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From the Journal of S.M. Kudryavtsev, 'Record of a Conversation with Ernesto Che Guevara, Director of the National Bank of Cuba'

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Summary:

Guevara and Kudryavtsev economic integration between Cuba and the Soviet Union and other socialist countries and the lack of support shown by Latin American governments to the US at the Costa Rica conference.

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from the journal of
S. M. KUDRYAVTSEV

RECORD OF A CONVERSATION
WITH ERNESTO CHE GUEVARA,
DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL BANK OF CUBA

I paid an official visit to Guevara this evening. After initial greetings I passed him warm greetings and best wishes from Cde. N. S. Khrushchev and a small gift.

For his part, Guevara asked me to pass cordial gratitude to N. S. Khrushchev for the attention, stressing when he did so that the Cuban government very highly appreciates the aid and support given to Cuba by the Soviet Union.

In the course of further conversation I told Guevara that I would like to also make use of this protocol visit to discuss some practical questions. Referring to my meeting with Nunez Jimenez I told Guevara that we had discussed with him the question of the trip of the Cuban delegation to Moscow in October of this year for talks about economic coordination in the field of foreign trade. I continued, the Soviet government invites the Cuban delegation to come to Moscow to talks on this question. However, we would like to receive the necessary information from the Cuban side about the list and quantity of goods Cuban needs in advance in order to appropriately prepare for and hold the talks with greater efficiency. Nunez Jimenez, I continued, recommended discussing this question with you and getting the necessary information through you for the USSR Ministry of Foreign Trade.

Guevara said that he was very glad to hear that the Soviet government had given its agreement to the proposal of the Cuban government about talks in Moscow on questions of economic integration.

At this time we are preparing the necessary materials for these talks. I will obviously head the Cuban delegation myself and we will arrive in Moscow 20-29 [v 20-kh chislakh] October. We will try and pass you our proposals about economic integration by the end of September. Guevara said further, in current conditions the question of economic integration is taking on great importance for Cuba. We are almost confident at the present time that in 1961 the US will completely refuse to buy sugar in Cuba. This is demonstrated by the fact that the Americans are pursuing strong preparatory work to leave the Cuban market. This work is being done both by increasing their own production of sugar as well as concluding contracts for the delivery of sugar from other countries. Therefore at the present moment the question of there being an additional three million tons of sugar on the market, which the US previously bought, is being raised before Cuba with urgency. Guevara continued, the Cuban government already considers it advisable right now to think about the question of what abilities the Soviet Union has to buy these three million tons of sugar. This is still a problematic question, of course, but evidently we need to prepare for it ahead of time. Guevara continued, the Cuban government can begin to prepare its more specific proposals about economic integration after Cuba concludes a trade and payment agreements with other socialist countries. At the present time we are holding these talks with the GDR and the DPRK. In addition, we intend to hold such talks with Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania.

After the conclusion of such talks, said Guevara, it will clearer to us what we need and what each of the socialist countries can supply to Cuba in exchange for sugar and

other traditional goods. Guevara expressed the thought in this connection that it wouldn't be bad for think about the question of coordinating the actions of Cuba, the USSR, and the other socialist countries in the field of foreign trade. Guevara noted that, in his opinion, during his stay in Moscow it would be advisable to organize conferences or meetings with the representatives of the other socialist countries in order to discuss plans of economic integration in their entirety.

In the course of further conversation I asked Guevara the state of the Cuban economy.

Guevara said in reply that, in his opinion, the economic situation of Cuba is completely satisfactory for now. This is explained primarily by the fact that the Soviet Union has given and is giving broad aid in such an important question for Cuba as the purchase of sugar and is supplying it with needed goods in exchange for the sugar. Of course we have to encounter a number of economic difficulties, an explanation for which ought to be sought, on the one hand, both in the revolutionary process itself occurring in the economic field, as well as in American attempts to introduce confusion in our economy.

For example, the level of agricultural production in our cooperatives has risen considerably as a result of successfully carrying out land reform. At the same time because of a lessening of attention to the needs of the middle landowners, who provide approximately 40% of the country's agricultural production, the volume of production in this sector has fallen.

The consumption of meat and other food products has grown in view of the increase of the standing of living of the broad masses of the population, especially the peasantry. This, however, has in turn caused immediate difficulties, inasmuch as Cuba cannot satisfy this increased consumption. Guevara continued, we see a solution to this situation in the creation of state animal husbandry and poultry farms, and also in the encouragement of a division of livestock among the peasants themselves.

In Guevara's words, the nationalized enterprises are operating completely normally. We are successfully coping with the technology of the production at petroleum refining plants, sugar mills, and power stations for the time being. Obviously difficulties will arise later when we will be faced with all the urgency of the question of the replacement of deteriorating parts with new spare parts, which the Americans are refusing to supply to us. Of course, at some nationalized enterprises we have difficulties in the realm of mastering the technology of production. This is connected with the fact that in a number of cases the technology of production was set up such that the primary technological processes were done at the enterprises directly in the US. In particular, we for example cannot yet do anything with MOA [expansion unknown] enterprises to enrich nickel ore.

Then the conversation turned on the conference in Costa Rica. Guevara expressed the opinion that the governments of the majority of the Latin American countries are deciding not to openly support the US, taking into consideration the mood of the peoples of these countries in favor of Cuba. Guevara continued, the governments of these countries are playing a double game. They oppose the interference in the affairs in Cuba in words, but in deed they vote against Cuba together with the Americans. The representatives of the reactionary governments of the Latin American countries at the conference in Costa Rica, continued Guevara, display a demonstrative firmness with respect to the US. This is done to put certain pressure on the Americans to get big credits and various other kinds of aid from them. The reactionary regime[s] of the Latin American countries, as the conference in Costa Rica showed, are striving to use the fact itself of the existence of revolutionary Cuba to blackmail the US, get aid from them, and thus strengthen their own positions. The

US, fearing a repetition of the Cuban revolution in the other countries of Latin America, has started to give them aid more generously in the hope of restraining the development of the revolutionary process in Latin America. However, Guevara continued, Latin America is seething, and next year revolutionary outbreaks ought to expected in a number of countries, Peru and Paraguay most of all. This process will undoubtedly be accelerated if the US dares to take some action against Cuba with the support of the reactionary governments of the countries of Latin America. Guevara said, of course revolutionary actions in these countries will in all probability be put down by the US armed forces which "will come to the rescue" in accordance with the appeals of the reactionary governments of these countries. Guevara noted bitterly in this connection that unfortunately in other cases the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries will not be able to help the peoples of such countries as Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, or Peru inasmuch as in the first revolutionary outbreak the governments of these countries will immediately call for American troops, legality will be outwardly observed, but in reality lawlessness will happen.

Then the question of the probability of armed intervention by the US against Cuba was touched upon. Guevara said that, in his opinion, such a danger could not be underestimated inasmuch as it was impossible to count on the US leaving Cuba alone. In Guevara's opinion the most vulnerable places where an armed provocation against Cuba might be carried out is the American military base in Guantanamo and, to some degree, the Isle of Pines.

However, in the current international situation, Guevara said in conclusion, the US will try to stifle the Cuban revolution predominately by means of an economic blockade and broader use of counterrevolutionary forces inside and outside the country.

The rest of the conversation had a general nature.

Guevara told about his participation at fronts in the struggle to liberate the Cuban people.

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