

Spies: Old advice from Khrushchev

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The idea to send Cuban spies on mass to Miami was developed more than three decades ago in the Georgian city of Pitsunda in the old Soviet Union.

This subject was amply debated between Fidel Castro and Nikita Khrushchev, in a spring afternoon in May 1963, when the Soviet hierarchy of the time invited its Caribbean colleague to sun himself at the pool of his private 'dacha'.

It was the first trip Castro made to the ex Soviet Union after the Missile Crisis in October 1962. His objective: to mend fences and request more military assistance. The relations between Havana and Moscow had cooled following the Soviet withdrawal of nuclear missiles, which Castro wanted to maintain at any cost on Cuban soil.

Amongst much of the advice Castro received from Khrushchev, it included having spies infiltrate exiled organizations in the south of Florida and the military apparatus of the United States.

"Cuba's best defence will not only be the construction of a powerful military force, but to have effective intelligence activity in the exterior", then warned Khrushchev.

That was without doubt a successful trip, which Castro prolonged more than what had been planned. During almost four weeks Castro and Khrushchev talked intensively about the relation between countries and the role Cuba should play in the Soviet strategy affront the United States.

Castro and Khrushchev's conversations during this visit, like hundreds of other documents in the Kremlin's secret archives, have come to light in recent years to the public.

A good part of the so called October Crisis was able to be analysed, with these documents, in the book *One Hell of a Gamble* that was published in September 1997 by the W.W. Norton publishing house in New York. Its authors, Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, have reconstructed the history of the crisis, its development and consequences of all this historical period, convulsed and little known of the Cold War.

The charge made this week by the FBI before a Miami Federal Court against 10 of Castro's alleged spies, clearly shows that Khrushchev's old advice wasn't dismissed by its Caribbean disciple. As quoted by Fursenko and Nafali, Khrushchev told Castro that Havana "should make every effort to penetrate exiled groups to crush their plans before they progress sufficiently".

"There are times when security services should physically eliminate counterrevolutionary leaders in exile", Khrushchev advised.

There is no proof that Castro has also fulfilled this last advice. But there is no doubt that the disciple went further than the teacher in other aspects. Castro hasn't just sent spies to the United States.

He also emptied the prisons of the worst delinquents and criminals, and removed the mentally ill from their asylums and sent them to Florida, along with the thousands of decent Cubans that arrived to this country in the so-called Marielitos exodus of 1980.

It's just to recognise that this "migratory weapon" was exclusively by Castro. This never crossed Khrushchev's mind when advising his protected.

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Page: 6A