaya]