

November 16, 1962

**Record of Conversation between Mikoyan and
Ernesto 'Che' Guevara, Havana, 16 November 1962**

Citation:

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Summary:

The conversation takes place soon after the IL-28 crisis, which gives Mikoyan a chance to patch up the relationship with trade agreements and promises of future aid and industrial cooperation. Near the end of the conversation, Guevara and Mikoyan discuss the theory of revolutionary struggle. Guevara shares his vision that "further development of the revolutions in Latin America must follow the line of simultaneous explosions in all countries." Mikoyan cautions him, pointing to the Soviet experience and using the metaphor of the rebellion on the battleship "Potemkin." Hinting at further disagreement ahead, he gently registers his disagreement with the Cuban leader's drive to ignite revolution in the hemisphere.

Credits:

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Contents:

Translation - English

Ernesto "Che" Guevara received A. I. Mikoyan and his colleagues-deputy chairman of the State Committee of the USSR Council of Ministers for Foreign Economic Relations, Comrade A. I. Alikhanov; the head of the group of chief advisers-organizers of production in Cuba, Comrade F. E. Titov; and the adviser on economic affairs to the embassy, Comrade N. V. Goldin-in his office at the Ministry of Industry.

After exchanging greetings, A. I. Mikoyan suggested to E. Guevara that Comrade Alikhanov would give a progress report on the Soviet Union's obligations for building industrial facilities in Cuba.

A. I. Alikhanov reported the following.

During the time we spent in Cuba, Soviet experts and heads of Cuban organizations have reviewed the state of affairs in the implementation of the Soviet-Cuban agreement on economic and technical cooperation, and we visited a number of construction sites and projects.

Construction has begun on a number of facilities provided by our agreements, including industrial objects. In May of this year, only one project was being built-a file-making plant; but today a whole range of projects is under construction, including two large power plants: one in Mariel, with a capacity of 200,000 kilowatts; and the second in Renta, with a capacity of 100,000 kilowatts; as well as a mechanical plant in Santa Clara. Work has started (though still in its initial stages) on the reconstruction of a steel works plant. Construction is also under way for training centers to prepare skilled industrial workers.

Construction of the file-making plant is nearing completion. All equipment for this plant has been delivered from the Soviet Union and installation is almost complete. The plant is scheduled to start manufacturing goods this December, that is, a year ahead of schedule.

Construction of the mechanical plant is proceeding well. The Cuban workers are promising to complete construction of the building in December. A part of the equipment has already been delivered from the USSR, and considering that construction of this plant is proceeding ahead of schedule, we will try to take action so the majority of the essential equipment will be shipped in the first half of 1963.

Then Comrade Alikhanov spoke about the construction of other facilities. He informed Comrade Guevara that the main lift crane equipment for the construction of the power plant in Mariel will be shipped in December of this year, and equipment for the power plant in Renta will be shipped in the first quarter of 1963. He also said that due to the difficulties of shipping a 50-ton crane for the installation of engineering structures, the Cuban side promised to find a crane for this purpose in Cuba.

Comrade Alikhanov said that all matters relating to the construction of industrial facilities were reviewed with the deputy minister of industry comrades Borrega, Trueba, and Solodriguez [sic], as well as with the minister of public works, Comrade Cienfuegos, and his deputies.

In connection with the request made by Comrade Borrega on behalf of Comrade Guevara regarding the delivery of finished steel structures for the reconstruction of a steel works plant and the construction of power plants, Comrade Alikhanov suggested that it would be inexpedient to change the course we agreed upon earlier, when it was decided that steel structures would be manufactured in Cuba from metal imported from the Soviet Union. Comrade Alikhanov also said that changing the previously established procedure for manufacturing steel structures will delay their production, and that a part of the metal has already been shipped from factories in the Soviet

Union.

As for the possibility of manufacturing critical and nonstandard equipment in the USSR, Comrade Alikhanov said that we will review this question further when we return to Moscow.

Comrade Guevara agreed.

It was reported to Comrade Guevara that Soviet organizations will satisfy his request for the extension of Soviet adviser Comrade Fedorov's stay in Cuba, and on sending an expert metallurgist to work on the reconstruction of the steel works plants.

It was reported that the Soviet government approved a request from the Cuban side regarding the question of the Soviet Union providing technical assistance in the organization of production of spare parts in Cuba. For this purpose, 140 specialists will be assigned to Cuba, including 30 this year. In the first quarter of 1963, the necessary equipment for creating four laboratories (welding, metallographic, chemical, and controlling and measuring instruments) will be delivered.

E. Guevara: I would like to ask a question regarding the construction of a refinery plant. Cuban specialists recently received the Soviet project for it. When they looked it over, they saw that the cost of the work outlined in the draft is approximately twice as much as the construction costs of similar North American plants that are located in Cuba. The specialists are well aware of the costs of building North American plants, since they participated in the construction and continue to work in these plants. Also, I know that American monopolies tend to inflate the cost of construction in underdeveloped countries, because it helps them to take out large profits in the metropolis. Therefore, the actual difference may be even greater.

A. I. Mikoyan: Right now, it is difficult to answer this question. We do not have the necessary data, but we will look into this and let you know the answer.

N. V. Goldin: The specialists who worked on this project will arrive here in a few days. They will look into this matter together with the Cuban side.

A. I. Mikoyan: I would like to tell you, Comrade Guevara that our design engineers often overstate the cost of the projects, and we have to be in an uncompromising struggle with them. Sometimes, we manage to reduce the initial cost by as much as 20 to 30 percent. For example, the project of the largest oil refinery in Belarus comes to mind. After a thorough review and amendment we were able to reduce construction costs by 30 percent.

Overstating the cost usually happens because a lot of support structures are included into the project, and these support structures are not always necessary. The design engineers usually place various buildings at a great distance from each other, citing fire concerns. This, in turn, lengthens the communication lines, thereby increasing their cost. When I was in Mexico, I noticed that the various service buildings of the oil companies were arranged very compactly. And rightly so, because it reduces the construction costs. And if there is a fire, it seems to me that the enterprise will burn either way (general laughter).

In addition, design engineers sometimes make mistakes in counting the cost of equipment, especially if it is a new model.

Different kinds of mistakes can happen, too. I remember a case with an oil refinery that we were planning to build in Ethiopia. This refinery was designed to power half a

million tons of oil. When the project was finished and the Ethiopians looked it over, they said that they did not like it because it cost more than similar North American projects. We studied the situation and found out that the cost of the project included expenses for construction of a power plant that was supposed to supply electricity for the plant and for a large city, as well as expenses to build a water purification plant, which was also designed to meet the utility needs of the city, and in addition there were expenditures for construction of port facilities for receiving oil. We only had to deduct these expenses from the cost of the project and everything fell into place. The cost of our project no longer exceeded Western models. As you can see, our engineers are far from commerce, and made plant construction cost calculations based on our internal regulations. That's why I say that we need to look into the matter. I will give an order to organize a special expertise on this project in Moscow. In connection with this, I would ask you to give us precise data on the construction costs of North American plants, to facilitate the work of our experts. If our design engineers really made a mistake, we will correct them. Such a study would be useful to the Soviet Union as well. If our plants are more expensive to make, we will have to catch up. Therefore, your criticism will be beneficial to us.

E. Guevara: But I didn't criticize anybody. (Everybody laughs.) I only made a preliminary comment on the project.

A. I. Mikoyan: We do not need to be afraid of criticism. Criticism and self-criticism are at the heart of our development. I ask you to give information about the North American plants to our comrades.

E. Guevara: Yes, I will give instructions to prepare the data.

N. V. Goldin hands A. I. Mikoyan a brief reference on the planned oil refinery.

After studying the reference note, A. I. Mikoyan says, addressing E. Guevara: As far as can be seen from these data on the composition of the future refinery, there is ample evidence that the construction costs should be reduced instead of being inflated. I see that the new plant is tied to an existing plant and therefore they will have a number of shared services. This should lower the cost of construction. However, despite this, we should examine this question. Comrade Goldin will help in this matter. He is a big specialist, he built the steel plant in Bhilai.

E. Guevara: Yes, I know about it.

A. I. Mikoyan: You should put him to work more (Everybody laughs) He built a plant there for 1 million tons of steel. It is a large plant. And now it is already working at full capacity. The British and the West Germans also built a factory each in India. But they are still working only at two-thirds of their capacity. As for the oil refinery plant, I think there is some kind of misunderstanding here. In India we are building an oil refinery, also for 2 million tons of oil. The question of excessive costs did not arise there. Apparently for the Indian project the world market prices were taken into account, I do not know why the problem of cost came up in the Cuban project.

E. Guevara: I noticed that there are some paradoxes in the prices of Soviet industrial equipment. Some equipment is sold far below world prices, other equipment is sold at world prices, and yet other is considerably above world prices.

A. I. Mikoyan: That is not entirely correct. We usually sell our industrial equipment at world market prices, or rather, slightly below. Inside the country the price of industrial machinery and equipment differ significantly from international prices. For example, we make a profit on the production of trucks and tractors, but we produce passenger cars at a loss. When we sell products abroad we set prices in line with world prices.

For this purpose, we study reference manuals, magazines, newsletters, and so on. If we cannot find price data on certain equipment in reference materials, we give instructions to one of our trade representatives to contact the Western enterprise in question, which manufactures analogous products, and, acting as a potential buyer, to inquire about the prices for this product.

It is true that pricing industrial equipment is a complicated matter. It is not like wheat or some other agricultural commodity, the prices for which are readily available every day. Different companies producing analogous equipment do not copy each other exactly. Furthermore, it has been established as a general rule that equipment produced in West Germany is cheaper than equipment produced in North America. British equipment is more expensive than West German, but cheaper than American. The Japanese often sell their equipment even cheaper than West Germans. So the pricing of equipment sold abroad is a complicated matter.

Further, A. I. Mikoyan directed E. Guevara's attention to an issue that in his opinion is very important for Cuba. He was talking about setting up production of spare parts for industrial equipment. A. I. Mikoyan said that Soviet specialists working in Cuba told him that Cubans allocated large production facilities for organization of enterprises that will produce spare parts for Soviet vehicles. This factory will be created on the base of the former Amber Motors. Soviet specialists believe that it would be possible to set up production of spare parts for American cars at these production facilities as well. This is of paramount importance if we consider that there are 300,000 North American cars that are already well worn. Soviet specialists proposed to invite an additional number of engineers from the Soviet Union, so they could study the relevant parts and make working drawings of them, because there are no such drawings available in Cuba. However, I think that this is not the best option. It could be arranged much faster if you send the parts to the Soviet Union and the working drawings were made there. We have hundreds of design engineering bureaus which could quickly do this work. Sending the specialists to Cuba could take a long time.

E. Guevara agrees.

A. I. Mikoyan: I wanted to bring to your attention another very important question, Comrade Guevara. The uninterrupted supply of Soviet goods to Cuba's industries in the course of the next year depends on the resolution of this issue. Our Ministry of Foreign Trade received an order for supply of goods in the nomenclature. However, it does not have the specifications that are necessary to place the orders in our factories. This matter has taken a very long time. If we do not receive the specification in the near future, the uninterrupted continuity of our shipments will be compromised starting next year. I took an extreme measure and instructed Minister Patolichev to place orders from Cuba whenever possible without specifications. However, he told me that it is impossible with regard to machinery, equipment, ferrous metals and certain other goods. So I ask you to take the necessary steps to ensure that the required specifications are transferred to our Minister of Foreign Trade.

E. Guevara: The following happened with regard to the specifications. When I was in Moscow and spoke with Comrade Khrushchev, we discussed issues of foreign trade. We have developed a trade deficit in your favor in the amount of 190 million pesos. We agreed that this matter would be resolved later. Therefore, we did not want to produce orders for next year before we addressed the issue of balancing our trade relations. And then the events happened, of which are aware, and made us neglect this issue completely.

A. I. Mikoyan: It is wrong to wait for a settlement of the deficit and not prepare trade for the coming year.

E. Guevara: But how can it be otherwise? On what basis can we do trade, if we owe you.

A. I. Mikoyan: On the basis of trust. We are friendly countries. Moreover, I am informing you that our government has decided to register Cuba's foreign trade debt as a trade credit. I have not told this to your leadership yet. I am telling you this now.

E. Guevara: You are talking about our debt for this year?

A. I. Mikoyan: Yes, for this year. And besides, did anyone tell you that we cannot do the same thing next year? I cannot give a specific number, but we can agree on a trade credit for next year, as well.

E. Guevara offers the present company to smoke. All except Comrade Titov refuse on the grounds that they are nonsmokers. E. Guevara lights a cigar.

A. I. Mikoyan: Smoking is a bad habit. Our scientists estimated that out of six people who died of cancer, five smoked. In our CC CPSU Presidium, for example, almost nobody smokes. Only Comrade Brezhnev smokes sometimes, but even that is more for amusement than real smoking. I have a pretty big family, around twenty people. And none of us are smokers. Four of my sons were in the army, where the conditions are very predisposed to smoking-there is even a free issue of tobacco for each soldier-and still they did not acquire this habit. I smoked at one point. But then doctors told me I could not. I started developing tuberculosis on the tops of my lungs, and I quit smoking.

E. Guevara: I also have tuberculosis, but I smoke. Neomycin works for me.

A. I. Mikoyan: Tuberculosis is a terrible disease. We have a goal in our country to eliminate tuberculosis completely. We developed a special program to combat this disease. In particular, we have now established a worldwide network of boarding schools for children, working on a system reminiscent of your system becados. The network will continue to grow. We decided to put all children sick with tuberculosis into these boarding schools, taking them out of the family. Tuberculosis can be cured within a year, using new methods of treatment. Thereby, we will completely eliminate this disease among young people. We will also increasingly rely on sanatoriums for the treatment of adult patients.

E. Guevara: Tuberculosis is a terrible disaster in Cuba. It is perhaps the most widespread disease here, especially in rural areas. It seems to be due to the hard work and constant malnutrition. It is a terrible plague that we inherited from capitalism. In Cuba, TB causes more deaths than cancer. And if in the Soviet Union five out of six people who died smoked, in Cuba every five out of six people smoke.

A. I. Mikoyan: How is your tobacco production?

E. Guevara: With tobacco things are good. Natural conditions in Cuba are extremely favorable for the production of tobacco. We have some difficulty selling it abroad. The United States used to buy a lot of it. The capitalist bosses are used to Havana cigars, and right now they have to do without them.

A. I. Mikoyan: You know, when I was in New York en route to Cuba, I was talking with Adlai Stevenson. He complained to me that he misses Cuban cigars. I gave him some friendly advice to normalize trade relations with Cuba and thus solve the problem. (Everybody laughs)

E. Guevara: Recently, the use of tobacco within our country has increased.

A. I. Mikoyan: Do you have large trade surpluses of tobacco?

E. Guevara: I do not remember the exact number.

A. I. Mikoyan: At what price do you sell tobacco?

E. Guevara: We produce different varieties of tobacco. There is tobacco that costs 500 pesos per ton, and there is tobacco that costs 12,000 pesos per ton.

A. I. Mikoyan: In principle, we could buy tobacco from you. But we need cheap tobacco. We produce enough expensive grades of tobacco ourselves. Our domestic production is around 80,000 to 90,000 tons per year. Sometimes it goes up to 110,000 tons. Our domestic consumption of tobacco is about 180,000 to 190,000 tons. We make up the deficit by buying abroad. But, I repeat, we are buying cheaper grades. For a while, China supplied us with large quantities of tobacco. But in recent years, because of falling production, China has refused to supply us with tobacco. Bulgaria is our regular supplier of tobacco; we buy 30,000 to 40,000 tons. We buy tobacco from Greece and Turkey out of political considerations, but not in large quantities. This year Bulgaria had a bad harvest of tobacco, and it supplied us with only 20,000 tons. So we could buy your tobacco. And in general, we could always buy the tobacco that you do not sell to other countries, provided that it is cheap-grade tobacco. We could conclude a long-term agreement on this, securing a certain share of Cuban tobacco in our purchases of tobacco abroad.

E. Guevara: Could you buy black tobacco from us?

A. I. Mikoyan: I think so. We process a large number of tobacco products and, blended with other varieties of tobacco, we might be able to use the black tobacco. I think we should instruct our trade associations to discuss this issue.

E. Guevara agrees and makes a note in his notebook. The present company is served Daiquiris. Guevara explains that this is a Cuban drink made of rum and finely crushed ice.

A. I. Mikoyan praises the drink and says that it is very tasty. He notes that a Daiquiri is much nicer than pure rum, and it is weaker, so it is less dangerous in terms of intoxication.

E. Guevara jokingly explains that the strength of the drink depends on who prepares it (Everybody laughs).

A. I. Mikoyan: In our country, we pursue a policy of limiting the consumption of hard liquor and we are developing the production of wines and beers. The fight against alcoholism is very important, especially among the youth. We have data that half of the crimes are committed in a state of intoxication. Based on this fact alone, it is worth fighting drunkenness.

E. Guevara: The opposite is the case in Cuba; recently, the tendency has been to increase the consumption of alcoholic beverages. This year, for example, beer production will only be 60 percent of last year's production, while production of liquor grew to 110 percent.

A. I. Mikoyan: You have good beer. When we recently visited the Isle of Turiguano, we

were treated to Cuban beer, which I really liked. At the time, I joked that by the quality of the beer you can tell that Minister Guevara has been doing a good job. (Everybody laughs) Why is your production of beer dropping?

E. Guevara: Our breweries are suffering from a lack of raw materials. We import hops and malt. We buy the hops from the Czechs, but they have a limited amount to sell us. The same can be said about malt.

A. I. Mikoyan: I will check back home in the Soviet Union to see there is something we can do to help you in this regard. Why don't you organize production of raw materials on site? You should try to master the cultivation of hops in Cuba and buy barley abroad and make malt out of it on site. This is much cheaper. It is not difficult to set up this production, it can be arranged in a matter of six months. If necessary, we can send you our specialists and equipment. The Czechs can probably do the same. Then you will have no shortage of raw materials, and you will be able to further develop the brewing industry. Beer brings a good income to the state. Considering that your country has too much money in circulation, increasing beer consumption would play a positive role.

And while you are building a factory for the production of malt, we could negotiate the purchase of barley from us and its treatment, either in the Soviet Union or in Czechoslovakia, if the Soviet Union does not have the capacity. You will buy our barley, and we will follow your instructions to send it to Czechoslovakia for processing and further transportation to Cuba. This work in two directions will help you to quickly increase production and meet demand.

E. Guevara made a note in his notebook and said that this option should be looked into.

E. Guevara: In particular, my ministry has a farm. We conduct various experiments on this land. We should try to plant hops there. I will also give an assignment to study the possibility of building our own malt production plant. The present company is invited to proceed to the convention hall of the ministry, where dinner is served.

While the rest of the company moved away, A. I. Mikoyan told E. Guevara that on the occasion of the forty-fifth anniversary of the October Revolution, the CPSU received a congratulatory letter from the leadership of the American Communist Party.

A. I. Mikoyan: This letter is of some interest. In particular, it notes that the events in Cuba greatly influenced the mood of the American working class. The awakened the working class, forced it to think about political issues. In recent years, there has been an influx of workers into the Communist Party. This is a welcome phenomenon. In this letter, the American Communist Party is critical of the fact that it did not use the Cuban events to the fullest extent possible in its work. It notes that the party should have been more vigorous in defending the Cuban people. It seems to me that this letter is of some interest to the Cuban leadership. I received this letter because as a member of the Presidium of our Central Committee, I am informed about all our important matters, for which a variety of materials are directed to me here from Moscow. We are not talking about the fact that the Americans asked us to send you the contents of this letter. I think that the Cuban leadership will be interested to know its contents, to have a better understand of the situation in the US working class. It is impossible to fight against US imperialism without knowing the sentiments of the American working class.

E. Guevara agrees.

Everyone walks over to the dinner table. Guevara introduces Mikoyan to Guevara's

deputies-Orlando Borrego, Juan Castineras, Tirso Saenz, Gomez Trueba, Mario Sorrilia, and Santiago Riera-who join them for dinner.

During the dinner conversation, the question was raised about the difficulties of socialist construction. A. I. Mikoyan said that Cuba could build socialism with far fewer sacrifices than did the Soviet Union.

A. I. Mikoyan: We really had it very tough. We were alone. Out of the forty-five years, we spent fifteen with food rationing, when even supplying the population with bread was a difficult task. We had food rationing cards during the Civil War, during the collectivization of agriculture, and during the last war, all the way up to 1947. During the war, we had bread rationing of 300 grams to 1 kilogram of bread per day per person. Workers employed in particularly heavy industries received the highest rations. Meat and butter were given out in very small quantities. In the last years of the war, we introduced a system of so-called commercial shops, where people could buy food at higher prices but without the rationing cards. At the time, we ended up with two price systems. Goods could be obtained through rationing cards at the low prewar prices, while prices in the commercial stores were three to four times higher. In 1947, the rationing cards were canceled. We also reinstated uniform prices for goods. These prices were higher than before the war but below commercial prices. The increase in prices served to absorb the excess money collected in the population during the war years. The money reform had the same goal, when we exchanged money at the rate of 1 new ruble for 10 old ones. Note that we exchanged cash up to 3,000 rubles, and money in bank savings up to 10,000 rubles. This reform was welcomed by the majority of the population, although, of course, a small portion of the people who had accumulated large sums was displeased. This reform improved the monetary circulation in the country.

The situation is completely different in Cuba, Mikoyan continued. If our task was to provide the population with bread, then in Cuba, it is to provide the population with meat, fats, etc.

E. Guevara: If we talk about the plight of the masses as a factor that causes revolutionary upheavals, then of all the countries in Latin America, Cuba was the least suitable country for a socialist revolution. The standard of living in Cuba was is one of the highest in Latin America.

A. I. Mikoyan: Russia was also an exception. If you follow dogmatic Marxism, the most suitable country for a socialist revolution was and is the United States, since the socialization of production there is the highest among all the capitalist countries.

Russia during the Revolution was one of the most backward countries in Europe, with strong vestiges of feudalism. And then a socialist Revolution happened in this country. It was our luck that the Russian bourgeoisie was weak and had a dumb political line. It was unable to solve a single problem of the bourgeois-democratic revolution.

The working class is an advanced class, but it should not be idealized. It lends itself to bourgeois influences. If the Russian bourgeoisie had abolished the Tsarist government and conducted at least some land reform, like the one the Americans did in Japan, and to some extent solved other problems of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, the socialist Bolshevik Revolution in Russia would have been delayed for many years. Therein lies the greatness of Lenin-he was able to understand the complex situation of the time and advanced the slogans that brought the vast majority of the population to the side of the Communists. This slogan-"Peace, Bread, and Land"-is essentially bourgeois. Peace is for all people. Land is for the peasants, that is, the majority of the population. And only bread is for the working class. Through this slogan, the Bolshevik Party was able to win over the masses. It is not a

paradox that at one point there were people who said they were for the Bolsheviks but against communism.

The Cuban Revolution also took place "against the rules." The study of this revolution is of great theoretical interest. To properly understand the issues of the socialist Revolution in Cuba would be to make a major contribution to the development of Marxism-Leninism.

The great significance of the Cuban Revolution is that it is the first socialist revolution in the Americas. If Cuba was somewhere in the region located close to the Soviet Union, it would not have such significance, and it would not attract so much attention. The Cuban Revolution lit the torch of socialist transformation in America. It is difficult to say when and which Latin American countries will follow.

E. Guevara: It seems that the further development of the revolutions in Latin America must follow the line of simultaneous explosions in all countries. Only this way can they succeed.

A. I. Mikoyan: This is incorrect. The countries of Latin America have their own national characteristics, which cannot be ignored. Because of these features, the revolution cannot occur simultaneously in all countries. These revolutions can happen shortly one after another, but an overall explosion is unlikely.

E. Guevara: Unless there is a simultaneous explosion, the revolutions in individual countries will be suppressed by the reactionary forces in alliance with imperialism. This is confirmed, in particular, by the events in Venezuela and several other countries.

A. I. Mikoyan: This is possible, but not inevitable. If the revolution takes place quickly and the rebels manage to seize power throughout the country before the intervention begins, they can survive. But if this is not achieved, and the country has two governments, the imperialists will have a "legitimate" excuse to provide armed support to the government the rebels are trying to overthrow. Otherwise, it is difficult to organize intervention, because even imperialists are not always able to flout law and public opinion, especially now that there are powerful forces in the socialist camp, standing guard over the revolutionary movement.

As for Venezuela, I do not have enough information, but it seems to me that the recent attempt at insurrection was unsuccessful due to the fact that the rebels did not have a connection with the people. It was something like the battleship Potemkin during the 1905 Revolution, when the rebellious sailors were isolated from the people and defeated.

E. Guevara: We told our Venezuelan comrades that they were using the wrong tactics. They entered into an agreement with the army. They sent their people into the army. There was an uprising. As often happens in Latin American history, the army rebelled and the army surrendered. As the result, the Venezuelan comrades lost their people, who were either killed in open battle, or captured.

A. I. Mikoyan: The battleship Potemkin was a good lesson to our revolutionaries. The uprising in Puerto Cabello can have the same significance for Venezuela. The uprising must be supported by the masses. Individual acts, like the recent sabotage of American oil fields, are not very useful. They do not cause serious damage to American imperialism as such. They hurt a particular company, and even that damage is relative. The company will rebuild the damaged installations and will continue to exploit people.

E. Guevara: Indeed, the company can rebuild the installation, but these installations can be blown up again. If this happens repeatedly, the imperialists will see the advanced firing line and they will lose any desire to invest their capital in that place.

A. I. Mikoyan: Speaking specifically about this case does not really prove the point. In recent years, there has been a tendency in the world not to import refined petroleum. Now it is more profitable to import crude oil and to develop the petrochemical industry around refining it. That is why American companies can let go of their oil refineries in Venezuela. This will only help them to exploit the Venezuelan people even more.

As for the theory of a simultaneous explosion, I would like to say that during the first years after the October Revolution, we were also waiting for socialist revolutions in other countries. Many people thought that if such revolutions do not take place, we would not make it. And in fact a socialist revolution broke out in Hungary and Bavaria. However, these revolutions were soon crushed by the reactionary forces. Some time passed, and we saw that the time for revolutionary crises in capitalist countries had passed, and then we made an important decision and announced that capitalism had entered a period of partial stabilization, and we need to build socialism on our own.

With this, the conversation ended and the Cuban comrades present at the dinner warmly said goodbye to A. I. Mikoyan and his accompanying colleagues.

Recorded by O. Darusenkov.

18 o'clock: In the embassy building, A. I. Mikoyan received the former president of Guatemala, Jacobo Árbenz, and the Guatemalan Labor Party Central Committee member, José Manuel Forntuny, at their request.