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From the Journal of S.M. Kudryavtsev, 'Record of a Conversation with Ernesto Guevara, President of the National Bank, 30 September 1960'

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Summary:

Guevara and Kudryavtsev discuss economic integration between Cuba, the USSR, and other socialist countries in preparation for upcoming trade talks in Moscow.

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from the journal of
S. M. KUDRYAVTSEV

RECORD OF A CONVERSATION
with Ernesto Guevara,
President of the National Bank
30 September 1960

I visited Eh. Guevara today with Trade Representative Cde. Sakun in accordance with instructions I had and asked him the progress of preparations for the upcoming talks in Moscow.

I asked Guevara when they could present us with their specific proposals on questions of trade turnover for 1961 so our foreign trade organizations could study them in advance and prepare from our side for the talks with the economic mission of Cuba.

Guevara said in reply that they have already finished the lists for the trade turnover with the Soviet Union which they will present to us in the next few days. In a day or two he, Guevara, will pass us a letter addressed to Cde. A. I. Mikoyan which would present the ideas of the Cuban side about the further development of trade relations, and also [about] economic integration between Cuba, the USSR, and the other socialist countries in the field of foreign trade.

Then, referring to a request of Guevara's that at one time he had expressed the idea about the advisability of his meeting with representatives of other socialist countries in Moscow to discuss a plan of economic cooperation as a whole, I asked him whether the Cuban government had come to a final decision on this question. I continued, for a more successful organization of this meeting it would desirable for us to know with the representatives of which socialist countries the Cuban delegation would like to meet in Moscow, at what level, and concerning which specific questions. Continuing to develop this thought further, I said that if the Cuban side thinks that such a meeting should be organized by the Soviet Union then it would be desirable to know the approximate date of this meeting.

Guevara said that, in his opinion, it would be advisable to organize he meeting with all the socialist countries in Comecon. We would like to ask that the Soviet government take on the organization of this meeting since we still do not have diplomatic relations with all the socialist countries, and it is difficult for us to organize this matter by ourselves. It would be probably advisable to plan the convening of such a conference for a period when the trade talks and the discussion of other questions concerning the Soviet Union and Cuba directly are over. Evidently 10-12 November could be such an approximate date.

Then Guevara directed a request to send highly-skilled Soviet specialists in banking and financial matters [to Cuba] as soon as possible to help in organizing the work of the banks nationalized by the Cuban government. Guevara noted, F. Castro had asked about sending these specialists in his 31 August 1960 letter addressed to Cde. N. S. Khrushchev. Guevara said in this connection that they intend to nationalize all private banks by the end of the year, and therefore an urgent need has arisen for Soviet specialists being sent about the banking business.

For my part I promised Guevara to take all necessary steps to accelerate the arrival of our specialists as F. Castro has requested in his letter to Cde. N. S. Khrushchev.

Then Guevara said that the Cuban government intends to buy about 10 large-tonnage merchant ships. However, before the question is decided the Cuban government would like to know whether the USSR would agree to supply these ships, if necessary, under the Soviet flag. The US, Guevara continued, will in all probability establish a naval blockade and seize our ships as they are doing right now with the aircraft of the Cuban aviation company. Therefore we would like to coordinate this question with you. Guevara stressed, we think that the Americans will decide not to detain Soviet ships, and thus the ships actually belonging to Cuba would be protected from possible seizure.

I said that this is a hypothetical question, of course, but that we would consult with the appropriate Soviet organizations about this matter.

In the course of further conversation Guevara said that the uninterrupted deliveries of crude oil from the Soviet Union completely meet Cuba's needs and allow it to have some surplus of gasoline. Cuba could export this surplus to other countries. In particular, Guevara continued, right now we could sell Canada a certain quantity of gasoline produced from the oil received from the Soviet Union for dollars. However, before performing this operation we would like to know whether the Soviet Union would have an objection to such a practice.

I said in reply that Cuba has a complete right to dispose of the products it produces but that, considering the question raised by Guevara, we would consult with our appropriate organizations. However, it can be already be said in advance with confidence that there will be no objection to such operations.

In the concluding part of the conversation Guevara raised the question of the safety of the Cuban currency. This question was later resolved with the USSR State Bank.

Soviet Trade Representative Cde. P. I. Sakun was present at the conversation.

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