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From the Journal of S.M. Kudryavtsev, 'Record of a Conversation with Prime Minister Fidel Castro Ruz and President Osvaldo Dorticos Torrado, 22 April 1961'

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Summary:

Kudryavtsev delivers the text of Khrushchev's reply to Kennedy's April 18 message, and Dorticos and Fidel Castro praise the text of the message and Soviet support for Cuba. Kudryavstev infroms Castro of the granting of the Cuban governments request for various military equipment, including aircraft and specialists, from the Soviet Union.

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from the journal of
S. M. KUDRYAVTSEV

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RECORD OF A CONVERSATION
with Prime Minister Fidel CASTRO RUZ and President Osvaldo DORTICOS TORRADO

22 April 1961

I met today with Fidel Castro and Dorticos. In accordance with instructions [I] had I passed them the text of a message of Cde. N. S. Khrushchev in reply to Kennedy's message of 18 April.

President Dorticos read the text of this message aloud, and Fidel Castro repeatedly interrupted him with individual approving remarks.

After reading the text of the message of Cde. N. S. Khrushchev Fidel Castro said that this is a remarkable document which will have enormous significance for the cause of peace. The argumentation contained in this document, continued Fidel Castro, is unusually strong and convincing. The tone of the message is first and in addition calm and confident, which advantageously distinguishes it from the hysteria of Kennedy. Fidel Castro stressed, I am confident that this new message, just like the first message of Cde. N. S. Khrushchev, will raise the prestige of the Soviet Union by an enormous degree and will be evaluated by all peoples as a document of peace.

We are extremely grateful to Cde. N. S. Khrushchev for this new support to Cuba, stressed Fidel Castro. It will undoubtedly force Kennedy to think seriously before deciding on any new adventure against Cuba. This message will undoubtedly exert its own influence and strengthen those circles in the US which support a more reasonable policy. It will also find a very positive response in a more reasonable policy.

President Dorticos also spoke highly in approximately the same words about the message of Cde. N. S. Khrushchev, stressing the deep and dialectic character of the analysis of the situation which Cde. N. S. Khrushchev gave in this document.

Fidel Castro and Dorticos especially liked the place in the message where it said that if Kennedy considers himself justified to take such steps against Cuba, as the US government did recently, then it ought to admit that other countries have no less grounds to act in the same fashion with respect to countries on whose territory military preparations are actually being made which represent a threat to the security of the Soviet Union. Fidel Castro and Dorticos stressed in this connection that such a response hit the nail on the head.

In the course of further conversation it was arranged that the message of Cde. N. S. Khrushchev will be immediately published in the Cuban press as soon as it was placed in our press and broadcast over Soviet radio.

Then, in accordance with instructions [I] had I passed Fidel Castro cordial congratulations of Cde. N. S. Khrushchev on the occasion of the victory won by the Cuban people over the interventionists.

Fidel Castro was very moved by these congratulations and asked that Cde. N. S. Khrushchev be passed his cordial and sincere gratitude.

Fidel Castro stressed that the firm support given Cuba by Cde. N. S. Khrushchev at the moment of the attack on it by counterrevolutionary bands exerted a decisive influence on the Americans, and after this warning they decided not to expand aid to the interventionists or use their aircraft and other resources more broadly.

It was felt from this part of the conversation with Fidel Castro and Dorticos that they were genuinely quite satisfied with Cde. N. S. Khrushchev's message in reply to Kennedy and see it as strong and effective support to Cuba.

Then, in accordance with instructions [I] had I informed Fidel Castro about the granting of the Cuban government's request regarding sending weapons and combat equipment, and specialists, and the proposed delivery of aircraft and also air defense equipment. Fidel Castro asked in this connection that Cde. N. S. Khrushchev be passed his sincere gratitude for the aid to Cuba and the rapid granting of the requests concerning these questions which the revolutionary government had appealed for at one time.

In the course of further conversation Fidel Castro said that, in his opinion, the danger for Cuba had still not passed, and therefore he would request all possible steps be undertaken so that the weapons, combat equipment, and aircraft be sent in the shortest possible time. It would also be advisable, if possible, to more rapidly send the specialists to Cuba, who would immediately be able to start work on arrival. It would not be at all bad, noted Fidel Castro, if specialists in questions of combined-arms tactics were also included the aforementioned category of specialists. He continued, combat operations to eliminate the interventionists have shown the weakness of the revolutionary army and people's militia, primarily in questions of tactics and troop command.

Then Fidel Castro stressed that he would like to ask the Soviet government to send aircraft and air defense equipment to Cuba in as short a time as possible. The Cuban air forces have no more than 15 pilots in all. However, the Soviet flight instructors who should arrive in Cuba among the other specialists might quickly instruct the available Cuban pilots and thus they could quickly fly on Soviet aircraft. In addition, if possible it is desirable to accelerate the training of 25 Cuban pilots who are now studying in the Soviet Union.

Fidel Castro stressed, for our part we will take every step to carefully conceal the aircraft from the enemy, and I would like to assure the Soviet government that these aircraft will not be harmed. It is also extremely important to strengthen the country's air defenses, to begin with, even at the expense of anti-aircraft artillery.

Fidel Castro further noted that Czechoslovakia also intended to help Cuba with weapons and combat equipment, and the Cuban government had decided to accept this aid.

In conclusion Fidel Castro again asked me to pass his sincere gratitude to Cde. N. S. Khrushchev for the aid and support to Cuba in the difficult days for it.

The rest of the conversation with Fidel Castro and Dorticos touched on several general questions. Fidel Castro told in detail about the combat operations to eliminate the amphibious forces of the external counterrevolution which had invaded, and the revolutionary army and the people's militia displayed great heroism and selflessness in these battles.

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