

Documents on Raul Castro's Visit to Eastern Europe, and Cuban-East European Contacts, March-May 1965

Records from the Polish, Bulgarian, and Czech Archives

Ed. Note: In March-April 1965, Cuban Defense Minister Raúl Modesto Castro visited the Soviet Union and several of the Kremlin's Warsaw Pact allies in Eastern Europe. The journey came at a sensitive moment in both the communist world (and in Cuba's relations with it) and in the broader Cold War. In Moscow, it was still a time of transition following the October 1964 overthrow of Nikita Khrushchev, and this was the most senior Cuban figure to come to meet the new leadership since then.¹ It was also a moment of increasing tension in the Sino-Soviet split: Soviet Premier Alexei N. Kosygin had met with Chinese leader Mao Zedong in February, but their conversations had failed to produce any progress toward overcoming the friction between Moscow and Beijing, despite the newly emerging threat posed by US military escalation in Vietnam (see below).² As it happened, the deepening Sino-Soviet schism coincided with a plunge in Sino-Cuban relations, burying Havana's hopes of not only improving their own bilateral relations with Mao but even, perhaps, trying to mediate between Mao and the post-Khrushchev Soviet leadership in Moscow—in early February (just prior to Kosygin's arrival), Ernesto "Che" Guevara had visited Beijing, but had disappointing talks that failed to surmount differences, and unlike his prior visit (in November 1960), he was not received personally by the Chinese Communist Party chief.³ Further complicating the impact of these evident and growing divisions in the communist world, moreover, were the fresh signs of a new military confrontation between the United States and the communist-bloc in Southeast Asia: in the early months of 1965, precisely as Raúl Castro traveled around the Soviet bloc, Washington sharply escalated its involvement in Vietnam, and indicated that steeper hikes were to follow. In particular, in February and March 1965—following communist guerrilla assaults against US forces in Pleiku and intense secret planning and discussions in Washington agreeing on the need to intensify a US military or else risk the collapse of the anti-communist regime in Saigon—the Johnson administration began bombing North Vietnam (i.e., the Democratic Republic of Vietnam) and sending additional troops, beginning with a deployment of Marines to guard the US air base in Danang in northern South Vietnam.⁴ The question of the communist world's response to this building conflict—and whether the new threat could enhance unity and cooperation between the Soviets and Chinese or, conversely, only accentuate their

divisions—clearly ranked high on the agenda of meetings between communist party representatives, including Raul Castro, who gathered in Moscow. Besides these various international issues, bilateral Soviet-Cuban discussions also had now perennial subjects to cover—the parlous state of the Cuban economy and the level and nature of Soviet-bloc aid, and the continuing rift between Havana and Moscow over the best means to promote revolution in Latin America (and by extension the Third World), with the Cubans favoring armed guerrilla struggle, after their own triumph and in some respects closer to the more bellicose Chinese line, and the Soviets, more cautiously, preferring political or even parliamentary combat by established communist parties.⁵

Unfortunately, neither the Soviets nor the Cubans have released records on the Soviet-Cuban discussions that took place during Raul Castro's visit to the USSR. However, the *CWIHP Bulletin* is pleased to present translated records of exchanges with the Cuban defense minister from three of Moscow's Warsaw Pact allies—the Poles, the Bulgarians, and the Czechoslovaks. These records, procured from communist party files in archives in Warsaw, Sofia, and Prague, offer considerable fresh evidence both on Cuba's relations with the Soviet bloc—political, economic, and military—and on Cuban (and East European) views of the international situation at a time of global and communist-world turbulence. They include records of Raul Castro's top-level discussions with communist leaders in Warsaw and Sofia, and then, after his return to Havana in early April, with the visiting Czechoslovak defense minister, whose military delegation also met with Fidel Castro and President Osvaldo Dorticos (records included), as well as a record of a conversation the following month in Prague between senior Cuban communist figure Carlos Rafael Rodríguez and a top Czechoslovak party official. In addition to discussing issues of current import, as perhaps the highest-ranking Cuban to visit Eastern Europe since the fall of 1962, Raúl Castro also reviewed—especially in his conversation with Polish communist leader Władysław Gomułka—the still quite recent history of the Cuban Missile Crisis, adding his own (still largely missing from the record) perspective on the installation of the missiles (including his own July 1962 trip to Moscow), the crisis itself, and its consequences. Besides offering a snapshot of Cuban-Soviet-bloc relations, they also provide some rare glimpses of Raúl Castro, of one of the more reclusive members of the Cuban leadership (especially in contrast to Fidel!), who nevertheless

has long been recognized as one of the revolutionary regime's most powerful figures—a status confirmed more than four decades after the events recounted here, when he formally succeeded his ailing brother in 2008 as Cuba's president.-- J.H.



I. Polish Documents

Memorandum of Conversation between Cuban Defense Minister Raúl Castro and Polish Leader Władysław Gomułka, Warsaw, 20 March 1965

Present

Cdes. J. Cyrankiewicz
Z. Kliszko
M. Spychalski
M. Moczar
G. Korczyński
A. Werblan
J. Czesak

From the Cuban side
Cdes. R. Castro

Carlos Olivares Sanchez – Cuba's ambassador in Moscow

Fernando L. Flores Ibarra – Cuba's ambassador in Warsaw

After exchanging a few remarks on the subject of the destruction in Warsaw and its reconstruction, and about a number of Polish citizens who died in the last war, Cde. R. Castro wishes to express his thanks one more time for the invitation to Poland extended by Cde. [Zenon] Kliszko and states that he highly values cooperation with the Polish delegation, with which he had a few conversations at a meeting in Moscow. Cuba's position is undoubtedly known to us, but he would be willing to inform or explain what may be of interest to us.

Cde. Gomułka

We are delighted with your visit. Cde. Kliszko invited you on behalf of our Political Bureau – he consulted with us on this matter. We advised that he take advantage of this opportunity and invite you. What can be of interest to us? Generally, we

know a lot and we are well-informed, even though some matters were not clear to us. We did not have a clear picture as to your position regarding the controversy [*spór*]⁶ within the international workers' movement. When this dispute manifested itself in the harshest ways, it seemed to us that you were positioning yourselves somewhere in the middle and that you were not declaring yourself clearly. We would readily listen to how this looks now. The position assumed by you in Moscow is uniform with ours, with the CPSU [Communist Party of the Soviet Union], and with most parties which participated in the meeting.

I recently read Cde. Fidel Castro's speech to students in Havana. Besides, we published it in our press. This speech was directed against the aggression of the US imperialists towards Vietnam. It was not difficult for us to decipher to whom it was addressed. It contains a sharp criticism of the CPC's [Communist Party of China's; CCP's] position towards Vietnam, as well as its position toward the international workers' movement.

It seems to us that, due to your familiarization with the actual state of affairs, some evolution took place regarding your positions.

The second issue is not quite clear to us: We do not know your ideas as to the prospects of legalizing the Cuban revolution, organizing the organs of the local authority as well as building a party which, as we know, is in the process of being built. You surely must have some ideas regarding these matters. Such matters are hazy, not clear to us. If we may, could you also perhaps say a few words about the economic situation and the prospects with regard to this issue?

Raul Castro

The news about the [Sino-Soviet] divergences [*rozbieżności*]⁷ reached us in 1960. We saw how they were developing and how the polemics were sharpening, how it turned into a heated [*ostrzy*]⁸ struggle and what damage it caused to the unity of the socialist camp and the international workers' movement. We saw a fractional tendency being developed. We could not assume any position at that time, as not everything was clear to us. Besides, our comrades also had contradictory opinions. Some were leaning to one side while others to another. At that time our main task was the consolidation and protection of our revolution.

We cannot help but appreciate the activities of counter-revolutionaries in the United States of America as well as those in countries of Latin America which are conducting intensive training for counter-revolutionaries. The social base in their countries is very weak for their activities. We also made some efforts in the field of the economy. We now know

that the course towards such an abrupt liquidation of monoculture was a mistake.

It was difficult for us to distinguish [*rozeznąć się*]⁹ within the polemics which were conducted; the positions taken by the CPSU and the CPC [CCP] on the same issue were extremely different. We did not possess sufficient knowledge [lit. components or elements] in order to take any position. Given the abovementioned reasons we could not drag the country [i.e., Cuba] into these polemics. We never placed our national interests before the interests of the international workers' movement and the socialist camp. We understood that placing missiles in Cuba was in the interest of the socialist camp as well as that of Cuba. If it were only for Cuba we would have never agreed to it. We agreed to their installation since we believed that it was in the interest of the socialist camp.

One could ask us: How could it have been possible when this [installation of missiles] placed the world at the brink of war?

We agreed in absolute confidence without demanding any detailed definition of its causes. Here we demonstrated a total lack of experience. After signing the agreement with the USSR regarding this issue, Khrushchev was to visit Cuba within 6 months and to disclose, to legalize this fact publicly, as this was to assume an official nature. We had many doubts. I went to Moscow at that time [2-17 July 1962] in order to clear up the matter. We were convinced that we could not hide this fact from foreign intelligence, which was conducting activities on our soil, and that this fact would be known before it was officially announced. I presented these doubts to Khrushchev: What will happen if this comes out? He answered at that time that we had nothing to fear. The Soviet Union is surrounded by US military bases and if Americans start acting up we will send in the entire Baltic fleet to your rescue. We then came to the conclusion that the crux of the matter was surely the bases and thus creation of a pretext for a discussion with the US regarding the liquidation of their bases surrounding the USSR.

The fact of the missile installation could not be hidden, since in order to transport them to certain places roads had to be built. Besides, this was a very visible transport, a line of trucks whose cargo reached 20 meters in length. We demanded that an agreement with regard to this matter be announced officially at an earlier date. We were told not to be afraid. I must say that we were very concerned despite this [assurance]. We know what happened next. Cde. Fidel suddenly found out at breakfast [on 28 October 1962] from the American press about the decision of the USSR to withdraw the missiles as well as about Khrushchev's proposition with

regard to establishing international inspection whose task was to monitor whether everything was withdrawn.

We had already realized a little earlier that the Americans were up to something. Our intelligence informed us about a sudden meeting in Washington and the fact that senators had been brought down by planes and helicopters. We were convinced that this had to do with us. After a meeting we decided to announce mobilization. Everything became clear. We presented the issue before the ambassador of the USSR, [Aleksandr Alekseyev]. After lunch, on the same day [22 October 1962], Fidel decided to announce the mobilization. I wanted to postpone it for a few hours since such a mobilization is very costly, but Fidel did not consent to it and he was right. After a few hours Kennedy gave his speech and this is how a crisis in the Caribbean Gulf [Sea] began. The result of the crisis was such that Khrushchev became the champion of peace, its defender, and we instead became advocates of the thermonuclear war. And how do the guarantees for our security look like on the US side? Kennedy is not alive, and [US Secretary of State Dean] Rusk has recently stated that nothing like this exists.

We had never placed and will not place our national interests before general interests; that is, the interests of the socialist camp. We are separated from you by 6 thousand km; we do not have any alliance of a broader nature, or even a bilateral one. Our security is contingent on an oral agreement with a president who is already dead.

A big misunderstanding arose when our nation found out about the withdrawal of the Soviet troops. At that time the necessity arose to reveal before the nation the fact of a divergence between the USSR and us. We said that we would clear up the matter during the international talks. This position of ours was not met with any understanding either, but if we did not do this, it could have been worse. After all we could not cover the sun with one finger.

Since this time we have not had any points of misunderstanding, except perhaps a letter from Khrushchev which alluded to the necessity of stating our position towards the divergence within the international workers' movement. In connection with this, we sent Cde. [President Osvaldo] Dorticos to Moscow [in October 1964], but at the same time Khrushchev was removed from power. This fact was explained to Cde. Dorticos with regards to [Khrushchev's] health; we were not told anything else. We took offence at that; we did not believe it. It would have been better if they had told us that they could not talk at the time and that they would explain later, but not like this. This matter was explained to us at a later time.

We do not want to talk about Khrushchev. We have much respect for him, and we are much indebted to him. He was

our friend. However, he made many mistakes, and because he was directing the party, thus the party also made mistakes. This had been already overcome, but some issues remained as to which we did not persuade the Soviet comrades nor did they persuade us. We will not go into them now. The experience, however, tells us to be cautious and not to trust anyone blindly.

This is what our attitude looks like towards the dispute. We could not be influenced by information flowing from this or that source. We did not take any position due to all these reasons.

In the presence of the existing situation, we began [the talks] with the parties in Latin America where there were also specific divergences; some which were our fault and some which were not. We have our own opinion regarding the process of revolutionary struggle and tactics, but each party has to work out its own policy. The meeting in Havana [of Latin American Communist Parties in late November 1964] had a concise agenda: the exchange of experiences, development of the revolutionary movement, the position with regard to the divergence as well as bilateral relations.

As a result of the meeting we cleared up a series of contentious issues. Some differences still remained as far as some other matters are concerned, but we established norms of mutual relations which would preclude deepening of differences. We also decided to dispatch a delegation [headed by Carlos Rafael Rodriguez] to Moscow and Beijing, which consisted of representatives from nine parties, in order to present our position with regard to the divergence within the international workers' movement.

Our delegation was very well received in Moscow and they agreed with our position. In Beijing, however, as soon as they sat at the table after preliminary niceties, the assaults and accusations began, directed at both present and absent parties. Mao Zedong thought up three "little devils" directed at us: that we are afraid of imperialism, that we are afraid of the People's Republic of China, and that we are afraid of the Cuban people.

He asked Cde. [Rodney] Arismendi, the secretary of Argentina's [*sic*; actually Uruguay's] CP: How many are you in Argentina [*sic*; Uruguay]? One and a half million, he answered. Then, you join us. There will be more of you.

He asked how can parties in Latin America develop without any leadership. The point was not understood. After all, the comrades said, we are working, we are fighting, etc. Yes, yes, but you need leadership. He stated that polemics have to be public, that one can wait for resolving the dispute for eight thousand years, and so on. One could not discuss anything in light of such arguments. In addition, he would shout every now and then that he was a dogmatist.

After this meeting we decided to dispatch our own delegation. Cde. Guevara went there [in February 1965]. Both sides maintained their own point of view. Mao did not receive Cde. Guevara despite the fact that up until this point he received all Cubans who possessed authority to a larger or a lesser degree.¹⁰

This is our own personal experience.

After this, the Albanians published an article in which they called the meeting of the parties from Latin America in Havana the Soviet Union's stratagem. They stated that revisionist parties want to take advantage of the Cuban revolution, but that they were convinced that the Cuban party would not allow itself to be dragged into this.

We did not agree with the nature of the previous meeting in Moscow and we did not intend to go. We decided to go when we were informed about the change. We recognized that our absence could seriously damage the cause of the international workers' movement, and that our absence could be read as if we shared a mutual line with the CCP. These justifications¹¹ influenced the change of our position.

A series of divergences still exist in the relations between the USSR and Cuba, but they are indeed bigger with China. Nobody, until now, could persuade us as to the benefits flowing from the hitherto polemics as well as to the fractional activity. On our continent, we have a series of parties working underground devoting most of their work to fighting the fractional activity.

Here, Raul Castro refers to the details of foreign student demonstrations in front of the US Embassy in Moscow, stating that he sees this incident as a planned provocation.

All these Chinese actions are taking place at a time when North Vietnam is being continuously bombed by the US. In this situation, difficulties are being made for the Soviet Union in sending aid and the refusal to allow passage of the Soviet planes.

All these facts lead to the conclusion that the CCP is assuming erroneous positions. This unhealthy attitude of the Chinese as to polemics points to the fact that it will be very difficult to attain unity. Actually, they do not desire it. One can wait 8-10 thousand years, as long as fractions evolve everywhere and until there are two centers. They desire unconditional surrender of all parties, including the CPSU, and until this takes place, unity is impossible.

We are interested in the active operation of the CPSU. Just as other parties, we cannot help but appreciate the role and the position of the CPSU in the international movement. The new Soviet leadership had already done much good. It had undertaken a series of steps which we highly approve of.

There was once a problem regarding Khrushchev's [proposed] visit to the FRG. At that time [i.e., the summer-

autumn of 1964] we expressed our negative opinion regarding this matter. We also conveyed our remarks with regard to a series of other issues and we will continue to do so.

At the moment the Chinese evoke xenophobia and national hatred through their activities; we saw this among foreign students in Moscow. They strive towards a hegemonic role within the workers' movement. The distance which separates us will increase. On the other hand, a series of steps undertaken by the USSR made us closer to the Soviet Union. This is the situation in which we currently find ourselves.

The divergences could be resolved through a series of conferences. A mutual line of struggle against imperialism will contribute towards overcoming the divergences. The Chinese will not participate in any conferences. We are convinced of that. Due to these considerations we put forth the inexpediency of designating a place and time for the conference, and we suggested the necessity of creating a friendly atmosphere.

We are particularly interested in the parties which are different from us, but which do not take the same position as the CCP. There are such Asian parties with which one can cooperate. There are different opinions and trends within the Vietnamese party.

We are very concerned about the situation in Vietnam, since the imperialists are attacking it by using new elements. We are divided. The Chinese talk so much about a paper tiger, but they have an example in Vietnam of what this paper tiger looks like. Not only are they not doing anything themselves, but they are also impeding the USSR from providing aid. Perhaps the Soviet aid deprives the Chinese of yet another argument in the quarrel. What will happen if the imperialists start a limited aggression against us?

The U2 planes are still flying over Cuba. We are not using missiles against them in accordance with the agreement with the USSR. The American imperialists are incessantly organizing provocations against us. From the time of the crisis we counted five thousand provocations of a different sort. Recently they seriously wounded our soldier. He was shot through a small window in a fortification with a precision rifle. We moved our fortification on the border with Guantanamo by 50m, thus creating a 500-meter dense belt. The aggressors set out into this territory by one or in groups of a few; they busy themselves and go back. Our country is small, we cannot push up-country, as in the end we would fall into the sea.

The aggressiveness of the enemy intensifies with the degree of the increase of divergences within the international workers' movement and within the socialist camp. We debated this matter, we conducted a detailed analysis of the enemy's capabilities and we concluded that we need to revise our plans. We accepted the fact that we could become an object of a local

war and the territory of the retaliation of imperialism. We decided to make preparations for such a possibility. These are very expensive undertakings. The majority of facilities have to be built and hidden underground. Even though our country is small we cannot be strong everywhere. In order to carry out the designed program we were forced to stop a series of works in other fields. The condition, which they are giving us, is to entirely cut off relations with the socialist camp. Such a condition precludes all conversations.

There is still one more brigade of Soviet soldiers in Cuba. We asked that it not be withdrawn since this may cause mistaken calculations on the part of the imperialists, and this could lead to who knows where [*Nie wiadomo dokąd*]. This brigade serves as a symbolic force, but it is important psychologically. The USSR consented. I am talking about all this in order to facilitate the understanding of our position.

We did not sign the treaty banning exercises using nuclear weapons since the US base exists on our soil. As to the agreement itself, we received it positively.

This is how our cause and our position present themselves.

W. Gomułka

In most matters our views are convergent. Perhaps we see some matters differently, e.g. the issue of the missiles. It is difficult for us to know all the details of this issue. In my opinion two factors were decisive: contradictions which arose within the socialist camp as well as the policy which was conducted by Khrushchev.

You trusted Khrushchev's policy. They perhaps did not want to specify a series of details. Nevertheless, the issue was clear from the very beginning. American imperialism is capable of conducting a war with Cuba by way of conventional weapons, it does not have to use nuclear weapons. It is clear that the socialist camp and the USSR cannot defend Cuba in any other way but by using nuclear weapons. This is clear and you are aware of this. If a conflict is meant to be, then it will be a nuclear conflict, there is no other way.

In my opinion, Khrushchev conducted a policy which was not thought-out and which was all-out [*va-bank*], and when his scheme was not working out, then he had to withdraw. Besides, there was no other way. If one makes a mistake, then one needs to do one's best in order to minimize the consequences. The withdrawal did not strengthen, but weakened the socialist camp. But what could be done if not doing one's best to turn around this setback to one's benefit and to that of the socialist camp? The evidence that this is a peaceful policy of the USSR was enhanced by influences within the world opinion. Everyone is aware today that if this fact¹² did not exist then things would be better.

It is not, as you say, that you subordinate your policy to the interests of the socialist camp. The party and the government of a country are responsible for that country's policy. I am convinced that if there were no divergences then one would not even have the Soviet propositions regarding the missiles. Here, perhaps, exists the seed of Cuba's misunderstanding of the situation. Cde. Fidel and the leadership resented the fact that the withdrawal of the missiles took place without any consultation. This is correct. One can feel resentful or feel offended by the fact that Khrushchev did not consult with you prior to that, but on the other hand, this attests to the assessment of the situation by the Soviet comrades. The situation at the time was very tense. There was a problem: to go into a nuclear war or not? One should not exclude the fact that such a situation may arise, but as long as one can avoid it then one should avoid it. One day, history will assess this and it will educe pros and cons. One must say that Fidel was against the missiles' withdrawal and that he adheres to this position even today. In a real situation, Cuba would have to be the first one to face the consequences of nuclear repression. The US is capable of attacking Cuba by way of conventional weapons, thereby destroying it.

Cuba's position towards the dispute and [its] certain tendencies towards supporting these or other Chinese arguments were contingent on this missile issue. If the Chinese reasoned according to the categories of Fidel and the Cuban leadership, then perhaps their position could have been right. But they reason according to other categories. We also had some illusion as to our Chinese comrades. Nevertheless, we tried to understand them and to get to the core of their argument by following the principles of proletarian internationalism. Afterwards, based on the evidence, we concluded that the Chinese comrades are subordinating their international policy to that of their narrowly understood national interests, or more specifically, to their great-power tendencies. We do not deny their position as a great power country. We repeatedly stated that China is a grand country and that they deserve this position. The means and methods chosen for this goal are typical of all nationalistic countries. We also did not praise the arguments which were used in the polemics between the CPSU and the CPC, and in our publications and speeches we did not use them. We stated at our congress what we think of the policy conducted by them. It seems to us that our assessment is correct. Besides, this confirms a series of later events.

During the visit in Moscow, on the occasion of the October Revolution [in November 1964], we talked twice to Chinese comrades and, while over there, we also presented twice the situation in Vietnam as a central issue which required an agreement and establishing some kind of a line of action. There is no decisive answer on the part of the socialist

camp with regard to the aggressive undertakings of imperialism and to the bombing.

Our Chinese comrades did not take up this problem. They did not want to discuss this subject. It became clear to us that the existing situation suits them. Besides, this is in accord with the line of an interview which Mao Zedong gave to [American writer Edgar] Snow.¹³ It seemed as if in the interview Mao Zedong was inviting Americans to take aggressive actions by stating that the People's Republic of China will not undertake any steps that would involve it in the Vietnam conflict and that they would react only then when they are attacked and when the Chinese border is crossed. He even invites the US imperialism towards the People's Republic of Vietnam by stating that if they took the entire North Vietnam, then they would have 30 million Vietnamese conducting war against them. This interview is very interesting. I am not sure if the comrades had read it (R. answers that he did not read it). It is worth reading. This testifies to the fact that the situation which exists in Vietnam suits the CPC. That is why the Chinese position is not a surprise to us. The comrades are undoubtedly familiar with the conversation between Mao and Kosygin [on 11 February 1965]. In this conversation Mao clearly states: you take care of Europe and do not poke your nose into Asia. Given this, there is nothing peculiar about the fact that they refused to agree to let the Soviet planes fly to Vietnam. Neither the Chinese party nor the Chinese government want to take a single step which would give the US an excuse to attack them.

Imperialism cannot help but decipher the policy which attacks the Soviet Union for not providing aid in the situation when one himself does not do anything. One can draw various conclusions from such a policy.

The party as well as the government of China are afraid of US imperialism. The basic premise of the Chinese policy is not to let US imperialism attack China directly. They have the right to be afraid of this, but what type of steps are they taking against this? It is a great conciliation towards US imperialism. Even the official Chinese statements regarding the incident in the Gulf of Tonkin corroborate this. The first one was already mild, and in the recent ones the expression that "they would give aid" even disappeared. How to explain this? They say more and more that the Vietnamese nation does not need help and that it will take care of itself. It is so strong that it will conquer American imperialism on its own. And how could they protect themselves against imperialism? Only through a unity with the USSR and the socialist camp. Not only are they not thinking about it, but they are doing everything in order not to create any impressions that they would go for such a unity. One of the examples of this is the student demonstrations in front of the US embassy in Moscow, in

front of the USSR embassy in Beijing, as well as the return of 4 students to Beijing. This was an act of outright provocation. After all, there is a British diplomatic post in China. England is in solidarity with the US in its actions against Vietnam due to its own interests. They could have made such a demonstration in Beijing, and to vent all their hatred. But not only did they not do anything in their own country, but they also created provocation in Moscow. And this when? At a time when they are aware of the USSR's official request for help, and after the refusal for the passage of the Soviet planes. It is clear that they want to turn the world opinion and that of their own nation in a different direction; that is to portray the USSR as a partner of the US, and themselves as the only advocates of the struggle against imperialism. We had intelligence that these 4 students got on the plane in a normal manner in Moscow, and in Beijing one of them had forgotten his part and started climbing down the steps. They quickly dragged him inside and got him out on the stretcher along with others. These may be amusing facts, but they testify to what methods Chinese propaganda is clinging to.

We had certain illusions, but also many reservations, as to the policy conducted by Khrushchev. We expressed this repeatedly and we did not hold it inside. We also think today that what Khrushchev was doing gave the Chinese excellent reasons, but he was right on one thing, and that is, that currently no agreement is possible with them. Later events proved this thesis. At the time when the Chinese party went for the aggressive and street polemics, it was already being guided by the policy which is being conducted today in a different situation. One could say a lot on this topic. Why are they conducting such a policy? There may be many reasons. One should see it as certain means of pressuring the US in the fight for their interests as a great power. "The conflict in Vietnam can be resolved only when we, the Chinese, agree to it." This is some kind of a trump card. And this is how they present the issue. This is how it currently looks.

We talked with [North Vietnamese Prime Minister] V. [sic; P.] V. Dong during the visit in Moscow [in November 1964]. At the time he suggested that we look for a way, that we take advantage of our capabilities towards the facilitation and acceleration of a political solution with regard to the Vietnam problem. Not so long ago there were good possibilities for such a solution of this issue, and as we see it, the US would have gone for it. Today, the [North] Vietnamese government, being under the influence of the Chinese position, refuses a political solution. In other words, it is counting on a military solution. We talked with him by stating that if they see a possibility of co-opting the South Vietnamese Army, then perhaps one could count on such a solution. However, if the US and the South Vietnamese government can organize an

army of half a million and not allow a massive crossing to the other side, then one cannot dream of some military solution.

They now put forth such conditions that one can only hold talks if the Americans withdraw, and when they do withdraw, then the talks can occur only with the National Liberation Front and not with the North Vietnamese government. This is an unconditional demand for capitulation. If one wants to do so, then one needs to place the enemy in such a situation that one has to destroy and crush the enemy as was done with Hitler in Berlin in order to be able to place conditions for absolute capitulation. I am not inclined to believe that this fight suits the United States. We have several grounds on which to base our assumption that they would readily withdraw while saving face. In these conditions, however, they cannot do so. As for now they are conducting a policy of harassment, exacerbating the situation and bombing North Vietnam. It is a dead-end street that they are stepping into. It is difficult to conjecture that they would act in a manner as to strive for a world conflict. But this can last for a few years. This is not a trifle. The bombings may be meaningless from a military point of view, but they will exhaust the country economically. From a strategic point of view this has a full justification. If this were to last for 2-4 years, then one could easily imagine the consequences, as not only a military problem, but also an economic problem would arise. After all the economy of this country is relatively weak. Vietnamese comrades said themselves that before the liberation they were eating rice once a day and now they eat it twice a day. This is a great progress. This is an important issue, as people have to eat, and this in turn requires developing the economy.

I am afraid that our Vietnamese comrades may miss the current opportunity. I am afraid that in 2-3 years there will be such a situation in which they will have no choice but to agree to a worse conditions [for a deal]. This would be in accord with the Chinese line since one would be able to attack the USSR for not wanting to help, for conducting a revisionist policy, and so on. This is at times a catchy slogan especially at a time when people are badly off. When Khrushchev withdrew the missiles such slogans were also catchy in your country. A great nation comes and it says: "Here are the guilty ones; we had already been saying this for a few years, we demonstrated even in Moscow, and they beat our students."

The Albanians are already writing that the United States informed the USSR that they would be bombing North Vietnam. Indeed, this occurred. The Soviet Union was informed about this an hour before. This was to signify that they were not starting a war. The Albanians did not write, however, that the Chinese had also been informed about this. The Albanians did not know that the USSR had been informed; the Chinese told them. They did not say, however,

that a British charge d'affaires in Beijing [Donald Hopson] also informed the Chinese at the same time. The British Ambassador in Warsaw [Sir George Clutton] told us about this referring to an Albanian letter [newspaper].¹⁴ The notification was simultaneous in Moscow and in Beijing.

The Chinese want something to bargain with. What I am saying here may seem brutal, far away from the principles of the proletarian internationalism and Marxism-Leninism, but this is what it is. This is how I see them.

We understand the policy of Cuba. Some time ago we had put forth before the Soviet Union that one had to indispensably come into an understanding with the Chinese and to establish a mutual line and in this way protect Cuba. What will we do if imperialism attacks your country? We do not have any strategy for such an eventuality. If we presented this issue to the Chinese today, they would refuse all discussions. I don't know if an attack would not be in their interest. What to do then? Start a nuclear war? Such a situation already existed and it was decided that "No." How can one work out a mutual strategy without China? Two systems exist and one should think and plan according to these categories. If one country is attacked, this means that the entire system is being attacked. The Chinese do not want to think of it by following such a framework. Many communists do not understand this. In my opinion, many communists in Cuba also did not, and still do not, understand this. We are in a difficult situation. We cannot even publicly state that China does not allow the passage for the planes and they know about this.

We are divided by a large precipice; we have no chances for unity. How will this further develop? Much depends on the position of the entire communist movement. If such a situation arose in which out of 81 parties, 80 or 79 parties would come to the conference while 2 or 3 parties, including China, would not participate, this would force the CPC into changing their tactics. Politics is not a free-art type of issue, it has to be adjusted to the situation. The Chinese do not understand. These are wise and experienced people. They have a large tradition of statehood. They think that as long as they can continue this line, they will do so.

There is no point to play at prophesizing. I agree with what you say, and that is, that a joint conference with the Chinese is not realistic. This is an opposite pole of their policy.

I understand you. I read the most recent speech by Fidel Castro in which he states that one has to give all the assistance to Vietnam. This statement suits the Chinese (the surprise of R. Castro). Well, only a small group of people knows at whom it is directed, right? As a matter of fact, the Chinese are saying the same thing on the outside. I would not exclude the fact that some day the US would try to encroach on China's terri-

tory with its bombs, perhaps by mistake, I don't know. Even if it were only for the purpose of examining their reaction.

Mao says that a war would unite us and that it would create conditions conducive to unity. Such statements are not serious. They do not suit the situation. This is a fatality. One can avoid the war, but in order to do this one needs unity.

We realize that your country is like an outpost. What is decisive in your country? How do we see this based on our own experiences? Of course, it is difficult to compare. These are different countries and different conditions; nevertheless fundamental and mutual matters exist. Armed forces are very important to the fight against the internal, and also external, counterrevolution. But no less decisive issue is creating such conditions in which one could not, under any circumstances, restore a capitalist system.

I read somewhere about an estimate that Cuba, based on its own climactic and other conditions, is able to feed 50 million people. The essential matter is to improve the economy. For Cuba to help improve the well-being of its own people, thereby becoming an example for the entire Latin America in this respect, would mean projecting the revolution. This is more than any propaganda. A people which connect their well-being with a revolution will not go back to an old [system] under any circumstances.

Looking at your conditions, this is not comparable, even despite the fact that although we are not most advanced relative to our neighbors, there is no possibility in our country to go back to capitalism under any conditions. There are no people, there is no one worker, who would say that a factory which was either made into a public property or built by him is to be returned to private hands. Each country should conduct such a policy that would take advantage of its reserves to the maximum. Such a course of industrialization during the first years, while neglecting agriculture, was false. One also has to industrialize a country. The main issue, however, is agriculture, and it is good that Cuba is following such a line. We know how much of an effort this takes, but perhaps it will be faster given your conditions. It seems to me that unless appeasing the need of the people is resolved, then there will be opportunities for a counterrevolution. Discontent grows precisely on such grounds. A revolution can only be carried out under a great emotional impulse, but even under such emotionalism which characterizes Cubans and in general the nations of Latin America, it is not an inexhaustible source. Life is difficult and often ungrateful. One needs fuel for enthusiasm and when it goes out then the enthusiasm is exhausted.

In 1960 a Cde. [name whited out—Blas Roca?] came to visit us. In a conversation with him I put forth a suggestion that Cuba must hold elections, and that it has all the chances

for a big victory. It could even let in some bourgeoisie party. The 22 [sic; 26] July Movement can join in a united front with the Communist Party and go together into elections. It will undoubtedly receive 90% of votes. One can work out a plan and guarantee Fidel Castro's rule, e.g. following the example of a president in the US. One has to legalize the revolution. It is necessary both for the people and for external necessities. The Cuban revolution had not yet been legalized. Currently the conditions are worse. Today you would not gain 90% of votes.

At the time, Cde. [name excised] answered that this was not necessary, and that in your country, as well as in other countries in Latin America, there is no parliamentary tradition, that there were still bribes, corruption, and that these were complex issues, etc. This was our first conversation with someone from your side.

Clearly, each party decides on its own as to its policy and it learns from its own mistakes. We are also not copying anyone indiscriminately. After all it is known that every country has its own specificity. Nevertheless, this poses a problem and the strengthening of a revolution, internally and externally, is not without any meaning.

I was not able to catch one thing that Cde. Castro was talking about, namely, on what are the current divergences with the CPSU contingent?

R. Castro

I personally agree with most of your views. I consider the meeting very useful. In addition, your experiences offer a great help to us. Our party is still young and immature, although the CP had existed for 30 years.

Gomulka

When an old party comes to power it then confronts entirely new problems. Of all things that are valuable within it, only one remains, namely a valuable discipline.

R. Castro

I consider continuing this type of contacts, either in Warsaw or in Havana, as indispensable.

One word regarding the missile withdrawal. We do not consent with the manner of their withdrawal. We do not agree to any concessions, no matter what. Khrushchev explained that there was no time. He has done much to patch it up, especially during Fidel Castro's visit in the USSR [in May 1963]. After all, we could have been copied on all the correspondence that was going to the US. The point here is not

that we want to impose our prestige. When we were confronted with a world crisis, our own dignity did not matter. What I said had to do with the method of action.

In a letter to the US, Khrushchev proposes an international inspection in Cuba. This is not right not only because we were not asked for our opinion, but also because this would be a precedent which would be very dangerous for us. If he had written that the inspection was previously agreed to upon consultation with Cuba, then everything would be fine.

Gomulka

I do not have any reservations on this issue.

R. Castro

The Americans reacted to our refusal in such a way that they conducted their own inspection from the air. This is why there are all these U2 planes. All our reservations are with regard to a group of methods with which we do not agree.

The connection between October [1962] and the divergences, as well as a bow to China, are not a childish offence, but a mistake. And as you said yourself, we are learning from our mistakes. The Chinese reactions taught us to see how things look like in reality. I agree that there were, and still are, comrades in Cuba who either had or still have a different opinion. It may be that perhaps they had undergone an evolution after recent events. It is good, however, that when a party makes a decision then everyone is in agreement.

I do not want to take your precious time. I regret that we cannot discuss longer.

W. Gomulka

The point here is not our time, but the fact that your program does not allow it.

R. Castro

We will further discuss with comrades and Cde. Kliszko during the trip. I will explain in conversations what you had inquired about.



From a Conversation between the 2nd Secretary of the UPSR,¹⁵ Cde. Raul Castro Ruz, and a member of the PB CC PUWP, Cde. Zenon Kliszko, on 22 March 1965

During a trip by plane from Orneto to Katowice, Cdes. Raul Castro and Zenon Kliszko conducted a conversation, with regard to, among other things, the following topics:

1. Assessment of the position of the Italian Communist Party

Cde. R. Castro informed the others about conducting a series of discussions with a delegation of the CP Italy in Moscow and about a departure of a delegation of the CP of Italy to Havana at the invitation of the Cuban Party which was soon to take place. He asked about the assessment of the Italian policy from the side of the PUWP, for which he received an answer that the program of this party is not clear for the Polish side, particularly with regard to the question of establishing a uniform workers' party. Both interlocutors agreed that unity can be solely *wykuta*¹⁶ based on the activity of the lower organizations on the subject of concrete problems. Cde. R. Castro stated that the justification [*argumentacja*] of the CP of Italy with regard to internal matters is devoid of substance and that with regard to the conference of 81 communist and workers' parties, this party, which albeit bases [its actions] on other assumptions, nevertheless takes the same position as that of the CCP.

2. Assessment of the position of the Romanian Workers' Party

Cde. R. Castro was very interested in knowing who would become the new First Secretary of the Romanian Workers' Party [after the death of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej on 19 March 1965] and he was asking how a new Romanian policy would be shaped under new conditions. Both interlocutors agreed that in recent years the RWP¹⁷ had been employing a policy characterized by nationalism. Cde. Z. Kliszko said that this became evident mainly with regard to the issues of economic cooperation within the framework of CEMA.¹⁸ In connection with this, Cde. Z. Kliszko emphasized the fact that sometimes the need arises when one has to give up one's narrowly understood interests in the name of unity and the

mutual welfare of the camp as a whole. In this context he recalled a vote of the Polish delegation in the UN against the project of denuclearizing Latin America which was aimed at manifesting a position of solidarity with Cuba, even though Poland was the first champion of the idea of denuclearization.

3. The UPSR and Other Communist Parties in Asia

The Cuban comrades are now convinced that the CPC will not participate in any meeting aimed at the consolidation of the international movement. They are, however, adhering to the position that one should not isolate oneself from other Asian parties which did not participate in the last meeting in Moscow. From the conversations, which were conducted by the Cuban delegation with other Asian parties, i.e. Vietnam, Korea, at the meeting in Moscow on the occasion of the October Revolution, one could get an idea that their point of view with regard to the situation as a whole was not exactly in line with the position of the CPC.

4. The Matter of a Former Member of the National Leadership UPSR – J. Ordoqui

Cde. R. Castro, on his own initiative, explained the situation of the suspension of the activities of J[oaquín]. Ordoqui, a former member of the Nationwide Leadership of the UPSR and the former vice-president of the Armed Forces. Ordoqui was arrested under the accusation of cooperating with the American intelligence.

While in Mexico during the dictatorship of Batista, Ordoqui established very close relations with a traitor, Marcos Rodriguez, who turned in to the police a group of young revolutionaries from the former so-called Revolutionary Directorate who were participants in an armed attack on the presidential palace in Havana in 1957.

This fact was used by American intelligence to conduct sabotage which resulted in the subsequent recruitment of Ordoqui. The Mexican intelligence was also said to be involved in this issue. The activity of Ordoqui made it impossible for many years to institute an inquiry against the traitor. After the former had been arrested, Ordoqui made the inquiry difficult. When, after a long inquiry, Rodriguez admitted to the crime, which he committed, he also revealed the fact that both Ordoqui and his wife (E. Garcia Buchaca, a member of the leadership of the former Popular Socialist Party and a former secretary of the Cuban Council of Culture). This forced the Cuban leaders to undertake special cautionary steps. The meetings of the War Council had not been called for a long time due to this incident, and only members of the

Secretariat were notified, with the consent of the National Leadership of the UPSR, with regard to the matters which directly affected the nation's security. This caused very serious complications and it created an ambiguous and unclear situation for many comrades. It was also at that time that the Cuban leadership acquired evidence in Mexico which testified to the ties of Ordoqui with foreign intelligence. Under these conditions a decision had been made to arrest Ordoqui and to institute an inquiry against him at the meeting of the leadership of the UPSR. Two comrades, who are from the leadership of the former Popular Socialist Party and who have our utmost confidence, are conducting this inquiry. Ordoqui has not confessed to his guilt to this day, even though he is not capable of refuting evidence presented to him such as: a tape of a conversation which he had with Cuba's minister of construction, O. Cienfuegos, with Cde. Khrushchev still in 1962, and personal files prepared by Batista's police which included a description of the method of recruiting him to cooperate with [American] intelligence. According to Cde. R. Castro, Ordoqui would have confessed to his guilt if his life were spared. Other comrades from the leadership, however, rejected such a suggestion through the justification that adopting different criteria towards members of the former Popular Socialist Party would evoke very unfavorable comments in society. Ordoqui's case is complicated by the fact that it was suitably used by reactionary elements in Latin America and, in the US [it stirred up] an interest with regard to the weakening of confidence within the Cuban leadership.

Drafted by R. Czyżycki
Prepared in 5 copies



From a Conversation between the 2nd Secretary of the UPSR,¹⁹ Cde. Raul Castro Ruz, and a member of the PB CC PUWP, Cde. Zenon Kliszko, on 23 March 1965

The conversation took place on the initiative of Cde. R. Castro, who wished to return to certain matters which were not exhaustively discussed during the meeting in the CC PUWP with the participation of the 1st Secretary of the CC PUWP, Cde. Władysław Gomułka.

1. First of all, Cde. R. Castro asks that copies of notes prepared by the Polish side from the abovementioned meeting be delivered to him. He justified his request

mainly by wanting to have at his disposal the identical versions of the notes taken by both sides. Cde. R. Castro asked that the materials be handed to him directly or through Cuba's ambassador in Moscow, C[arlos]. Illivares [Olivares] Sanchez, through the ambassador [Edmund Pszczolkowski] of the PPR [Polish People's Republic] in Moscow between 2 and 5 of April this year (Cde. R. Castro returns to Cuba via Moscow). The guest also asked for possibly supplementing the notes with other materials related to the matters discussed during the meeting and which the Polish side would be interested in putting forth to the Cuban side.

2. Relations between the UPSR and the PUWP

The divergences which Cde. R. Castro referred to during the meeting in the CC PUWP were mainly related to the old leadership of the CPSU. They mostly resulted from the development of the Caribbean Crisis. Due to the development of this crisis, the Cuban leadership concluded that each new step in the field of inter-party relations must be the result of an independent thought process based on concrete facts and evidence; a result of comprehensive discussions. The recently conducted talks with Soviet comrades allowed for the discovery of an existing convergent position of both parties with regard to a series of essential matters. Some other problems remained to be discussed. They are, however, not fundamental matters.

The Cuban leaders conclude that the current leadership of the CPSU is assuming a more cautious and proper position with regard to the controversy [spór]²⁰ within the international movement.

3. The Issue of the Legalization of the Cuban Revolution

The Cuban specificity contributed to the fact that the leadership of the UPSR does not have to²¹ attach such great importance to the issue of elections. According to Cde. R. Castro, one should not talk about the legalization of the revolution, since it is a legal act if the situation as a whole is taken into consideration. It is true, however, that the lack of firm local authority is palpable, thereby causing additional troubles for the revolution. Such a situation will possibly change only after the process of establishing a new party has been completed. A typical thing is that if the consolidation of revolutionary forces in Cuba had materialized in the years 1959-1960, it would have to be carried out based on a multi-party system. The solution of this matter at the end of 1960

and 1961 made possible for the attainment of integration on the basis of the existence of one party.

4. The Situation in Vietnam

Cde. R. Castro inquired:

- a) About the Polish assessment of the situation in Vietnam,
- b) Whether one should not interpret the bombing of North Vietnam by American imperialism as evidence of losing control over the situation in the South,
- c) Whether the Polish side believes that the US would withdraw from Vietnam if it could do so with saving face,
- d) Whether and, possibly how, will the PPR react to the situation in Vietnam.

Cde. R. Castro agreed that the lack of readiness of both sides regarding a political solution of the problems must lead to a complicated situation and to the intensification of the danger of deepening the feeling of impunity on the side of the US imperialism, which, in the face of the above, could aim at expanding further military actions in this region. He listened to the opinion regarding serious and negative consequences, psychological and economic (with all implications resulting from it), which would have to result in long-lasting military actions against North Vietnam. The guest also listened with interest to the fact that the PPR has reasons to believe that the US would withdraw from Vietnam if it were possible to do so with saving face. At the same time, he seemed to agree with the view that the setback of the US in South Vietnam is more of a political, and not military, nature as well as that the US's material resources are too great and it has too many broad interests in South-East Asia for it to withdraw from Vietnam in the role of the defeated.

Cde. R. Castro confirmed the fact that the excerpt of the last speech of Fidel Castro, in which he talked about comprehensive aid which Cuba would give to Vietnam had it been neighbors with this country, was directed against the PRC.

5. Cuba and the Current Situation in Latin America

Cde. R. Castro expressed apprehension that the current developments in the Vietnam crisis may develop into a dangerous precedent for Cuba due to the following reasons: Latin America is a fighting continent. The struggle assumed a particularly harsh [*ostrzy*]²² character in Venezuela due to the increase of a revolutionary wave, the extent of the influences of the [communist] party as well as thanks to the moods in the army (avoiding fighting with the guerillas). One should not exclude the fact that as soon as the fight assumes a more

severe character, the US can use repressions against Cuba, just as they are doing currently against North Vietnam.

In order to illustrate to what degree the situation in Venezuela has become complicated, Cde. R. Castro presented a maneuver of US imperialism; that it is striving to persuade the Venezuelan government to sound out the possibility of establishing diplomatic relations with the USSR, thereby certainly aiming to show that the CPSU is, in some way, cutting itself off from the activity of the Venezuelan party. The leadership of the CPSU, however, did a proper thing by consulting with the comrades from the CP of Venezuela regarding the matter. As a result, the Soviet government will not establish relations with Venezuela.

The guest announced that Cuba was providing aid to the Venezuelan comrades. The guerillas were trained in Cuba and the Cuban comrades were sending weapons to Venezuela. As a result of carelessness of the Venezuelan guerillas, part of these weapons found itself in the hands of the Venezuelan authorities. This fact served as a base for putting forth a well-known accusation against Cuba. However, these weapons were, in their entirety, American, and were introduced in great quantities into Cuba's territory by American intelligence. Cuba, Cde. R. Castro stated, will never withdraw its moral support for the Venezuelan guerillas.

6. The position of the PUWP with regard to the conference of 81 parties

Cde. R. Castro asked, once more, for the explicitness of the position of the PUWP regarding this matter. Following the reply of Cde. Z. Kliszko, the guest stated that the positions of both parties on this subject are in agreement.

7. The attitude of the socialist camp towards Cuba

Cde. R. Castro asked what exactly Cde. W. Gomułka had in mind when, during the meeting in the CC PUWP, when he talked about the lack of a mutually-worked-out policy of the socialist camp regarding Cuba's defense.

The answer was that the lack of a mutual political position between the CPSU and the CPC, which is due to divergences, is reflected unfavorably not only in Vietnam, but also in the Caribbean.

At the end of the conversation, Cde. R. Castro expressed interest in continuing this type of honest exchange of opinions.

Drafted by R. Czyżycki
Prepared in 5 copies



The Statement of the 2nd Secretary of the UPSR,²³ Cde. Raul Castro Ruz, pertaining to Cuba's Minister of Industry, Ernesto Guevara

In one of the conversations between a member of the PB CC PUWP, Cde. Z. Kliszko, and Cde. R. Castro, a referral was made to the position assumed by the Minister of Industry in Cuba, Ernesto Guevara, at the economic seminar of Afro-Asian countries in Algeria in February this year. Cde. R. Castro stated that he was not prepared to discuss the essence of the issue (the extent of aid from socialist countries to developing countries), but he stated that:

- Cde. Guevara had recently spent a long time outside of the country and the position taken [lit. presented] by him should be treated as [his] personal view;
- One should search for some kind of a solution regarding world [lit. international] prices which are unfair [detrimental]²⁴ to the developing countries. However, the propositions of E. Guevara are too extreme;
- The Algerian Seminar was not the right forum for a discussion of the matters raised by E. Guevara;
- E. Guevara is an unusually valued member of the UPSR leadership and he commands general respect. He is, however, marked by obstinacy, which was a cause of serious discussions within the Cuban leadership;
- One of the biggest merits of the UPSR leadership is freedom of discussion and an unrestricted atmosphere which enables one to state his individual views. However, a decision that was once made is observed without exception by all comrades who comprise the Nationwide Leadership of the UPSR.

Drafted by R. Czyżycki
Prepared in 5 copies

[Source: Records of the Polish United Workers Party Central Committee [KC PZPR], Sygnaatura 237/XXII/1399, Archiwum Akt Nowych [AAN; Archive of Modern Acts], Warsaw, Poland.

Obtained by the National Security Archive and translated for CWIHP by Margaret K. Gnoinska.]



II. Bulgarian Document

Minutes of T. Zhivkov – R. Castro Conversation, Sofia, 26 March 1965

MEETING

Of comrade Todor Zhivkov – First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party and Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bulgaria and comrade Raul Castro Ruz – Second Secretary of the United Party of the Socialist Revolution, Deputy Prime-Minister of the Revolutionary government and Minister of the Armed Forces of Cuba

Sofia, Friday, 26 March 1965
9:30 a.m.

T. Zhivkov: On behalf of the Central Committee of our party, on behalf of the Politburo and the government of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, I most warmly welcome comrade Raul Castro in our country as our highly valued guest, comrade and brother.

In the tour that Raul Castro will make in the country he will see and feel the great love that our people cherish towards the heroic people of Cuba, how popular the Cuban revolution and Cuba's leaders are in Bulgaria, how large the authority of comrade Fidel Castro is in Bulgaria.

Raul Castro: On behalf of the leaders of our country I would like to express our gratitude for the attention paid to me by inviting the current delegation. As far as I am concerned, this visit is an longstanding obligation of mine which I had to perform.

When we were at the meeting in Moscow, we received invitations from the Polish and Hungarian parties. We wanted to make a visit and exchange opinions with the leaders of these parties. This seems clear judging by the fact that the time we have at our disposal here, in Bulgaria, is limited. It has been exactly one month today since I left my country. The situation in the world does not allow a person to be outside his country for long.

One way or another, as comrade [Bulgarian Defense Minister Gen. Dobri] Djurov pointed out in Moscow, this

should be treated as the first part of my visit. On another convenient occasion I will have to come back to Bulgaria again so that I can make a tour of the country and see more things. Obviously the program that has been worked out now aims at enabling me to see many things. It is also our will to see as many things as possible in your country.

As far as our visit to exchange opinions with the Bulgarian Communist Party is concerned, I will try to make it in the most concise form, so that I can save the Bulgarian comrades time. I take into consideration the great number of your engagements and the little time you have at your disposal. I'm not aware of the exact nature of the questions that would interest you regarding our country. But it seems clear that we can exchange thoughts on the current situation of the international communist movement with regard to the new conditions created in Vietnam now.

Our country's stand on the international communist movement is, to a certain extent, known. I don't know whether the comrades would like me to elaborate more on it. It is evident that our party is interested in our Bulgarian comrades' opinion on these issues. I suppose that the Bulgarian party's stand coincides with that of the Cuban party.

T. Zhivkov: We would be extremely glad to listen to some information on the situation in Cuba.

How would you like us to proceed? Probably we could first of all state our opinion.

Raul Castro: All right.

T. Zhivkov: So the floor is given to me first. I will briefly want to dwell on some problems concerning our internal development.

[...]

Raul Castro: The Chinese have still said nothing on the Romanian problem.

T. Zhivkov: No, they would not say anything. The Chinese are seriously courting the Romanians now. Indicative of this is the fact that the leader of their delegation at [former Romanian communist party leader Gheorghe] Gheorghiu-Dej's funeral was Chou-Enlai [Zhou Enlai].

We must admit that the contemporary Romanian leaders, as well as the previous ones headed by Gheorghiu-Dej, do not fully share the Chinese views. We can say that regarding the principles of international development they firmly stand on the basis of the Moscow declaration. Yet now they follow a policy of cooperation and balance with all. Americans,

Frenchmen and Englishmen mean the same to them as we do. Of course, these are the tendencies.

On the whole, our relations with Romania are normal. Yet practically they aren't. [excitement]

[...]

As you know, the Chinese accuse us of being modern revisionists. We find it difficult to say exactly what our revisionism is like.

[...]

Maybe we have put less effort into the country's defense, maybe we sit idle and that's why we're revisionists? Of course, all of this is not true. Both the Turks and the Greeks know our army is better equipped than theirs.

Maybe we do not help the national liberation movements? This is the biggest slander directed towards our country. We cannot respond to it, cannot disprove it. But the Algerian friends and /Ahmed/ Ben Bella know well whether or not we have offered support to them. The headquarters for supplying the Algerian army was in Bulgaria. It was our organization that was in charge of procurement for the Algerian army. As far as the supply with clothing etc. is concerned, we created an organization in a capitalist country, I think it was Switzerland, that bought the goods and materials we couldn't get from the socialist countries, for the Algerian army.

Let them ask in the Congo about the arms that Bulgaria supplies for the national liberation movement in that country. Let them ask the same in Cyprus, the South African Republic, etc. It goes without saying that Vietnam has also had supplies from us. Although Bulgaria is a small country, with limited resources, there isn't a single place in the world where the opportunity has arisen and we haven't responded by helping with weapons and staff. Our partisan leaders even are in Venezuela.

There is a special organization in our country now that tackles these issues and whenever the people rise up we offer help on the spur of the moment. And I must admit that thanks to our party's great underground experience, we have had almost no failures when transferring arms. The first ship with arms to arrive in Algeria during the blockade was a Bulgarian one. As soon as the events in Cyprus started, they asked us for arms. The people of Cyprus armed themselves with our own, Bulgarian arms. Not only with ours, of course.

Ivan Mihajlov: It is more convenient to get arms from us instead of the Soviet Union. But we do not make declarations on these issues.

T. Zhivkov: We would not say anything on this matter, and it's not necessary to talk.

So, we find it difficult to see what comprises our “revisionist views.”

But we are worried about what’s going on now in the international communist movement, in the socialist countries. We discussed these issues in the Politburo and in the Central Committee after the Moscow meeting and we came to the conclusion that the existing discord cannot be overcome. Yet we do have to make efforts.

Mitko Grigorov: Especially to weaken the Chinese influence on the other parties.

T. Zhivkov: Of course, the international communist movement will not yield to and take the Chinese stand, this is impossible, but there are and will be difficulties. The international communist movement, which has a rich experience and tradition, is diverse and cannot be characterized by a single political platform as the Chinese leaders propose. What is most important and most dangerous in our opinion is not the ideological dispute, although it is of great importance. But our government relations are complicated. Secondly, we make it possible for the American imperialists to become even more aggressive.

[...]

Now, after being granted this loan we can say we are relying on our own efforts and abuse the Soviet Union for interfering in our internal affairs. /laughter/. The Soviet Union is interfering in our internal affairs because we are going to build more than 100 big plants with its help during this five-year period!

We regard our relations with Cuba as improving. But, how shall I put it, sometimes our relations with Cuba are dependent on certain bodies which frequently view things from their own viewpoint, have a quite constricted outlook. So that probably at a summit meeting in the future we will be able to clarify some issues and to better determine the directions and rate of our cooperation.

Excuse me for having spoken too much. But I had not made any preliminary notes.

Raul Castro: You took up the whole time, so that none is left for me now.

T. Zhivkov: We seemed to be quite impudent. We invited you, yet we did the talking, not even listening to all that you had to say.

Raul Castro: In this respect you resemble the Cubans quite a lot.

T. Zhivkov: If comrade Fidel Castro can deliver a speech for 4 to 5 hours, why couldn’t I make a two-hour speech? (Laughter.)

In the past our party used to have great public speakers, traditions in public speaking. We had public speakers that would start speaking in the morning and continue in the afternoon. There is a comrade of ours who is still alive but is ill now. Once he started speaking, fainted, was poured with water, raised to his feet and continued speaking. (Laughter.)

Raul Castro: The Soviet comrades are much more patient than the Chinese who were famous for their patience. This fact becomes evident exactly in these disputes in the international communist movement. Hence we can say that our relations with the Soviet Union are the same as are our relations with the other socialist countries.

Many times we have declared in public that we agree to argue with the Americans, of course, on the basis of a preliminary program, on an equal footing. If they want to establish diplomatic and trade relations we also agree on the same basis—on that of total equality. The Americans say that they will be closer to us if we break our ties with the socialist community countries. Our response is that they would have to wait for 10 thousand years and moreover we have no intentions of making deviations from the road we’re following. It is clear that this will take up a lot of time, since the Americans find it difficult to recognize the first socialist country in America.

Regarding the problems of the international communist movement. We are very concerned about North Vietnam. We are convinced that if there were no differences and splitting in the socialist community, these facts wouldn’t exist. This means killing a small people like the Vietnamese. The aggressiveness of the Americans is increasing, that’s what concerns us. This is a precedent and we are worried about the way the problem will be solved. My personal opinion is, since I haven’t taken my party’s opinion, that the problem cannot be solved by wanting South Vietnam to fight against imperialism. This is my personal opinion and I think that if our people and party are in a similar situation, if the outcome is such that South Vietnam should stop the struggle so that it won’t be attacked, we would rather be attacked but let South Vietnam continue the struggle. I say that because we have to see ourselves in Vietnam’s mirror, because the outcome depends on the way the problem will be solved.

We welcome the agreement on the partial test-ban of nuclear weapons, yet we did not sign the agreement because we do not approve of not importing nuclear weapons into Latin America. We are already victims of such attacks from all American military bases, and there is a base²⁵ in which there

might be nuclear weapons. There probably are such weapons there because there are nuclear submarines there. That is why we cannot sign such an agreement while there are such weapons on our territory. Yet we welcome all these efforts.

On the other hand the war in Latin America continues, in Venezuela, Columbia, Guatemala, and Honduras. There are greater or lesser difficulties in some places, the extent to which the communists participate in some places is different, yet the struggle continues. Our party thinks that there are conditions for a revolutionary, armed struggle; there is a revolutionary situation in Latin America—in Mexico, Costa Rica, Uruguay, Chile and all other Latin American countries. We think that the only way to seize power is via armed struggle, the massive struggle of the people, the way things are now in Venezuela. That is how we think, but every party has the right to solve these problems. We don't think and do not delude ourselves that the bourgeoisie with the imperialists together in these countries will easily give up power. The bourgeoisie and the imperialists together did their best to win the elections. It is evident that if the Unidad Popular had won, there would have been a coup d'état. Nevertheless we considered the line of struggle in these four countries, including Chile, appropriate.

For instance, [Brazilian communist party leader Luis Carlos] Prestes assured us that a *coup d'état* was impossible in Brazil. We told him we thought the same, we even told him that a coup d'état was possible in the USA, although they have other methods there—they kill one president and put another one in his place. Less than six months had passed after we talked with Prestes before a coup d'état took place. This surprised the party, it was not prepared for the coup d'état. And Venezuela is the most important party now in Latin America. Imperialism cannot do the same things in Venezuela as it did in Vietnam – send some people there and rely on puppet governments. Because Venezuela's present army would not like to fight against the partisans, as was the case in Cuba. Because what happens then is the following—when a military unit is sent there to fight, the general remains in a given town while the soldiers are in another, so that nobody reaches the partisans in order to fight them. It is clear that the National Liberation Front had no support among the peasants in the beginning.

Let us recall the fact that after the ex-dictator [Romulo] Betancourt yielded power, he won the elections relying on the peasants and lost the elections because the peasants, living in hope of an agricultural reform, promised by Betancourt, did not support him. Moreover, the persecution and repressions of the government against the peasants makes them unite with the partisan movement. This is the way things were in our country. When we arrived in Cuba there were not objec-

tive conditions for us to win the peasants, it was not until one year had passed that such conditions were created—when the struggle became more acute.

The authority of the party of Venezuela in Latin America is great. Although some accused it of adventurism not long ago, it is the party that has the greatest support. It has penetrated most deeply into Venezuela's armed forces; it has full control of the students. And thus the struggle in Venezuela is developing.

We provide the appropriate assistance with regard to our own situation. There are about 40,000 people in the Venezuelan army. Their number is insufficient even to guard the petroleum shelves in Venezuela. It is an enormous country—800,000 km, one of the richest countries in Latin America. Recently, petroleum fields have been discovered there that can satisfy the world's needs for 40 years. They even have a well-developed heavy industry, metallurgy, plants that were created in [former Venezuelan President Gen. Marcos Perez] Jimenez's time so that he could plunder [the country's wealth]. Now these plants are closed, they do not function. Now they have a great capacity for energy production. Yet nothing is used. There are mountains of ore, for which there is no need to go underground, they only have to be loaded. Every ton of ore that the imperialists take from Venezuela is bought at a very low price.

The imperialists, the monopolists, have a plan to use these riches. They have an Alliance for Progress in Latin America and send their overstock there. This practically means that there would be less bread today, more tomorrow. Even only what the Americans plunder in Venezuela is enough to cover what they give to the Alliance for Progress.

We also have an organization to help other countries, of which comrade T. Zhivkov already spoke, but having in mind your experience, we have made some mistakes in this respect. We prepared partisans and the enemy knew that. We have a full right to do this but they are preparing counter-revolutionaries against us in all these countries. To tell you in private, we sent a huge quantity of weapons at a convenient time to Venezuela, but it was not from the socialist countries. These were weapons left in Cuba and we sent them into Venezuela. The weapons were American-made. Hence they were left at the wrong address. We have hundreds of tons of weapons that we have thus leased.

The struggle in Venezuela is becoming more acute. We have not discussed this issue in the party, but having in mind the latest events in Vietnam, I think that when the struggle in Venezuela becomes more acute, the same thing that is happening now in North Vietnam, will happen to us. Undoubtedly, if that happens, we will not want the Venezuelans to stop the fight but on the contrary, to intensify

the struggle. That is why we are even more interested in the way the problem is solved in South and North Vietnam.

Under the chairmanship of comrade Fidel, the main General Staff leaders, some members of our party's secretariat started checking our defense plans, our defense strategy somewhere around the middle of last year. We started analyzing the extent to which an enemy attack was possible and reached the following conclusion.

Regarding the counter-revolution—the internal one and the one that has been exported from Cuba. In spite of the existence of 1,000 dens where it could be prepared, a counter-revolution would be crushed, since our country is an island and it would be difficult for the contra revolutionaries to come to our country without the interference and support of the USA. The pirate attacks against us will continue. With our security organs we have been fighting with greater success. Attacks, such as the ones at Playa Giron [Bay of Pigs] are possible. We have an army that can repulse such an attack or a number of simultaneous attacks with the help of the Soviet Union, of Bulgaria and some other socialist countries. We must admit that when the attack at Playa Giron took place [in April 1961], the tanks had just arrived and we didn't have people to use them. There were tankers and artillerymen, who learned how to maneuver with these weapons on their way from Havana to Playa Giron. We relied on the experienced leadership of comrade Fidel. We won there because of the heroism of the workers and peasants who fought there. The fact that many lives were lost there was not in vain. We took a whole brigade as captives but we suffered heavy losses. Attacks such as those at Playa Giron are not possible now. An American invasion against us I think is possible but very difficult.

These days some imperialist circles speak of repressions, similar to those in North Vietnam, without being afraid of the outbreak of another war. We came to the conclusion that this is the most dangerous thing for us and began to take measures in our plans, each of which costs 30 million pesos. We had to stop construction of many sites, roads etc. We possess an enormous quantity of anti-aircraft missiles whose maximum altitude is above 1,000 meters. The latter fact is difficulty for us, since we are a small, long island. Their planes fly at low altitudes, take off from their different military bases, including Miami—shoot and leave. Some planes throw flammable materials, which can cover the plantations and on the next day everything will be burning. They have missiles. We had to make a big purchase for such an anti-aircraft defense [system]. The Soviet Union gave us a large quantity of anti-aircraft missiles, but we have to add three batteries to each group of such missiles, so that the anti-aircraft defense can act. We wanted to purchase anti-aircraft

artillery from Czechoslovakia, but we couldn't. However, we managed to buy some quantities from China. A few months later exactly this incident in the gulf took place after which we started preparing our defense more intensely.²⁶ You already know how the process developed, under what pretext they bombarded us and they may reach the canals.²⁷ This can happen in Cuba at any moment, we expect it to happen. We should be very patient in this respect. From the October [1962] crisis onwards, till February this year, there have been about 5,000 provocations of various nature against Cuba,.

For instance, one or two airplanes are circulating above Cuba's territory. We cannot take them down due to various considerations; they fly at a low altitude. The Yankees think they have the right to inspect our country. This is a consequence of Khrushchev's declaration that each territory should be inspected but we cannot allow our country to be inspected. The Yankees say they have the right to fly over our country in order to check whether it has nuclear weapons. You can imagine what this could mean to a country's defense—to have airplanes fly over the country and inspect it. Of course, we could take these airplanes down and thus not allow them to make such inspections, but Khrushchev has told us not to do it, otherwise he wouldn't give us anti-aircraft defense. We have to reach an agreement as to whether or not we can take down these airplanes. This should happen at an appropriate moment.

Hundreds of provocations take place monthly. Lately they have taken the form of people hiding near the border at the Guantanamo Base and shooting at our border guards. Two of our people have been wounded and one has been killed. We withdrew our border posts 500 meters to the inside of the country; we built defense fortifications, so that the Americans would not be able to see the border soldiers. Yet they have recently started very dangerous provocations: they pass the border and travel in our territory. For instance they enter our territory through customs and set it on fire, while the posts are 500 meters to the inside of the country.

We have thousands of provocations of this sort and every time when we condemn these provocations, the Yankees say that we have instigated them.

The Yankees pass near the border and approach our posts at other places as well. Earlier only two or three people did that sort of thing while now it is done by 15 to 20 people. Those provocations have become more frequent after the events that took place in Vietnam. We do not take measures to respond to their firing. The time will come when the Yankee entering our territory will approach our posts. Our country is small, narrow and if we continue to retreat we will have to jump in the ocean. It is evident that our

patience has its limits. We know we have the duty to avoid complications in the international relations, we all know what these provocations mean. At some places we let trained dogs kill people.

All the points I've made so far make us think lately that what has happened in Vietnam could happen to us as well, which disturbs us a lot. We will have the necessary patience, we will do our best to avoid increasing the international tension, but it is clear that everything has its limits.

You probably know what it means to build socialism in a small, poor country suffering so-called repressive measures. This is the case with North Vietnam that is bombarded in different places, under different pretexts. I informed the Bulgarian Communist Party about these things.

[...]

At present the situation in the country is normal although we do not underestimate the enemy's activity. Our coastline is 2,500 meters long. People can reach our coast even with submarines. There are 250,000 people in Cuba who do not agree with the revolution's principles. They have been given the opportunity to leave the country. These are usually parasites, ex-bourgeois.

We have had success in agriculture in several respects. There is no longer food rationing. We are already experienced; we do not make as many mistakes. Thousands of agricultural specialists are being qualified. We consider the prospects to be very good in the latter respect.

Regarding the state of the international communist movement and relations with other parties.

We completely share T. Zhivkov's opinion regarding Yugoslavia. We have some experience and we are willing to gain more. At the end of 1959 when we knew that the enemy was preparing an attack against Cuba we wanted to buy weapons from wherever possible. We were still not buying weapons from the socialist countries. We bought rifles from Belgium, but the imperialist circles interfered and the supply failed. We started buying from Italy. The imperialist forces interfered and the purchase was stopped. We sent a delegation to Yugoslavia to buy mine-throwers. The people there said: this is a small deal for you, while as far as we are concerned, it will cause us great problems with the Americans, so that the deal is not worthwhile. Moreover, there were some attacks issued in their theoretical journals, but we hadn't interfered in them since we had thought that it would not be to the benefit of the communist movement.

Regarding Romania. We share the opinion that was expressed here. We have just withdrawn all our students that were in Romania. That was not only due to the fact

that they had been attacked and beaten at a demonstration in front of the US Embassy. I think that the demonstration was even not permitted by the authorities. That was also not due to the fact that the students had been refused the hall that they had been traditionally given to celebrate their anniversary. That was a political measure undertaken by our party, taking into consideration exactly the Romanian Party's political opinions. We would not like our students, although they are a small group, to be brought up in the spirit of the Romanian Party.

Our delegation, which was in Moscow on 7 November [1964], met with the Romanian delegation led by comrade...

²⁸ When the differences and discord in the international communist movement were discussed, the Romanian delegation took a stand as if they were the founders of Marxism-Leninism, that is of the extreme left wing. Comrade... [name missing in record—trans.] posed the question that these problems should be solved and the Soviet Union should be respected. They said it was a matter of prestige, of ideological prestige. On the one hand, they lend a hand to the Chinese, by severely attacking the Soviet Union and having ever closer their relations with the Western capitalist world. The Chinese' contradictions become obvious—they accuse all parties that do not think the same way as they do of revisionist views. But the Romanians have not told us anything in this respect yet.

Recently [, in November 1964,] there was a meeting of the Latin American communist parties in Havana. We discussed our differences, closed ranks. This meeting was very good in all its aspects. A 9-member delegation that insisted on stopping the disputes in public was sent to Moscow. Our comrades from the CPSU understood these issues well and agreed with us. The delegation then went to China with the same aims. The situation there was ironic from the very beginning to the end when the issues were discussed. Rather, [the Cuban delegation heard] criticism against all parties and hysteric fits by Mao Zedong who said: I am a partisan, a fighter. Ironic phrases regarding the other parties were abundant. There were many cases of tactlessness and insults. For instance, regarding the party of Uruguay he asked: What is the number of your population? Uruguay has 2.5 million inhabitants, but comrade /Rodney/ Arismendi said: we are 1.5 million. Mao Zedong said: You can join some other people. You do not deserve to live on your own. He said the public discussion²⁹ had to continue. We insist on stopping the public discussion. Although there was one delegate from our country among these 9 delegates, some things against our party were also said. The mission completely failed.

Later on, we sent a 3-member delegation on behalf of our party to discuss these issues again. They supported their own stand, we—ours.

Regarding trade relations—we have good relations with them [the Chinese] and they are kept in a good state. We needed anti-aircraft defense and some other things, which we wanted to buy from them. They gave them to us for nothing. Afterwards, the Albanian press published an elaborate article, attacking all Latin American parties as revisionist.

We have had personal contacts with the Chinese party; we have had talks regarding the problem of the international communist movement. We are convinced that they would not agree to a conference; they disagree with unity in general. We have observed other things and opinions in our relations with them. It is clear we can draw our conclusions on these issues. We were not able to do that earlier. The direction that the discussion itself had taken, the insults etc. that appeared everywhere, the untruthfulness of many facts. All this made it seem to us, on the one hand, that everything is really that way, on the other—that not everything is the way it seems to be. On this basis we were not able to make a concrete, correct analysis. Now we are witnessing the attack against the American Embassy [in Moscow], the aim of which is to challenge the Soviet Union. Many Cuban students participated in this demonstration. I have direct information from them. Chinese and some Vietnamese students have invited Cuban students to sign a letter—a protest and to send it to the Soviet government. We know of all the incidents that happened in the Soviet hospitals. We saw how the Beijing newspapers, radio etc. started spreading these things, the way each of them grasped them. We have been informed about the obstacles created by the Chinese to the quick arrival of Soviet airplanes with arms for Vietnam. The Soviet comrades never deal with this question, to go and spread propaganda [disinformation] in the way the Chinese do. Fidel Castro's last speech mentioned something about that. If they would like to argue with us on these issues, we will argue with them as many times as they want.

On the other hand, we see that the new leaders of the CPSU behave more predictably. They do their best to overcome these difficulties. It is clear that they are no longer victims of Khrushchev's typical earlier ferocity. There are a lot more facts such as these that contribute to bringing us closer, to strengthening our relations. We have always told the Soviet comrades that there are certain differences between us and that we cannot argue on these issues. But Cuba will never take a stand against the Soviet Union. The Soviet party has never exerted pressure on us, with the exception of one of Khrushchev's last letters in which there is only a hint that our party should act in a specific way. But this is only a hint. We wanted to clarify our positions on these issues. We sent a delegation, led by comrade [Osvaldo] Dorticos, but it arrived [in Moscow in mid-October 1964] on the day after Khrushchev

was ousted. Since then our relations have been improving. We are extremely grateful to the Soviet party, to the Soviet government. When we do not agree on some issues, we go to settle the issue with them. Our people know that quite well. It knows that the revolution may continue thanks to the help of the socialist countries, but above all thanks to the support or help of the Soviet Union. We must admit that they were extremely patient with us.

[...]

Todor Zhivkov: The information you gave us is very interesting to us, even some of the problems you posed are worth thinking over. But we must emphasize that our views on international problems, on the problems relating to the unity of the socialist countries, of the international communist movement coincide.

As far as the situation in your country is concerned, we are aware of the difficulties, the difficult conditions in which you work and that is why I will once again take advantage of this meeting to declare that we will be on your side now, tomorrow, under any conditions and circumstances, even if a war becomes necessary, if a defense of Cuba is necessary. This is not a disputable question in our country, this is a firm stand.

Raul Castro: We already know of your decision.

Todor Zhivkov: You should never doubt that we will always be together with you, even under the most difficult circumstances. We do not doubt the fact that it is hard for you not to yield to these provocations. Even if these provocations were not present, it would have been surprising if they weren't there.

[Source: *Central State Archives, Sofia, Fond 378-B, Record 1, File 140; translated by Assistant Professor Kalina Bratanova; edited by Dr. Jordan Baev.*]



III. Czechoslovak Documents

Documents on Czechoslovak Military Delegation Trip to Cuba, 30 March-9 April 1965

Presidium of the CPCZ Central Committee

5490/7

Sequence No.: 20

On the issue:

Information about a friendly visit of the Czechoslovak military delegation in Cua

From 30.3-9.4 [30 March - 9 April] 1965, a delegation of the Czechoslovak Peoples Army visited Cuba; the delegation submits a brief report about the stay and talks with leading representatives of Cuba.

Submitting: C. B. Lomsky

16th April 1965

Number of sheets: 14



This material must be returned to the office of the 1st Secretary of the CPCZ CC within one month.

Adopted resolution

Attention of: c. B. Lomsky



ATTACHMENT I

Attachment I

Draft of the resolution

Attachment III

The report

Attachment IV

1. Report of important conversations in connection with the visit
2. Report of talks with the Deputy Chairman of the Cuban Revolutionary Government and Minister of the

Revolutionary Armed Forces Raul Castro

File No. P 5490/7

R e s o l u t i o n

on the issue

Information about a friendly visit of the Czechoslovak military delegation in Cuba

(c. B. Lomsky)

R e s o l v e d :

The CPCZ CC Presidium accepts the information of c. Lomsky about the friendly visit of the Cs. military delegation in Cuba.



5490/7

ATTACHMENT III

Report about the friendly visit of the Cs. military delegation in Cuba

Based on the CPCZ CC Presidium's resolution from 10th November 1964, a Cs. military delegation, headed by Minister of National Defense, Army General Bohumir Lomsky, visited Cuba after several invitations from the Deputy Chairman of the Government and Minister of Revolutionary Armed Forces, Commander Raul Castro Ruz.

The visit occurred at the time of heightened acts of aggression of the USA against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and thus it was regarded as highly important in Cuba. It contributed to strengthening of Cs.-Cuban friendship and to strengthening of the friendship in arms of our armies.

The time of the visit can be divided into two stages:

I. Stage – before arrival of Raul Castro from a trip in Europe and a visit of the Cuban provinces outside of Havana.

II. Stage – after return of Raul Castro, and the stay in Havana

The delegation held a number of cordial and unofficial meetings with troops of the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces and with workers. The delegation met with: representatives of the Joint Staff and the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces [MINFAR], commanders of the Eastern Army in the Oriente province, sailors, members of the 78th Division,

pilots at the air force bases at Holquin and St. Antonio de los Banos, and with members of a military vocational school of armed forces.

During the visit, the delegation met with number of Soviet [military] advisors and with the main advisor General Colonel Shkadov.

A general draft is in effect in Cuban armed forces for the first year. The Army is the only highly organized force in Cuba – it is underpinning the Government. A tendency of its growth is apparent; discipline, organization, and order are improving. There is a great effort to master the new equipment. Armaments – Soviet and Czechoslovak.

Apparent shortage of educated cadres. They have 1,800 in training in the USSR. Officers trained in the CSSR hold important positions of regiment commanders, lieutenants and higher. They like to remember the CSSR. Many commanders yearn for training in the CSSR.

The delegation met workers in

- Cardenas – in a sugar refinery, in a shipyard,
- Havana - in a tobacco factory,
- St. Cruz del Norte – in a sugar plant with sugar cane cutters, as well as in
- Playa Giron – with sailor youth.

The delegation visited the party leadership in the Oriente province.

Revolutionary enthusiasm and a resolve to fulfill the key goals:

- harvest of 5 million tons of sugar by May 5, 1965;
- master 6th grade education (2 hours a day);

set by the government at the time is apparent everywhere. The main goals will be achieved but other results will be less remarkable.

Talks were held during the visit with:

- a) First Deputy of the Revolutionary Armed Forces, Juan Almeida,
- b) President Osvaldo Dorticos, in presence of Raul Castro,
- c) Chairman of the Cuban Revolutionary Government, Fidel Castro (in the Ambassador's residence).

Ambassador's report of the talks – see Attachment IV/1.

Before the departure, Fidel Castro authorized an important discussion with Raul Castro and the Joint Chief of Staff Sergio de Valle. C. Langer's report – see the Attachment IV/2. The friendly visit accomplished its objective.

According to the CPCZ CC resolution of November 10, 1964, Raul Castro with a delegation of the Revolutionary

Armed Forces was invited to visit the CSSR at the time of the III. National Spartakiade. He preliminarily agreed.



ATTACHMENT IV

Record of important talks in connection with the visit of c. B. Lomsky

A meeting of the Cs. delegation's leader was initially affected by Raul Castro's absence, since until his arrival, the talks remained at the level of the 1st Deputy Juan Almeida who takes over the function of Minister of Armed Forces in the absence of Raul Castro. It was explained that Raul Castro was still absent because he took part, as Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of the LSSR [United Party of the (Cuban) Socialist Revolution; PURSC], in the Moscow consultations of communist parties, and then visited a number of socialist countries. Following his return to Havana, a number of significant acts took place as a culmination of the Cs. military delegation's visit (handover of a battle standard to the military school of Antonio Maceo, a visit with the President of the Republic [Osvaldo Dorticos], a reception in the Ambassador's residence in presence of Fidel and Raul Castro and of other representatives of the LSSR and CRG [Cuban Revolutionary Government]).

During these days, talks took place that can be summarized as follows:

1. A visit at the Joint Staff in the absence of Raul Castro

During the visit, impressions of the delegation's stay were shared, which was followed by a friendly conversation with members of the Minfar [Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces] Joint Staff, during which opinions on military questions, armaments, and Cs. armament shipments were informally exchanged. 1st Deputy J. Almeida mentioned that just before arrival of the delegation, the CRG submitted to the Ambassador a request for a shipment of 100 pieces of 30 mm anti-aircraft cannons. The Cuban side emphasized that the current situation warranted strengthening of the anti-aircraft defense. There was no concrete discussion about conditions for delivery of these weapons, especially payment conditions. At a dinner with the Joint Staff, where R. Castro was not present, C. Langer asked Almeida about delivery conditions but the Cuban side did not specify these conditions, and did not do so later either. The delegation did not revisit the issue. However, it obviously is an important question that

will have to be answered, so that we could consider shipment of these weapons under the most favorable conditions within our capabilities. Since the first request in September 1964, this issue is still unresolved and will require close attention.

2. The delegation's visit with the Republic's President Dorticos

The conversation was very cordial, even though rather official. C. Minister Lomsky informed the Republic's President on behalf of the delegation about the stay of the delegation and its impressions and findings. He passed on greetings of the leading representatives of the CPCZ and the Government, above all of c. [Antonin] Novotny, which greetings c. Dorticos returned. Information mutually interesting to both parties was shared. It was information regarding the economic development of the both countries, and various current political issues in connection with the USA aggression in Vietnam, West German militarism and its efforts to acquire nuclear weapons, and the Moscow consultations of communist parties and their results. Both sides emphasized the need for unity of the ICM [International Communist Movement] and joint actions of socialist countries against imperialism and aggression. The Cuban side pointed out that the situation in Vietnam creates a precedent that could be repeated in other places, namely in Cuba, if the aggressors are not decisively condemned by countries of the socialist camp, which is partially hampered by a disarray among countries of the socialist camp, especially the current policy of the Chinese leadership. The cordial manner of the talks, in which Raul Castro took part as well, reflects a very friendly atmosphere formed around the visit of c. Minister Lomsky and the military delegation.

3. A visit of Fidel Castro at a reception in the Ambassador's residence

The most important meeting was that of Fidel Castro at the Ambassador's residence. This visit is so important because the Cuban Prime Minister did not visit a residence of any titular of socialist camp countries under similar conditions for the last 2 - 3 years, with the exception of the 15th anniversary of the PRC [in October 1964—ed.]. The visit in the Cs. Ambassador's residence on the occasion of a reception in recognition of the military delegation also underscores the situation that is developing after Cuba's participation at the Moscow meeting of communist parties.

C. Minister Lomsky had a very cordial conversation with Fidel Castro during the visit. He used this opportunity to criticize the approach of the PRR [People's Republic of Romania] who is entirely neutral on the issue of relations with Beijing and whose policy towards the USSR, socialist camp countries,

and western countries is sure to raise suspicion. The PRR has gone as far as Yugoslavia, if not farther - and [he said] that he "didn't like Yugoslavia." He emphasized that Cuba's strong friendship with socialist camp countries did not keep her from having her own policy, appropriate for the objective conditions. Regarding this, he pointed out the current development in Latin America where inflation and economic difficulties are increasing exponentially and making the situation much worse. It turns out that the policy of the IMF [International Monetary Fund] and the Alliance for Progress is a complete failure. That destabilizes the situation in Central America and in majority of other LA [Latin American] countries where revolutionary struggle is again intensifying. National liberation and revolutionary forces made serious mistakes in Brazil (especially its CP), also [Cheddi] Jagan in British Guyana, and others. The big problem is that revolutionary movements advertise ahead their agenda and objectives, instead of confronting imperialism with hard reality. He pointed out the need for the correct tactics. Algiers can serve as an example because it has not yet nationalized French oil concessions. It is all right to continue with such a policy as long as consolidation of the revolution requires it, which is the first priority. He has exchanged opinions about it with [Algerian President] Ben Bella. The group around [Leonel] Brizzola, who unlike [former Brazilian President João] Goulart always showed revolutionary decisiveness, is considered an authentic revolutionary force in Brazil.³⁰ The last guerilla activity in Brazil is his accomplishment, with which Cuba is helping him within its limited capabilities. It appears that the development in Chile could also lead either to adoption of truly revolutionary reforms or to a new, even deeper crisis.³¹

Imperialism has considerable difficulty in Africa with national liberation movements in Congo, Angola, Mozambique, etc. The fight intensifies with the help of Algeria and the UAR [Egypt]. Cuba also may provide some assistance - for example, it intends to be active in Congo due to the fact that the [Cuban] population has experience and is ethnically tied to Africa. The fight will be long in Africa, and Congo in particular appears to be a key position, which has to be conquered, albeit in a long and exhausting struggle. Impressions and experiences of the Cs. delegation from the stay in Cuba were shared in the conversation. Economic issues were discussed in detail: sugar harvest, questions regarding the JSSR [unknown Czech acronym, possibly Yugoslavia—trans.] and unity of the ICM [International Communist Movement], and other topical international issues. In the spirit of his last speeches at the University of Havana from the 10th March and his speech in commemoration of 13th March, Fidel Castro sharply criticized Beijing's approach to the issue of the ICM and help to Vietnam. Regarding the last speech

of [US President Lyndon] Johnson, he believes that the USA probably does not want a direct conflict, especially a nuclear one with the USSR, but seeks to establish negotiating positions in order to save its prestige and position in Vietnam and Southeast Asia.³² Beijing's approach prevents effective assistance of the socialist camp countries, and also blocks the possibility of negotiations. Beijing's conduct is unprincipled and inconsistent. Its objective is to damage the Soviet prestige and to promote at all costs its own selfish interests. He stressed that Beijing undermines the unity of the ICM only to assume a leading role. It is willing to sacrifice everything to this goal - even Cuba, which it does not care about and whose very existence it is also willing to sacrifice in its efforts to achieve hegemony in the ICM. However, he [Fidel Castro] believes that even in the PRC, there are reasonable people who disagree with this narrow nationalistic policy, whose main protagonist is Mao Zedong. He believes that after his departure, these factions will be more able to gain prominence.

On the other hand, he emphasized the wide and selfless assistance provided by the USSR, without which the revolutionary and socialist Cuba could not even exist. He mentioned that the USSR has and always had a very friendly attitude towards and understanding for the situation and needs of the Cuban revolution. Relations and cooperation with the USSR are continuously improving and developing. After the departure of Khrushchev, the new Soviet leadership shows full interest in the development of the situation in Cuba and its economic and other needs. It appears to him that the current political leadership of the USSR, particularly [Leonid I.] Brezhnev and [Alexei N.] Kosygin, applies a sophisticated and scientific approach to tackling important issues. Their approach to issues such as the unity of the ICM is much more constructive. He stressed that once 4 million tons [of sugar—ed.] was harvested in the last days, there was a real possibility of reaching 6 million tons harvested this year. Cuba will preferentially develop agricultural production. The value of other production beside sugar may exceed the value of today's sugar production by 1970. They will particularly focus on increasing citrus and livestock production for export.

We stated in the conversation that we shared their opinion, particularly regarding the need for unity of the ICM and for help to Vietnam. Last declarations of the Cs. government and positions of the CPCZ CC on the results of the Moscow consultations of communist parties were mentioned, as well as the issue of the upcoming talks about a long-term agreement on further economic cooperation between the CSSR and Cuba. Fidel Castro expressed interest in these issues and he expects that negotiations can be successfully concluded as soon as possible. Finally he asked that greetings be passed on

his behalf to c. Novotny, Cs. government, CPCZ and to all Cs. people.

In a conversation with the Soviet ambassador, after Fidel Castro left, we could state with confidence that we shared high appreciation of the importance of Fidel's visit. [Aleksandr] Alexeyev also praised the current conduct and policy of the Prime Minister, which are gaining a considerable prestige in Latin America and elsewhere for the revolutionary leadership. He said that he never had serious doubts about Fidel Castro's opinion on the issue of ICM unity and the Chinese position. This situation now became even more clear. While Raul Castro has always openly held the Marxist-Leninist line, Fidel, on the other hand, has a profound view of the situation and main problems, which allows him to find solutions appropriate to the situation, conditions, and status of Cuba whose political and economic consolidation are still undergoing significant progress.



54907/7
IV/2

Record of Talks with the Deputy Chairman of the Cuban Revolutionary Government and Minister of the Revolutionary Armed Forces, Commander Raul Castro, 9 April 1965

On 9 April 1965, Cde. Raul Castro asked for a meeting with the Minister of National Defense of the CSSR Cde. Army General B[ohumir]. Lomsky, and with the Joint Director of the Main Technical Administration of the Ministry of Foreign Trade Cde. eng. F. Langer. The talks took place in the villa where the Cs. delegation was staying, in the morning from 8:50 till 9:45.

Present were:

for the Cuban side: Cde. Com. Raul Castro,
Deputy Chairman of the Government and Minister of the Revolutionary Armed Forces
Cde. Sergio de Valle, Joint Chief of Staff

Cde. Manolo Lopez, Chief of the Department for Procurement of Armaments for the Cuban Peoples Army;

for the Cs. side:

Cde. Army General B. Lomsky, Minister of National Defense
Cde. Pěolka, Cs. Ambassador in Havana
Cde. F. Langer, Joint Director of the Main Technical

Administration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA-MTA)

Cde. Colonel Kriz, Cs. Military Attaché in Havana

Minister Raul Castro opened the talks with an extensive presentation about the military situation in Cuba. He informed Cde. Lomsky that in the beginning of 1964, a thorough analysis of the military situation in Cuba was done under the leadership of the CRG [Cuban Revolutionary Government] Chairman Fidel Castro. A conclusion followed from this analysis that internal danger has been eliminated, and contra-revolutionary and anti-government groups operating directly in Cuba have been broken up and practically destroyed. The analysis at the same time stated that external danger still fully persisted, that is, the danger from the USA and their minions, the danger of direct aggression.

At that, Cuba is not a member of the Warsaw Pact and does not have a bilateral treaty with the USSR either; there is only a "moral obligation of the USSR to help Cuba in case of an attack," which follows from several declarations of the USSR government about this matter. Another guarantee is Kennedy's statement that Cuba will not be attacked. However, the value of such a guarantee from the USA is undermined by the fact that Kennedy is dead and some members of the USA government reject such a commitment, and beside that, the USA is known to willfully violate even written promises, let alone the oral ones.

Based on the above analysis, they evaluated the strategy of the country's defense, revised operational plans, and carried out number of changes. They decided to concentrate forces into individual strategic locations instead of dispersing them throughout the whole territory, as was done before. Considering that they are within reach of not only tactical but also intercept air forces of the USA, they decided to station critical equipment in underground bunkers. The cost of this plan is about 30 million pesos. A number of civilian construction projects, some of them under construction, had to be stopped in order to free the necessary resources. Due to Cuba's dependency on imports of fuel for its air force and military equipment, they are also building, for instance, large underground storage facilities for fuel.

They have built quite good anti-aircraft defense. Beside modern equipped air force, they also have surface-to-air missiles; however, these weapons are effective especially from 1000 meters up.

Since the USA focused on airspace violations and attacks from lower altitudes, their anti-aircraft defense was augmented last year against low-flying aircraft. At the same time, measures to defend the missile batteries against low-flying aircraft had to be taken.

All these measures are very, very expensive. They are taking them while fully aware that even their completion cannot guarantee Cuba a permanent capability to resist, to repel permanently any aggression from the USA or their minions. However, they want any aggressors to find out that Cuba is a tough one to beat.

At the same time, they are even now getting ready for a possible insurgency on the territory that the enemy would conquer (armories, organizations). According to their opinion, events in the DRV [Democratic of Vietnam, i.e., North Vietnam] fully confirm that this approach is correct. They think that things can start happening in Cuba in a similar way. First an attack under some pretense, and the USA is a master in finding pretenses, then many more attacks without any reason.

That's why, after the first events in Vietnam, they were speeding up all projects – that was also the reason why they in 1964 asked the USSR and the CSSR for anti-aircraft weapons, and later they turned to the PRC with a similar request.

They originally approached the CSSR with a plea for a shipment of 200 pieces of 30 mm double cannons. C. Raul Castro then said they were offered 100 pieces of refurbished cannons against an immediate payment in Cuban goods, and he also noted that the first shipment of cannons in this quality was for a discounted price. They are, of course, aware that at the time, a payment in convertible currencies was expected. Therefore, they could not accept the offer at that time and were content with anti-aircraft cannons from the USSR and the PRC. The current situation, however (especially the situation in the DRV), is forcing them to ask for 30 mm cannons again. A review revealed that they would need 100 pieces of these weapons. However, they don't want them for free; they would not want and even consider it right that the CSSR should wait 15 years for a repayment.

C. Castro said they were aware that they were very much in debt to us because thanks to our kindness, payments in convertible currencies were changed to payments in Cuban goods. He said he was ashamed that they were not able to fulfill their obligations better. The above-mentioned shipments, including ammunition and priced the same as the first shipments, would cost about 6 million pesos, and they could start making payments from 1966 by 1 million pesos a year in goods.

In his response, Cde. Lomsky assured Cde. Raul Castro that he would pass the submitted request to the Cs. Government, and explained that we shared like brothers with the Cuban army even the first shipments of these cannons, and if the now requested cannons are delivered, the Cuban army will have more of them than the Cs. army. That was why we could

not have offered more than 100 pieces; we were taking these from the counts allotted for our own troops; we even had to reduce numbers of these cannons for our own units below the originally planned numbers.

Cde. Lomsky further pointed out that the CSSR was the first to help Cuba with weapons, regardless of possible consequences in relations of many countries with the CSSR. That is, I think, [Cde. Lomsky said,] the strongest evidence that it was a truly selfless help from the CSSR. He also said that, for instance, the requested 30 mm cannons were not delivered to any other country. The weapons considered for delivery to Cuba are practically new and will only have to be checked, not refurbished. However, it is more complicated with ammunition, which is not available and will have to be manufactured, which will require purchasing raw materials.

However, we fully understand the requests of the Cuban Revolutionary Government, and will pass them to the Cs. Government, along with a full explanation.

On Cde. Minister Castro's remark that the refurbished cannons were sold at a discount in the past, Cde. Langer explained that this time, a delivery of practically new cannons is being considered, as Cde. Lomsky mentioned, that were only checked before shipment. These are, therefore, weapons in the same quality as those that were sold for full price before. Of course, if refurbished cannons are delivered, their price would be adjusted accordingly.

Cde. Langer also said that our government at that time did not assess the delivery from the credit point of view. It followed from previous, quite open talks about these questions, which let us assume that should the Cuban side ask for credit, it would also state its repayment capabilities, much like Cde. Raul Castro conveyed the CRG's request today. The original request was assessed like number of other requests in return for immediate repayment, which were negotiated and realized in the past.

As for the future, Cde. Langer conveyed a request that important questions, above all payment conditions, be openly discussed from the very beginning, so that the capabilities of the Cuban side can be considered during talks. That will expedite negotiations and solutions of all problems.

In his response to Cde. Langer, Cde. Castro then talked about other questions, like training of officers, sending study groups to the CSSR to gain experience, which he would not have time to discuss.

C. Minister Lomsky then repeated an invitation for c. Castro and his military delegation to visit the CSSR, and expressed an opinion that the visit should occur as soon as possible, so that other issues regarding development of relations between the armies can be discussed.

Then the whole party left for the airport.

The talks were conducted in open, comradely manner, and ended very cordially.

[Source: Czech National Archive, Prague, CPCz CC collection. Obtained by James Hershberg and translated for CWIHP by Adolf Kotlik.]



Memorandum of Conversation between senior Cuban communist Carlos Rafael Rodriguez and Czechoslovak Communist Party (CPCz) official Vladimir Koucky, Prague, 25 May 1965

05/25/1965

For Information
5781/ 7

Record of a conversation of c. V. Koucky with c. Carlos R. Rodriguez, member of the national leadership of the Unified Party of Socialist Revolution of Cuba.

Carlos Rafael Rodriguez first said he was pleased to be able to talk with comrade Koucky confidentially and to contribute to the elimination of misunderstandings that could possibly arise because the reasons were not explained for Cuba's positions on issues of the international communist movement, and for speeches and statements of some leading Cuban comrades. At that he emphasized that Fidel Castro was happy to accept an invitation for a UPSR delegation to visit Czechoslovakia, because he as well is very much interested in better and more frequent relations of our two parties. He also keenly agreed with c. Koucky's remark that due to extensive economic and state cooperation of our two countries, contact between the parties is insufficient.

He further said that the UPSR strives for better contacts with fraternal parties. In August of last year, a Korean [Workers'] party [KWP] delegation was in Cuba and a delegation of the Italian Communist Party [PCI] is there now. In order to improve relations with fraternal parties and to inform the UPSR leadership better, the apparatus of the UPSR national leadership will be augmented by a Secretariat for International Affairs. The head of this international department will be the current Minister of Construction c. Osmany Cienfuegos, who since student years had sympathized with the youth of the Popular Socialist Party [PSP]. Carlos Rafael

Rodriguez fully trusts Osmany Cienfuegos and will help him in every way. The need to build this department is felt more and more urgently. Absence of such a work group is the reason why leading comrades are poorly informed about important issues of relations among parties and of international politics. In addition, Carlos Rafael believes that establishment of this department will be the next step to implementation of the principle of collective leadership of the UPSR.

Efforts to apply this Leninist principle to the party life began to develop promisingly by late 1961. The case of Anibal Escalante, who was dismissed from the leadership of the UPSR for sectarian methods [in March 1962], was a serious setback. Fidel Castro has since been very suspicious. He is convinced that the Communists are old friends of his, but he also knows that this friendship is not personal but is based on politics. To wit, the investigation of Anibal Escalante's activities revealed that the Unified Socialist Party was developing cooperation with Raul Castro and Ernesto Guevara, without Fidel's knowledge, already in the mountains of Sierra Maestra. This finding greatly strengthened Fidel's distrust.

Around Fidel Castro, there is a group of capable and honest people who are loyal to him uncritically. They are not communists, but "fidelists". Fidel takes a purely personal position on many problems. Non-critical closest personnel and Fidel's popularity sometimes become a negative factor.

Fidel takes sometimes measures, with which, for example, even the organizational secretary of the National UPSR Administration [Emilio] Aragonés disagrees, who is otherwise unconditionally loyal to Fidel. He [Fidel] interferes with the competence of personnel who are responsible for assigned sections. It happened very often for example at the Institute for Agricultural Reform [INRA], whose President was until recently Carlos Rafael [Rodriguez]. Differences and disagreements were thus happening between him and Fidel, which some people were taking advantage of. Carlos Rafael Rodriguez therefore offered his resignation to Fidel three times.

Comrade Koucky commented that the report of Rodriguez leaving the Institute for Agricultural Reform was not immediately clear to us. Carlos Rafael Rodriguez explained the untenable situation in the management of this important office, which was created by Fidel's interventions. He said he believed that Fidel really always wanted to take full control of agriculture. The only obstacle was that he did not want to offend Carlos Rafael. Carlos Rafael combined his last resignation with a suggestion that Fidel himself takes over the management of the Institute for Agricultural Reform, which indeed happened.

To Comrade Koucky's question whether Anibal Escalante remains now in Cuba, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez said that

Anibal Escalante asked for an approval of his return to Cuba. He returned on the occasion of the death of his brother, Cesar Escalante, who was in charge of ideological work within the national leadership of the UPSR. Personally, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez believes that Anibal Escalante should not stay in Cuba. His presence will revive bitterness of many middle party cadres, who were previously members of the Popular Socialist Party, and in connection with criticism of Anibal Escalante were removed along with him. (Carlos Rafael did not mention that Anibal Escalante would be put in a position of responsibility in the State Bank, as it follows from some reports.)

To c. Koucky's question what he thought about the case of Joaquín Ordoqui, Carlos Rafael replied that this was a complex and not yet fully clarified issue. There is evidence that a number of matters has been leaked to an imperialist agency. Almost all of these cases are from the time of Anibal's stay in Mexico. Moreover, it was found that only Ordoqui knew about some of the things that were leaked. Ordoqui denies guilt, but does not react well; responds in an unclear, unconvincing manner. He is 65 years [old] today. He demands vigorously a public discussion about his case. However, such a discussion will be very dangerous. Personally, Carlos Rafael believes that Ordoqui's guilt will not be proved but neither does he prove his innocence. Carlos Rafael Rodriguez referred to the whole thing as "very ugly matters." (Note: the wife of J. Ordoqui c. Buchaca, accused along with him, was formerly the wife of Carlos Rafael Rodriguez.)

Carlos Rafael further said that the Ordoqui case was water to the mill of anti-communist elements.

Carlos Rafael then mentioned that the situation in the party leadership and among middle-rank cadres is improving. By contrast, the influence of counter-revolutionary elements still persists in the state administration and especially in some ministries. Part of the followers of pro-Chinese views came from there. The Chinese attacks and slanders against the USSR were a platform for these elements from which to spread their anti-Sovietism with impunity.

Even many honest people sympathized or still sympathize with the Communist Party of China. As contradictions in the international communist movement develop, these honest and mostly young people lose illusions and their feelings about China are cooling down. (For example, today's sugar plants minister and former deputy of Ernesto ["Che"] Guevara in the Ministry of Industry Borges is one of those people.) The Chinese, however, use various ways and let their people speak at meetings. For example, one large meeting in Beijing featured a Haitian immigrant, or rather a man who posed as one. It is definitely an Asian; even his physiognomy is typical of an Asian, not of a Latin American.

When asked about Minister of Communications [Faure] Chomon [Mediavilla]'s current attitude, c. Carlos Rafael Rodriguez replied that still from his college times, Chomon is literally surrounded by a group of negative people with whom he is closely linked. Chomon has a revolutionary past; he participated as one of the commanders in the second guerilla section in [the Sierra] Escambray [mountains], and led terrorist actions against the people of the Batista regime in Havana. Carlos Rafael believes that it is possible to influence Chomon because he understands many things well. He talks especially well about the Soviet Union, where he was an ambassador. However, it is necessarily to keep him away from the group that influences him. His positive development would surely accelerate under the conditions of collective leadership.

Carlos Rafael Rodriguez then returned several times to shortcomings in the application of Leninist norms in the inner life of the UPSR. He said it was initially very difficult for him to work, and he could not adapt to Fidel's style for a long time. It is true that Fidel's perseverance and his extraordinary ability can correct many mistakes but it cannot prevent undisciplined acts of some individuals. He mentioned Che Guevara as an example.

To c. Koucky's remark that Guevara's Algerian speech was incomprehensible to us, and left a very uncomfortable impression, Carlos Rafael said that [Cuban] President [Osvaldo] Dorticos and he were also very surprised. Raul Castro, who was in Moscow [in March 1965], emphatically rejected this speech. Fidel Castro said that he agrees with some parts of the speech, however, neither the form of the speech nor the place where Guevara delivered it was appropriate.

In this context, c. Koucky noted that the CPCZ must work on two tasks simultaneously: to help nations that are liberating themselves, but first and foremost to fulfill its duty to its own working class. Socialism must be reflected in practice by increasing production and living standards because only that has a meaning for workers. Only then can an example of a socialist state be attractive for workers in advanced capitalist countries.

Carlos Rafael replied that he fully understands the complexity of our problems. Collective leadership would certainly help to eliminate errors like Guevara's speech in Algiers.

When asked how Guevara's absence in May Day celebrations in Havana is explained, and what Guevara is doing now, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez said that Guevara does not want to go back to the Ministry anymore or to lead any administrative or economic department. However, they are not sure how to arrange his departure.

There are also other kinds of difficulties with him. Guevara is a Cuban national and a member of the Cuban government. As such, he was involved in Argentine affairs too

much. On his own, he organized in Argentina (his homeland) guerrilla units, which were easily destroyed. He also sent there with this mission [Jorge Ricardo] Masset[t]i, his personal protégé and former director of Prensa Latina, Massetti (who is known as a former Peronist).

The Ministry of Industry is currently managed by a group of young professionals. They are fully aware of the depth of and relations among economic problems. Thanks to the Soviet ambassador, they found out that in Cuba, there is \$200 million worth of various uninstalled and partial or complete investments, delivered from socialist countries. Che Guevara was simply doing whatever he wanted. It will take a long time to correct the consequences. That task will be even more difficult because the level of the Unified Party of Socialist Revolution cannot be compared with levels of for instance the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.

However, Carlos Rafael said that despite all these difficulties, the first positive results are already appearing. Sugar production this year will reach almost 6 million tons. On the other hand, however, a decrease in world prices of sugar will have an impact. Also, volume of industrial production will not increase in 1965.

Carlos Rafael did not give even an approximate date when the founding congress of the UPSR of Cuba would convene. He again expressed hope that the visit of the Cuban party delegation in Czechoslovakia would be very beneficial. Fidel Castro's visit in the CSSR would be beneficial as well. However, it is absolutely necessary to act directly with Fidel, without any diplomatic protocol.

At the end of the conversation, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez responded positively to the question of c. Koucky whether he was satisfied with the course of talks, and with our economic experts.

[Source: Czech National Archives, Prague, Kuba files, CPCz CC collection; obtained by James Hershberg, translated for CWIHP by Adolf Kotlik.]

Notes

- 1 Cuban President Osvaldo Dorticos had actually been in the Soviet capital when the Kremlin coup occurred, but he was not able to meet those who had ousted Khrushchev, or even learn fully what had occurred, before he left the city.
- 2 On Sino-Soviet tensions at this juncture, and the February 1965 Kosygin-Mao conversations in particular, see Lorenz M. Luthi, *The Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008); and Sergey Radchenko, *Two Suns in the Heavens: The Sino-Soviet Struggle for Supremacy, 1962-1967*

(Washington, DC/Stanford, CA: Woodrow Wilson Center Press/Stanford University Press, 2009).

3 See Yinghong Cheng, "Sino-Cuban Relations during the Early Years of the Castro Regime, 1959-1966," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 9:3 (Summer 2007): 78-114, esp. pp. 78-79, 102-107.

4 For the best study in recent years on this often-told story, see Fredrik Logevall, *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999).

5 On Soviet-Cuban relations during this period, see, e.g., James G. Blight and Philip Brenner, *Sad and Luminous Days: Cuba's Struggle with the Superpowers after the Missile Crisis* (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002).

6 *Spór* can have the following meanings: contestation, dispute, controversy, quarrel, and altercation. The *spór* refers to the Sino-Soviet split or rift.

7 *Rozbieżności* could also mean disagreements and clashes.

8 *Ostra* also means sharp, caustic, severe and harsh.

9 *Rozeznąć się* could also refer to recognize, discern, or discriminate.

10 [On this episode, see Yinghong Cheng, "Sino-Cuban Relations during the Early Years of the Castro Regime, 1959-1966"—ed.]

11 More natural way to say this could perhaps be: "On these grounds we decided to change our position."

12 "This fact" appears to refer either to the Sino-Soviet rift or the occurrence of the Cuba Missile Crisis.

13 [For a report of his 9 January 1965 interview, see Edgar Snow, "Interview with Mao," *The New Republic*, 26 February 1965—ed.]

14 *Pismo* can mean both a letter and a newspaper in Polish--*transl.*

15 PRUS - Partido Unido de la Revolucion Socialista: the United Party of Socialist Revolution (UPSR)

16 Perhaps *hammered out* would be a better word here.

17 RPR I - Rumunska Partia Robotnicza: the Romanian Workers' Party (RWP).

18 RWPG - Rada Wzajemnej Pomocy Gospodarczej: Council for Economic Mutual Assistance (CEMA).

19 PRUS - Partido Unido de la Revolucion Socialista: the United Party of Socialist Revolution (UPSR).

20 This word can also mean contestation, quarrel, dispute, or altercation--*trans.*

21 The text here is incomplete. The word here could be either *może* (can) or *musi* (must, have to). It is most likely that the word is *musi* (must, have to)--*trans.*

22 *Ostry* also means sharp, acute, and severe--*trans.*

23 PRUS - Partido Unido de la Revolucion Socialista: the United Party of Socialist Revolution (UPSR)

24 *Krzywdzące* can mean both detrimental and unfair.

25 An apparent reference to the US naval base at Guantánamo Bay in Cuba.

26 It is unclear to which incident Raul Castro is here referring, though he may have been alluding to the August 1964 Gulf of Tonkin incident.

27 It is not clear what "canals" Raul Castro meant here--*trans.*

28 The name is missing at the shorthand record; however, the Romanian delegation was led by Prime Minister Ion Gheorghe Maurer.

29 Reference is to Sino-Soviet differences.

30 Ed. note: Castro refers here to Brazilian President João Goulart, who was deposed in a military coup in late March/early April 1964, and to his brother-in-law Leonel Brizzola, the governor of Rio Grande do Sul province whom US officials considered a dangerous leftist with communist connections and tendencies.

31 Ed. note: Possibly a reference to the 7 March 1965 Chilean parliamentary elections, won by the Christian Democratic Party.

32 Ed. note: A reference to Lyndon B. Johnson's 7 April 1965 address at Johns Hopkins University.

“A Mystery Wrapped in a Riddle and Kept in a Sphinx”: New Evidence on Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin’s Trip to Cuba, June 1967, and the Turn in Relations between Cuba and the Soviet Bloc, 1967-68

Introduction by Philip Brenner¹

The mysteries of Soviet Prime Minister Aleksei Kosygin’s visit to Cuba from 26-30 June 1967 and the ensuing crisis in Soviet-Cuban relations in 1968 are a little less opaque as a result of the documents that follow, though there remain inconsistencies. Most important, it is clear that the main purpose of Kosygin’s trip was to deliver a stern message to the Cuban leadership that the Soviets would no longer tolerate Cuba’s support for armed struggle against recognized governments in Latin America and Africa.

This was not a minor difference of opinion between Cuba and the Soviet Union. Each viewed the other country’s position as a threat to its fundamental interests. The Soviet goal was “peaceful coexistence,” which would provide the leadership with a domestic justification for directing resources to internal development instead of military spending while enabling the military to claim an enhanced status as protectors of a superpower with equal standing to that of the United States. Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev and Kosygin believed that achieving the goal required not causing any trouble for the United States in its “backyard.”

President Lyndon B. Johnson in effect told Kosygin as much in their summit at Glassboro State College in New Jersey, the day before Kosygin went to Havana. Johnson summarized his meeting with the Soviet prime minister in a telephone conversation that very evening with former President Dwight D. Eisenhower, saying he told Kosygin that in Latin America

there were 6 or 7 hot spots, that they are using Soviet material—Cuba was—that we caught a bunch of them the other day in Venezuela, that they were giving us hell in the Dominican Republic and Haiti and Bolivia and half a dozen places, that this is a very serious matter, Soviet equipment, Castro-trained people....He ought to realize that we thought this was very serious and we were going to have to take action.²

Notably, according to Kosygin’s own report to Communist Party Secretaries in Budapest two weeks later (see Document No. 2), he raised the matter of Cuba sending Soviet arms to guerrillas in Latin America.

For the Cuban leaders, supporting revolutionary movements was a strategy of survival in the face of the continuing threat it perceived from the United States and their certainty after the 1962 missile crisis that the Soviet Union would not defend Cuba in the event of a US attack.³ They believed, in Che Guevara’s famous phrase, that creating “two, three, many Vietnams” would overextend the United States and diminish its will to engage Cuba in a protracted guerrilla war. At the same time, if the struggles were successful, Cuba would have helped to build a network of like-minded third world countries with which it could trade and engage in south-south development, thereby reducing its dependence on the Soviet Union. Cuban Prime Minister Fidel Castro viewed “peaceful coexistence” as nothing less than capitulation to US imperialism.

The documents do not quite capture the tension in the meetings between Kosygin and the Cubans, though there are hints throughout. At one point in his Budapest report, Kosygin notes he told Castro that “conducting revolution in the countries of Latin America through expediting there a few people is adventurous”—a term that was used to justify the October 1964 ouster of former CPSU leader Nikita Khrushchev. Castro responded sarcastically, “So was the Cuban revolution [adventurous,] too?” adding that “Che Guevara is fighting in Bolivia and has successes. Most of the communist parties in Latin America are not parties... but Marxist clubs.” Kosygin’s blood must have been boiling, because this was precisely the posture he was sent to Cuba to re-adjust. But he remarks coldly, “I have not heard that he [Che] had been invited by the Bolivians.”

Kosygin’s meaning was clear to Castro. The “Bolivians” to whom the Soviet leader was referring was Mario Monge, head of Bolivia’s communist party. Monge had complained to the Soviets about Che’s expedition. Che in effect had challenged Monge’s claim to be the principal leader of leftist groups in Bolivia, and an endorsement would have violated orders he had received from Moscow. Indeed, it is evident from Castro’s “necessary introduction” to Che’s *Bolivian Diary*, that the Cuban leader believed Monge was responsible for Che’s death by revealing his location to the Central Intelligence Agency or Bolivian military.⁴

Castro certainly recalled his conversation with Kosygin when Che was killed three months later, and he likely believed the Soviets had approved Monge’s treachery. [Ed. note: By

late 1967, after a brief improvement following Kosygin's visit, Soviet-Cuban ties had plummeted again. As senior Cuban communist Carlos Rafael Rodríguez explained in late November 1967 to a Czechoslovak Communist Party (CPCz) official (see Document No. 3), Fidel Castro had been angered a month earlier when *Pravda*, the Kremlin mouthpiece, ran articles by Chilean and Argentine communist leaders implicitly critical of Cuba's militant stand supporting violent revolution in Latin America, for it termed proletarian communist parties as more effective than guerrilla groups; in response, Castro had abruptly lowered the level of Cuba's delegation to the celebrations in Moscow of the 40th anniversary of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, and it was the only party not to make a congratulatory address at the gathering.⁵ Rodríguez also noted some disappointment among Cubans at the tepid reaction to Che's death in some sectors of the Soviet bloc, including Czechoslovakia.—[J.H.]

The conversation with Kosygin, combined with the subsequent downturn in relations, may have led Castro to believe, as well, that the Soviets would try to oust him. Indeed, that was the essence of the charges against the so-called micro-faction, a group within the recently created Cuban Communist Party whose leaders came from the Popular Socialist Party, the communist party in pre-1959 Cuba, including PSP head Aníbal Escalante. In late January 1968 Defense Minister Raúl Castro, the second secretary of the Cuban Communist Party, presided over a trial that purged the micro-faction and sent a signal to Moscow that Havana would resist Moscow's pressure.⁶ (The charges against the alleged "micro faction" were laid out at an emergency meeting of the Cuban Communist Party—for East German reports, see Document Nos. 4 and 5.)

Another irritating way in which Cuba had displayed its independence from Soviet strictures was its response to the Arab-Israeli Six-Day War in June 1967. The Soviets broke diplomatic relations with Israel and demanded that the other countries in the Soviet bloc follow suit. All did, except Romania. Cuba also maintained diplomatic relations with Israel, and Kosygin's visit came two weeks after the war ended. The Middle East was an important subject in the meetings.

In part, Cuba's action served to highlight its independence from the Soviet Union. Cuban sources leaked a story while Kosygin was in Havana that the Russians had pressed Castro to break relations with Israel. Castro's reply: first the Russians must break relations with the United States.⁷ Castro reportedly also had an emotional affinity with Israel. Both countries placed an emphasis on educating its population and developing advanced medical systems. Castro also may have seen a parallel between Israel's situation—surrounded by enemies—and Cuba's own circumstances.⁸

The deep schism in the Soviet-Cuban relationship during this period nearly came to a breaking point in 1968. Even as Brezhnev attempted to dismiss the tension in his April 1968 report (see Document No. 6), Cuba continued to reject Soviet admonitions about both domestic and foreign policy. As the report from the East German Communist Party's International Committee observes disparagingly, Castro's purge of the "micro-faction" was accompanied by an "anti-Soviet, and petit-bourgeoisie-adventurist political line of the Cuban leadership." According to conventional wisdom, the break was avoided by Castro's supposed capitulation in his August 1968 speech in response to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. (On the subsequent more positive tone in Cuba's relations with the Soviet bloc, see the records of a November 1968 East German delegation to Havana—Document Nos. 8 and 9.)

In fact, far from being an endorsement of the Soviet invasion as the speech is often misinterpreted to be, it lays down exactly the kind of challenge to the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact countries for which Kosygin criticizes Cuba in his report to the Communist Party General Secretaries. Castro first acknowledges in his speech that "the sovereignty of the Czechoslovak state was violated ... Not the slightest trace of legality exists. Frankly, none whatever." The necessity of the intervention, he said, "can only be explained from a political point of view"—i.e., the need to maintain the unity of the socialist camp.⁹ Having established what he considered the only valid justification for the invasion, he then throws down the gauntlet:

We ask ourselves: Will the Warsaw Pact divisions also be sent to Vietnam if the Yankee imperialists step up their aggression against that country if the people of Vietnam request that aid? Will they send the divisions of the Warsaw Pact to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea if the Yankee imperialists attack that country? Will they send the divisions of the Warsaw Pact to Cuba if the Yankee imperialists attack our country, or even in the case of the threat of a Yankee imperialist attack on our country, if our country requests it?¹⁰

Of course, these were rhetorical questions with an implied accusation. Castro knew that the answers were "no." In reading Kosygin's report, we now know that the Soviet leadership also must have understood Castro's remarks to be as much denunciation as endorsement. Indeed, the Soviet Union did not reward Cuba with a significant increase in aid following Castro's speech. It was not until the 1970 ten-ton Cuban sugar harvest failed, and Cuba had no choice but to humble

itself, that the Soviet Union embraced Cuba and began a process of bringing it into the Soviet trading bloc.



DOCUMENTS

DOCUMENT No. 1

A Report from the Mexican Embassy in Havana, 4 July 1967

Air Mail—Confidential

Embassy of Mexico in Cuba
Number 559

Re: Visit of Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin from 26-30 June 1967

Havana, 4 July 1967

Secretary of Foreign Relations, Mexico City

On the 26th of last month [June], in a way surprising to the public and without prior notice of any kind, Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin arrived in this city, after his visit to the United Nations Headquarters in New York and his interview with President Johnson in New Jersey. He was received at the airport by President Osvaldo Dorticos, Premier Fidel Castro, the Minister of Armed Forces Raul Castro, two or three more officials of the Government and of the Communist Party and [Raul] Castro's wife, Vilma Espín,¹¹ president of the Federation of Cuban Women. Her attendance may have been a response to the wish that a lady be present during the reception to pay attention to Mr. Kosygin's daughter, who formed part of his delegation.

To repeat Churchill's statement, it could be said about the Soviet leader's visit that it was a mystery wrapped in a secret and kept in a sphinx. Nothing, indeed, has emerged up to now concerning what was discussed with the leaders of the Cuban Government and Communist Party, and although rumors and conjectures are heard in the streets, nothing is concretely known about the matters raised or discussed.

On the other hand, the cold attitude of the Cuban authorities and local press toward the important person, the apparent ignorance about his daughter's stay in Havana, a certain tense formality that could be seen in Dr. Castro Ruz when they took photos of him and the visitor, have all stirred

up suspicions that the encounter was not entirely favorable to the Cuban leader.

Not only among Western diplomatic circles, but also in those of the socialist world, it is believed that the matters discussed in perhaps a not very cordial way between the Russian and Cuban statesmen were the following:

First—the position assumed by the Cuban Government and Communist Party in relation to Latin America, where they promote a guerrilla movement against the governments of various countries. In this regard, Kosygin expressed the total disapproval of his government with what Cuba had done, and warned Mr. Castro of the risks of persisting in such a policy for relations in Moscow and Havana. Perhaps the Soviet Union would rather maintain cordial relations in the political and commercial arena with Latin American countries than arouse their enmity and endanger commercial exchange with them.

Second—the Middle East and Vietnam. Kosygin said to Mr. Castro that the position adopted by Cuba in relation to problems in the Middle East and Vietnam is disagreeable to the Soviet Union, since it goes to extremes to urge that the Kremlin not accept it. By seeming more Catholic than the Pope, Castro is possibly seeking to acquire prestige among the forces of the so-called Third World and become its leader, a very inopportune situation for the Soviet Union, presently quite worried about situations that they face in the case of China and Vietnam, Cambodia, etc. in southeast Asia.

Third—internal administration of Cuba. The Russian leader warned Mr. Castro of the serious concerns of his government about the chaotic state of affairs into which the communist administration of Cuba had put the country, and the obvious waste of aid that the Soviet Union had given it. In this respect, it is worth noting that although a commercial agreement exists between the two nations concerning sugar, of course favorable to the Soviet Union, the latter felt obligated to lend help to the government of Havana to keep it moving, though in precarious conditions the [Soviet] national economic machinery exceeds the advantages that its commercial treaties allow it to attain.

Fourth—political operation in Cuba. Mr. Kosygin expressed to Mr. Castro that his government fears that the constant repression and violence employed against enemies of his regime and even persons innocent of any possible political charge will end up provoking a violent popular reaction and even the defection of part of the army, among whom signs of restlessness are already cause for concern, as the Cuban people suffer more and more from the horrific shortage of all kinds of nutritional items, clothing, etc.

The views and conjectures above do not rest on a firm base, however, they are a general expression of the ideas and judgments awakened in the minds of Western diplomats and of communist countries by the strange reception and circumstances that motivated Mr. Kosygin's trip.

Cuban government officials remain discreet and cautious when talking about the meaning and importance of the Soviet leader's visit. It is possible, however, that Premier Castro might allude to it during his speech to be given in Santiago de Cuba on July 26. Until then, the island will continue to be in an environment of uncertainty and expectation.

To bid farewell to the visitor, we as chiefs of mission were invited to the airport and were able to observe a demonstration by workers and students along the road that connects the airport to the city with a few thousand people. This demonstration was the only act of public importance carried out in honor of Mr. Kosygin.

Lastly, and because it is of interest, I wish to state that this morning the representative of the Associated Press in Cuba, Mr. Miller, came to visit me, and told me that when he wanted to notify his organization of the visit, his message was rejected by Western Union on Friday morning, but surprisingly that same afternoon, governmental authorization for his dispatch was granted. The fact is important since Mr. Miller noticed the coldness of Mr. Kosygin's reception and the almost mysterious circumstances in which his trip took shape. It should be asked, then, why the Cuban censor opposed the dispatch of the cable on Friday morning, then accepted it unchanged in the afternoon. He either did this on his own impulse, or perhaps received instructions from higher up to proceed in such a manner. These are questions with difficult answers, but ones that give way to new issues.

I hereby take the opportunity to reiterate to you assurances of my most attentive and distinguished consideration.

EFFECTIVE SUFFRAGE, NO RE-ELECTION.

The Ambassador Fernando Pámanes Escobedo

[Source: Source: *Archivo de Concentraciones (Mexico City), Mexican Foreign Relations Secretariat, File folder: 3056-1, Informes Políticos-Embajada de México en Cuba. Original document included in National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book by Kate Doyle, "Double Dealing: Mexico's Foreign Policy Toward Cuba" (posted 2 March 2003). Translated by Christopher Dunlap.*]



DOCUMENT No. 2

Kosygin's Report on Trip to Cuba to Meeting of Communist Party First Secretaries, Budapest, Hungary, 12 July 1967

Secret

Copy No. 1

M i n u t e s

from a conference of the Communist and Workers' parties and chiefs of governments of the socialist countries on the situation in the Middle East (Budapest, 11-12 July 1967)

The conference was held on 11 July, from 3 to 9 p.m. and on 12 July from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
The reporting group met on 12 July, from 8:30 to 10:00.

The conference was convened on the initiative of the Soviet Union.

Rumania was not invited to the conference.

[excerpt from July 12:]

Information by com. Kosygin

[Kosygin first reported on conversations with Charles De Gaulle in Paris and with Lyndon Johnson in Glassboro.]

A visit in Cuba

I got an instruction from the Politburo to go to Cuba. Before my departure from Moscow the Politburo discusses the situation in Cuba. We decided to send a letter to Fidel Castro on behalf of the Politburo. In that letter we expressed surprise and disapproval for a number of his actions. It was quite a detailed letter. It dealt with all international problems and relations with the socialist countries, set out our position. We expressed our surprise at a political wavering of Cuba that could weaken its situation. We argued that we could not agree with its policy of exporting revolution to the countries of Latin America. We also said that if this would complicate the situation and lead to a military conflict—they take responsibility on themselves.

At the airport I was met by Fidel and [Cuban President Osvaldo] Dorticos. The meeting looked very bleak. They greeted me coldly. From outside our arrival looked like some private visit.

In the car Fidel was explaining me that they on purpose were not doing an official greeting. I responded: very good, I am glad, we have come here to talk and I am grateful that it was done without an official protocol. It seems that he was satisfied. Right after our arrival (we arrived from New York towards the evening) Fidel asked: What do you want to do now? Maybe we will go to see the city. It was evening, raining, but we drove to sightsee Havana—Dorticos, Fidel and me. I must say that Havana looks very poorly. Somehow frayed, houses not painted, plasters falling apart. Fidel suggested: and now we go to a cattle insemination station. And so, throughout the whole night, almost to 4 a.m. we traveled about Cuba. He showed me everything.

I was satisfied. They are doing a huge work. People work—enthusiasts, not “slipshod workers.” In the past they had had 7 million cattle. From that cattle there was neither meat, nor milk (2 liters of milk per cow daily). To milk a cow they had to tie its head by huge horns; milking had been done by men, as the cow was half-wild, kicking. Since some time they have bet on rational husbandry. They bought breeding bulls. Now they already have 500 thousand of young cattle, get new races of cattle, cows are giving already 20 liters of milk per day. In a word, they have wonderfully set about this question.

The economic situation in Cuba is very complex. There is a rationing system with very low norms of rice, butter, meat (30 decagrams weekly), which in general are not sold in total. Lack of milk. Even bananas are being rationed. Children get 2 bananas per week. A lack of industrial products, allocation of fabrics 8 m per person annually, shoes—1 pair annually, but even this cannot be bought. In normal commercial sale is only sugar and white bread (from our flour, we deliver it in sufficient quantities). Stores are virtually empty, everywhere queues, though Fidel gave instructions that on the day of our arrival there should be no queues. In Havana the mood is gloomy, only the students are cheering.

The next day we held a meeting. The whole Politburo of the Cuban party came in. Fidel suggested that I begin. I gave information on the situation in the Middle East, on Vietnam, on the economic situation of the Soviet Union and came up to the question of our mutual relations. When I began to talk about the content of our letter and explain it (the letter has a purely party-line character), Fidel asked: why have you come here, once you sent a letter? I answered: to explain particular issues, as the letter had been sent long ago. When I expanded on thoughts contained in the letter and dealt with all problems of their policy, Fidel started to

get nervous. He ordered a break, but by that time I almost had finished my talk.

Fidel suddenly suggested: Let's go sight-seeing the country. I responded I had not come for an excursion, but to talk. Dorticos supported me. Then Fidel said to me: too many people participate in this conversation from your side. While from our side it was only me and two comrades, and from their side about 15 people. Nevertheless, I said: all right, if you think that we are too many, I will remain alone. Then he said; “from our side it is also too many.” Apparently that is what he wanted. He ordered a recess for two hours, and in the evening we gathered in a different composition. From their side there were only three comrades: Fidel, Dorticos and Raul [Castro]. From our side also three: me, an interpreter, and a comrade from the ministry of foreign affairs. Only in this conversation Fidel started to talk in more detail on some questions. So did I.

First of all I raised the question of policy with regard to Latin America. Fidel said: you don't accept our policy toward the countries of Latin America. I responded: yes, we don't accept. And the controversy began. I said to Fidel: conducting revolution in the countries of Latin America through expediting there a few people is adventurous. Fidel responded: “So was the Cuban revolution too?” He added that Che Guevara is fighting in Bolivia and has successes. Most of the communist parties in Latin America are not parties—said Fidel—but Marxist clubs. He was particularly angry at Venezuela. He called them traitors, saying that communist parties have become bureaucratized, lost their revolutionary character and interest in leading their nations to a revolution. We believe—he said—in a military coup and in the formation of popular-revolutionary parties, which in Bolivia are created by Che Guevara. I responded: I have not heard that he had been invited by the Bolivians. Fidel said he had been invited. I expressed my opinion on the communist parties in those countries. Fidel disagreed with me. But all the time (we chatted the whole night) he was repeatedly raising this subject.

Then he took up our letter and said: you have said here that if we continue taking such position and conduct such activity in other countries, there will be conflicts and you will not take responsibility on yourselves. Thus, you learned that we were under threat and you sent out to us such letter to wash your hands of this matter.

He was saying all of this in a quite abrasive tone. The following day I said to him: Comrade Fidel (there were three of them), yesterday you offended our country and our party. We cannot accept it and you should recall your words. Otherwise, why should we need this cooperation. We support you, we help you politically and materially, and you offend us. On what basis? You have no proof to support your charges.

Fidel got excited: yes, I do have the document!

Show it to me—I demanded. He pulled out a cable sent by the Cuban ambassador in Moscow [perhaps Carlos Olivares Sanchez—ed.]. The ambassador writes that on the basis of reliable information in his possession (he gave an informer in Moscow, but Fidel would not reveal his name to me), there is prepared an intervention against Cuba and the Soviet Union knows about it, but doesn't communicate it to Cuba.

And here those two documents coincide—our letter and a cable from the Cuban ambassador. Fidel thought, that that is why we had sent our letter to have an excuse in case of intervention.

That cable was an absolute provocation from their ambassador. And so I told him: it is not an ambassador, it is a provocateur. It's good that I have learned from you about this document. Fidel responded: he could not lie, since this information came from high circles in Moscow. I replied: a week ago I was in Moscow and I know all state documents. I am officially telling you that this is a provocation.

I asked for the name of that informer, the more so that the ambassador wrote that his informer was someone close to the Soviet leadership and holding an important position. Fidel refused to reveal the name. He said he would ask him and if he agrees, then he will give his name. I repeated once again: I officially state that your ambassador is a provocateur.

Here you see how cautiously one should treat different information transmitted by third persons.

The Cubans became visibly cheerful. They were convinced that the cable from their ambassador was correct and was correlated with our letter. The mood changed at once. They began to be more interested in our policy, our successes, problems, began talking about their economic situation, etc. Thus, after a sharp exchange of views, everything began to go well.

For the Cubans, the main question right now is agriculture. Before the evening we went to look at grubbing out the jungle. They have our tractors working at it—250 KM, tied together. They work day and night. They clear up at a time 50-60 meters of brushwood and bushes, they are followed by French bulldozers, and then again tractors with discs, which cut the roots, etc. The work goes on day and night. They chose the right people—enthusiasts.

They created tens and tens of citrus plantations—lemons, mangos, and also of coffee and bean plants. They also created orchards. They estimate that in 1970 they will have at least 1 million tons of citrus fruits. They still don't think what they are going to do with all this. They lack processing plants, they are not going to sell such quantities. They have many new pastures. Thus, there is going on a huge work and with great enthusiasm.

However, there are also minuses to it. The whole work is based on students. Even colleges have some consecutively scheduled breaks in teaching. Students have two months of vacation in a year, which they devote to work. Women in ages 20-30 years old are mobilized from towns for voluntary work on the reconstruction of villages in the span of 2-3 years.

One should say, that Fidel is met everywhere with such enthusiasm, that they are ready to kiss him. Everybody says of him well, approach him, worry that he doesn't look well, advise him to get a rest, etc. All have pistols: a revolutionary mood—all in uniforms, even agronomists. Fidel also carries a gun, only Dorticos is not armed. After all, this is normal. In Russia in the first years after the revolution we were wearing arms too. The Spanish like arms very much, they would feel bad if they didn't have it on them. They are treating it like a toy.

And thus, after all these journeys around the country, talks, we got together once again. Then Fidel put forward his grudges.

He explained to us why he maintains diplomatic relations with Spain, Portugal, has not broken relations with Israel. He said: So many (countries) have broken diplomatic relations with us, that almost nobody is left.

A serious problem for them is a permanent emigration to the US. Already 400 thousand people have left Cuba, and 200 thousand are still waiting to leave. These departures are not being restrained. It is mostly intelligentsia that is leaving, and in the recent period also skilled workers. Fidel was expressing dissatisfaction about some socialist countries, among them Poland, that she is grabbing his sugar markets. They produce over 6 million tons of sugar. The Czechs have built a shoe factory in Cuba, which is idle, because they lack skins. Also idle is a refrigerator plant, since they lack metals, etc. We should think of injecting some live stream into the Cuban economy. The Cubans will return. They worry that they are in debt, but they will develop agricultural production and will return for sure.

I reproached Fidel for coming out against the socialist camp. He promised not to do it openly either against the socialist countries, or the Soviet Union. They will be approaching these questions more prudently, trying to prevent such divergences among us.

With regard to our letter he said: as we have exchanged opinions in detail on questions dealt with in your letter and have explained some problems, we will not respond to this letter. We will assume that the matter has been closed by our conversation.

I have to say that Raul was trying to help us and somehow smooth the situation. Towards the end of the visit there was no more tension.

They have recalled their ambassador in Moscow. Now they are selecting another candidate, a trusted man, a CC member.

Fidel has stated that he accepts all our wishes of military nature, they will permit to build in Cuba our observatory stations for rockets, cosmic vehicles, etc.

Johnson told me in the course of our conversation that he was worried because our arms find their way from Cuba to other countries in Latin America. He said that our rifles and motor boats had gotten into American hands. I responded I am not acquainted with this matter. I told Fidel about this. He responded: these are not Soviet arms, but the ones produced on Soviet licenses in one of the socialist countries (Czechoslovakia). Americans captures several Cubans and in this way got these weapons.

Fidel asked to convey greetings for de Gaulle. I did this in my talk with de Gaulle. He told me: they follow the situation in Cuba, have good relations. He thanked for a gift sent by Fidel. And continued talking for a few more minutes about Cuba. I argued with de Gaulle that that is important for us to have in this area of the world a socialist country, which would reflect some European problems. De Gaulle was laughing.

I am glad, that I could talk frankly with Fidel. The talks were sharp but amicable, party-like, friendly and have ended very well. We got a very friendly farewell. The whole of Havana took to the streets. Present were all official personalities. The farewell, from the point of official protocol was very well organized.

Tito: (Chairman); All comrades are probably in agreement that com. Kosygin's information has been very precious for us. On behalf of all of us I thank you very much.

[Source: KC PZPR XIA/13, AAN, Warsaw. Obtained by James Hershberg and translated by Jan Chowaniec.]



DOCUMENT No. 3

Memorandum of Conversation between Czechoslovak Communist Party official Vladimir Koucky and Cuban Communist Party official Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, Prague, 24 November 1967

For Information

3477/9

TOP SECRET!

Record of a conversation of c. Vladimir Koucky with a member of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the CP of Cuba, c. Carlos Rafael Rodriguez (November 24, 1967)

At the very beginning of his visit with c. V. Koucky, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez indicated that he had also other worries than his health. After c. [Soviet Premier Alexei] Kosygin's visit in Havana [in late June 1967], relations with the Soviet Union began to improve rapidly, but later deteriorated again, which was reflected in composition of the delegation to the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution in Moscow [earlier in November 1967]. According to Carlos Rafael, [Fidel] Castro holds c. Kosygin in very high esteem for his honest and firm attitude. This was indeed apparent in the fact that much more attention was given to c. Kosygin's departure from Havana than to his arrival.

Therefore, it was initially decided that the President of the Republic of Cuba c. Osvaldo Dorticos would lead the delegation to the celebrations. Carlos Rafael Rodriguez was to join the delegation in Europe. The situation changed when the Moscow Pravda published articles of comrades [Chilean communist Luis] Corvalan and [Argentine communist Rudolf] Ghioldi, in which the line of Cuba's CP was indirectly criticized. Minister of Health Machado Ventura, MD, was then appointed as the head of the delegation, and Carlos Rafael was told that he was not to participate in the celebrations. Carlos Rafael expressed regret that he was not in the homeland; he thought that he would have been able to persuade Fidel not to change the delegation.

Comrade Koucky pointed out that not only the level of the delegation, but also the fact that the head of the Cuban delegation did not speak at the celebrations of an important anniversary, gave the capitalist press an opportunity to write about a deep rift between Cuba and the socialist countries, especially the USSR. The attitude of the delegation put all participants in the celebrations in Moscow in a very awkward situation.

Carlos Rafael Rodriguez did not respond directly to this remark. He said, however, that we certainly know that the leadership of Cuban CP is not homogeneous, and there are also people who do not realize the importance of friendship with the USSR, and some might not even wish it. It is reflected in Cuban press as well, and for instance the chief editor of "Granma", [Isidoro] Malmierca [Peoli], was removed due to a questionable stance of the magazine on the importance of the USSR.

Carlos Rafael Rodríguez also expressed the view that both sides should suspend polemics between Cuba and Communist parties. The Cuban side wants that.

That's why it currently does not publish principles governing the build-up of the economy. It wants to avoid controversy about problems that Cuba is solving in a completely different way than other socialist countries. For this reason, economic and party workers are being instructed internally. Comrade Koucky responded that we have a sincere interest in Cuban friends being able to avoid mistakes and errors that we and other fraternal countries had to overcome. In this sense, Cuban economic theories cause considerable concern.

Carlos Rafael Rodríguez then recalled this year's visits by representatives of the Italian Communist Party [PCI] in Cuba. He said that Italian comrades had many meetings with Cuban leaders, saw many things up close, and their whole stay was focused on a fruitful exchange of views. He believes that such informal discussions and contacts between important parties can be very beneficial. At the same time, he offered for consideration a possible visit of comrade Koucky to Cuba.

Carlos Rafael also spoke how he himself strives to clarify views on fundamental questions, and said that for instance on issues such as [Régis] Debray's brochures "Revolution in the Revolution?", which was published in Cuba, he prepared a memorandum for the party leadership, in which he pointed out the erroneous views Debray expressed.¹² He believes that his intervention was not entirely without effect.

As for the Communist Party of Cuba's relations with other fraternal parties of the Latin American continent, he said that they worsened in many ways, mainly due to a lack of understanding. Lack of contacts does not help either because views are often spread that do not contribute constructively to the common cause, and can even be exploited by some people.

Similarly, in the apparatus of the Central Committee of the CP of Cuba, especially in the Committee on International Relations, there is a group of young people who lack erudition or experience and are damaging the relations of the Cuba's CP with the Soviet Union, the CPSU [Communist Party of the Soviet Union], and other fraternal parties. However, these people will be removed.

Carlos Rafael then expressed the view that European communist parties and maybe even the CPCz are not objectively informed of developments in Cuba. He said that since Prague is an important crossroads, many people are passing through, and not all of them inform objectively. He was pointing it out already when in Prague during the XIII. Congress.¹³

As an example, he mentioned false information about the relationship of the Cuban leadership with China. Only 4 members of the Cuban government were at the reception held at the Chinese Embassy in Havana, and none of the

leaders came. Of course, the Chinese invited many people and achieved a great turnout. But these were only insignificant people. Despite this, one Embassy of a socialist country - Carlos Rafael said that it was not ours - considered the reception as evidence of deepening Cuban-Chinese relations. The Consul of the Soviet Embassy himself allegedly refuted such a view.

The result of distorted information is the more reserved attitude on our [Czechoslovak] side, which was reflected, according to Carlos Rafael, after Ernesto ["Che"] Guevara's death [in Bolivia in October 1967]. Our press did not pay enough attention to this tragic event, which had to be received negatively in Havana.

Comrade Koucky noted that a telegram of condolence was approved and sent to him, and a report was published about it. It is common practice in cases involving similar events, and it reflects the mindset of our readers. Carlos Rafael said that Cuban officials considered our attention to the death of Che Guevara to be inadequate, and he himself did, too. He said that during the recent stopover in Prague, c. [Frantisek] Penc welcomed him and failed to console him, even though it was their first meeting shortly after Guevara's death.

Carlos Rafael further complained about the "poorly reasoned article" (published in the Reporter), which could not benefit anyone.

Comrade Koucky remarked that neither the character of the article nor that of the journal is indicative of the official view. He also said that our workers have an ongoing keen interest in events of the national liberation movement and in problems of the international communist movement, are asking about Cuba's position, and we have to explain.

To that Carlos Rafael replied that the response to Guevara's death was much more vivid in the Western press than in ours. He mentioned the Italian press as an example. To the remark that our press has a different mission and character, Carlos Rafael said that, for example, the Bulgarian press devoted much more space to the event than ours. He said that especially appreciated was the personal condolence of c. [Soviet leader Leonid I.] Brezhnev to the widow of Ernesto Guevara.

Carlos Rafael also indicated that there is a discontent over our relations with the Communist Party of Venezuela, with whom the CP of Cuba has deep divisions.

Comrade Koucky noted that we have had these relations with the CP of Venezuela even at the time when its leaders, such as c. [Eduardo] Gallegos Mancera, were enthusiastic supporters of the Cuban position. We thought this was the affair of only Venezuelan comrades. If the CP of Venezuela now holds a different opinion, and decided to change its position, we consider it again its inalienable right.

Carlos Rafael Rodriguez countered that people like c. Gallegos Mancera swayed the Cuban side to interfere with development in Venezuela; they promised a fight, received a lot of help, but did not fulfill promises; instead began attacking Fidel Castro when he stood up for those who continued to fight.

In the next part of the interview in connection with the development of Cuba's views on the issues of the international communist movement, Carlos Rafael sought to defend Cuba's rejection of convening the World Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties, and its absence in the preparations for it. He referred at that to [Uruguayan communist party head] c. [Rodney] Arismendi. Carlos Rafael did not reply to c. Koucky's remark that he was surprised because he talked with Arismendi and knew his views.

Unlike during the last meeting, Carlos Rafael was reserved. He did not even mention the latest development in the CP of Cuba, and did not indicate, whom Fidel Castro meant by the alleged "micro fraction" that he spoke in the closing speech at the OLAS [Organization of Latin American Solidarity] conference [in Havana in August 1967].

The meeting took place on Friday, November 24, and the interview lasted two hours.

[Source: Czech National Archives, Prague, Kuba files, CPCz collection. Obtained by James Hershberg and translated by Adolf Kotlik.]



DOCUMENT No. 4

Socialist Unity Party of Germany Central Committee (SED CC) Department of International Relations, "Position on the publications about the Meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba [CPC]," 31 January 1968

1. On 29 and 30 January 1968 the central organ of the Cuban CP, "Granma," published the speech given by Comrade Raoul [Raúl] Castro, second secretary of the CC of the CPC, at the 3rd meeting of the CC (24-26 January 1968). Additional publications have been announced.

In this speech, comrades from the CPSU, the SED, and the CPCz were directly attacked in connection with the measures of the CC against a "micro faction" and openly accused of conspiracy against the Cuban party leadership

and of collaboration with the penalized Cuban comrades.

The accused comrades of the "micro faction" who are to take responsibility before a revolutionary tribunal have, according to the report of Comrade Raul Castro, criticized the policy of the CPC, specifically Fidel Castro's attitude and his ideological-political ideas. They argued for a close connection with the CPSU, for cooperation with the fraternal parties and the international communist movement, and demanded a sound policy of socialist construction in Cuba. In doing so they evidently attempted to create a faction within the party. For the most part we are dealing with officials and members of the former socialist people's party [PSP].

This undisguised and up to now most intense attack against the CPSU, our party, and other fraternal parties, presented by these party-internal measures of the CPC, is a provocation against the unity of the international communist movement. It is aimed at discrediting our parties in front of world public opinion, to undermine the trust in their credibility, honesty, and righteousness in the relations to the fraternal parties, and thus to influence the preparations of the Budapest conference in a negative way.

It is being openly demonstrated that any opinion that deviates from the views of the Cuban party leadership or any attempt at a Marxist critique of its attitude is to be qualified as counter-revolutionary and persecuted criminally. Thus anti-Soviet and anti-Marxist behavior are being elevated to the official state attitude.

[...]

[Source: Bundesarchiv Berlin, DY 30, IV A 2/20/265. Obtained by Piero Gleijeses and translated by Christian Ostermann.]



DOCUMENT No. 5

SED CC Department of International Relations, "Information on the Third Plenum of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party and on the Attacks of the Cuban Communist Party against the Socialist Unity Party of Germany," 31 January 1968

- I. The 3rd Plenum of the Cuban Communist Party took

place in Havana on 24-26 January 1968. During the Plenum the decision of the Politburo of the CC was announced not to participate in the consultative meeting in Budapest. Fidel Castro gave a 12-hour long speech, which has not yet been published.

The main subject of the 3rd Plenum of the CC was the uncovering of a so-called micro faction within the party. The Second Secretary of the CP of Cuba and head of the Commission for the Armed Forces and Security Questions, Comrade Raoul [Raúl] Castro, dealt with this issue in an extensive presentation. The head of this “micro facto” is said to be Anibal Escalante, who previously belonged to the Politburo of the Socialist People’s Party [PSP] and afterwards had been the Organization Secretary of the “United Revolutionary Organizations of Cuba” (ORI) until 1962. Escalante was expelled from the party in 1962 as a “sectarian.”

36 former members of the Socialist People’s Party also belong to the Anibal Escalante group. According to Western news they were sentenced to long prison sentences.

The group is basically accused of the following crimes:

- It spread the claim “that a strong anti-Soviet current existed in the leadership of the CP of Cuba which hurt the Cuban revolution and that the USSR was the country that should exercise dominance” (Quotes from the speech of Raoul Castro).
- “They welcomed the departure of Cmdte Ernesto [“Che”] Guevara Serna as they were of the opinion that Cmdte Guevara was one of the most vehement opponents of Soviet policy and a proponent of Chinese positions.”
- “They were of the opinion that the small bourgeoisie was the predominant force within the policy of the revolution.”
- They accused the leadership of an “incipient rapprochement with the capitalist countries,” which “seriously harmed the trade relations between our country and those of the socialist camp.”
- Some of the groups [sic!] were of the opinion that thanks to the wise policy of the USSR not only war was avoided with the withdrawal of the missiles and the letter by Nikita Khrushchev but it was guaranteed for a long time that the imperialist would not attack.”
- “They opposed the armed struggle in general, using the lack of objective or subjective conditions as a pretext. They were of the opinion that war, such as it is being waged in Venezuela, was adventurous.”
- [...]

IV. Assessment

1. The 3rd Plenum of the CC of the Communist Party of Cuba served the consolidation and the expansion of the un-Marxist, anti-Soviet, and petit-bourgeoisie-adventurist political line of the Cuban leadership internally and externally.
2. It is being openly demonstrated that any opinion that deviates from the views of the Cuban party leadership or any attempt at a Marxist critique of its views is to be qualified as counter-revolutionary and persecuted as a crime. Thus anti-Soviet, anti-Marxist behavior is de facto elevated to the official state view in Cuba. The internal opposition evidently reaches beyond the 36 identified persons. It has apparently taken on considerable range.
3. The tendency already evident in the actions of Cuban leaders thus far to implement a policy independent of the international communist movement and in its general line antagonistic is newly and openly demonstrated at the 3rd plenum of the CC of the CP of Cuba.
4. These measures are the sharpest public attacks yet against the CPSU, the SED, and other fraternal parties. They are a continuation of the anti-Marxist and nationalist line which was developed at the three-continent [tri-continental] conference and the “International Intellectual Congress” in Havana as well as in the attacks on the fraternal parties of Latin America.

The severe splittist provocation of the 3rd Plenum of the CC of the CP of Cuba is aimed directly against the consultative meeting in Budapest and the successful preparation of the world conference. The CPSU and the SED are to be discredited before world public opinion. This intention is unequivocally evident in the fact that the accusations were not—as is customary between fraternal parties—resolved internally but instantly and massively by the method of surprise brought into the public.

V. Conclusions

1. The Cuban ambassador in the GDR is to be invited by the head of the International Relations Department of the [SED] CC for a discussion. It should be attempted to convey to the CC of the CP of Cuba the deep sense of reservation of the SED CC over these actions. The SED CC expects a correction in the form of a public confirmation of the flawless and correct behavior of the GDR citizens who were named

in the report to the CC of the CP of Cuba. This is necessary to guarantee the proper work of GDR citizens in Cuba in the interest of both countries. With guarantees that such incidents would not be repeated the completion of the printing press is not possible [handwritten correction to “put into question”]. The CC of the CP of Cuba is requested to hand over to the SED CC the materials allegedly incriminating the GDR citizens.

2. It is necessary to consult with the comrades in the CPSU leadership immediately.

3. The fraternal [communist] parties of the CSSR [Czechoslovakia], Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Korea, Vietnam, France, Italy, Spain, Finland, Chile, Uruguay, Argentina, Columbia,, and Venezuela are to be given internal information.

[...]

[Source: Bundesarchiv Berlin, DY 30, IV A 2/20/265. Obtained by Piero Gleijeses and translated by Christian Ostermann.]



DOCUMENT No. 6

Communist Party of the Soviet Union General Secretary Leonid I. Brezhnev, “About Current Problems of the International Situation and the Struggle of the CPSU for the Cohesion of the World Communist Movement,” secret speech to the CPSU CC Plenum, 9 April 1968 (Excerpt on Cuba)

Comrades! The December plenum has already paid attention to the fact that there are aspects of the international policy of Cuban leaders with which we cannot agree. The [CPSU] Politburo considers it necessary to inform the plenum that in recent times the actions of the Cuban leadership have aggravated Soviet-Cuban relations even further. One has to say, that special conceptions on questions of the building of communism, ways of development of the world revolutionary process, which are currently actively counter-posed to the views of the CPSU and other fraternal parties, were advanced by Fidel Castro several years ago. Thus, he has advanced the idea about the possibility of implementing the construction of socialist and even communist society on an expedited tempo, basing oneself merely on revolutionary enthusiasm.

In foreign policy terms, Castro adopted the course to “push” revolution in the countries of Africa and, especially, of Latin America. In accordance with this [course], [they] have advanced the motto of “many Vietnams,”¹⁴ in other words, creation of the cauldrons of war in many regions of the world. In fact, Castro comes out against any constructive steps and proposals of socialist states aimed at the relaxation of international tensions. In connection with this, [they] are keeping quiet about or openly criticizing our most important foreign policy activities, sharply limiting cooperation with us in international organizations.

The Politburo more than once undertook different steps in order to overcome negative manifestations in the policy of the Cuban leadership. The CC CPSU devotes much attention to helping the Cuban revolution to follow the truly socialist path.

You know, comrades, about the great support which the USSR and other socialist countries give Cuba in strengthening its defense capability, in developing [its] economy, in preparing cadres for the Cuban economy.

Maintaining appropriate tact, we have strived to help Cuban comrades also in making them understand the fallacy of their conceptions. In conversations with Fidel Castro, Dorticos, Raul Castro, and other Cuban leaders, we said many times that direct interference by Cuba in internal affairs of Latin American countries, the sending of armed groups there, aggravates the danger of the invasion [of Cuba], eases the maneuvers of the imperialists in hammering together an anti-Cuba front. Our representatives stressed that the most weighty contribution by Cuba in the revolutionary movement of Latin America and the task of spreading socialist ideas there, would be the successful construction of socialism in Cuba itself, her successes in the development of the economy and further cultural advance.

An important moment in Soviet-Cuban relations was the letter by the CC CPSU addressed to the CC of the Communist Party of Cuba from 23 June 1967. This letter, in particular, said, “In the conditions when Cuba, on many international problems, has begun to adopt a position different from other socialist countries, the question arises before us: How we and other friends of Cuba should struggle for the strengthening of its [i.e., Cuba’s] international position, how to counteract the ploys of the imperialist forces which are striving to isolate your country, to compromise its foreign policy in the eyes of the world public, including progressive circles of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. We don’t want to hide from you that in our efforts to hammer together a wide front of states and democratic forces in support of Cuba against the anti-Cuban actions by the USA, we more and more often have to face difficulties. We are forced to hear

that Cuba itself aggravates its own situation. It is not pleasant for us to say that, but Cuba's own interests in our conviction require [that we tell you] this."

We, of course, understood that such a frank conversation may not be to comrade Fidel Comrade Castro's liking. But we considered it necessary to explain our principled position to separate ourselves from the policy which is going against the interests of peace and socialism.

In June 1967, in accordance with the decision of the Politburo, there was a trip by c. A.N. Kosygin to Cuba. Then [i.e., at that time], in the course of the conversations, all main questions of Soviet-Cuban relations were discussed. What is more, Cuban comrades seemingly leaned to the understanding of the necessity of putting an end to the aggravation of relations with the Soviet Union.

However, subsequent actions by the Cuban leadership [went] in a different direction. In Cuba, [they] did not stop the criticism of the main tenets of the economic policy and foreign policy course determined by the 23rd Congress of the CPSU [in March-April 1966]. CC of the Cuban ComParty [Communist Party] did not even send an official greeting to CC CPSU in connection with the 50th anniversary of [the 1917] October [Bolshevik Revolution].

This was followed by events connected to the January plenum of the CC CP Cuba. This plenum devoted to the censure of the so-called "micro-faction" of Anibal Escalante, was in reality turned into a platform for unfriendly statements against our party, against com-parties [communist parties] of Czechoslovakia, GDR, and many parties of Latin America. The materials of the plenum publicly put in doubt the friendly and internationalist policy of the USSR in relation to Cuba, contain thinly-veiled reproach addressed to the Soviet Union, hints about some sort of "interference" by the USSR in the internal affairs of Cuba.

In February of this year, our ministry of external trade received a memorandum from the government trade delegation of Cuba about Soviet-Cuban trade relations. Written in a sharp tone, this memorandum advances an absurd accusation against the Soviet Union in "constraining" the development of the Cuban economy. It contains a demand to increase Soviet supplies to Cuba of various categories of goods: fuel, metallurgical products, fertilizers, agricultural machines, building materials, etc. Moreover, difficulties with which the Cuban comrades are faced in the implementations of plans of expanding the production of sugar are unambiguously ascribed to the fact that allegedly the Soviet Union "insufficiently" meets the requests of the Cuban side. Here you can already see a direct calculation to put the blame for the difficult economic situation of Cuba on the Soviet Union.

In response to the Cuban memorandum, we sent a letter in which, on the basis of facts, [we] showed the reproaches of the Cuban side to not have any basis. Having remarked that our policy in relation to Cuba has always been built on the basis of internationalism, fraternity, and comradely cooperation, we pointed out that the extent of Soviet supplies to Cuba should be considered in connection with our real capabilities and our obligations in relation to other socialist countries. Inasmuch as the questions raised in the memorandum go far beyond the framework of trade relations, we invited c. Castro (or c. Dorticos) to come to the USSR for the discussion of these questions.

In his letter of response, Fidel Castro in reality repeated the claims contained in the memorandum and in a sharp form rejected the proposal to discuss the aforementioned questions at a high level.

As you see, comrades, there are many difficulties between Cuba and the Soviet Union. One should think, however, that one should not hurry with final conclusions. Emotions are a bad advisor in politics. The interests of the Cuban people, [and] socialist development of Cuba are dear to the Soviet Union. It would be incorrect to condition the support of the victories of the Cuban revolution, of the task of socialism in this country [i.e., Cuba—trans.], on even very serious mistakes and twists of the Cuban leaders. One should take into consideration that the strengthening of positions of socialism in Cuba has great significance for the development of the revolutionary movement in Latin America.

Realizing very well that successful cooperation and real mutual understanding between parties and countries, [and the] liquidation of the difficulties that have arisen [between us], are possible only on the basis of mutual efforts, we will strive towards turning the Soviet-Cuban relations for the better. For this, it seems, it would be useful to hold a meeting of our party-government delegations. Of course, we have no intention to adjust our policy to the pseudo-revolutionary Cuban conceptions. And if we come to such negotiations, we will base ourselves on our principled Marxist-Leninist line. (applause)

[Source: Russian State Archive on Modern History (RGANI), Moscow, fond 2, opis 3, delo 95, ll. 64-69. Obtained and translated by Sergey Radchenko.]



DOCUMENT No. 7

Comment by Defense Minister Marshal Andrei Gretchko
to CPSU CC, 10 April 1968

[...]

As is known, on a series of military-political questions, a special position is also advanced by the leaders of Cuba, who, in the sphere of foreign policy, show clear elements of political adventurism.

We provide all-sided aid to Cuba, including considerable military aid. Thousands of Soviet military specialists, i.e., officers, sergeants, and soldiers, are stationed in Cuba, protecting its security, training its forces. However, all of this does not meet with appropriate recognition on the part of the Cuban leaders.

Our officers, sergeants, soldiers, despite the anti-Soviet splittist activity of the leaders of Cuba, steadfastly and self-sacrificingly carry out their service, honestly carry out their duty, of envoys of the Soviet country.

[Source: RGANI, fond 2, opis 3, delo 94, l. 6. Obtained and translated by Sergey Radchenko.]



DOCUMENT No. 8

“Note on the Final Talk [of an East German/SED Delegation] with the CP Cuba Delegation on 21 November 1968,” Havana, 27 November 1968

On the part of the Cuban delegation Gen. S. Hart was missing in the discussion.

The conversation began at first with a brief exchange of opinions about the provocation carried out by the Venezuelan government against a Cuban ship. Comrade [SED Politburo Member Paul] Verner expressed full support for the Cuban note and the attitude of the Cuban government. Afterwards he responded to the question by Comrade Castro about his impressions from the trip. He expressed his thanks for the well-organized trip, which allowed for a comprehensive overview over the entire and enormous development of the country. It became particularly clear that great strides were being made specifically in the area of agriculture. Comrade Verner asked that the delegation’s gratitude be conveyed to the leaderships of the provincial committees. [...]

Comrade [perhaps Harry—ed.] Tisch emphasized that the impressions gained by the delegation throughout the country deepened the conviction that the unity in the common strug-

gle had to be deepened and strengthened. It was important that we close ranks more closely.

Comrade Verner underlined that it was particularly important to strengthen the relations between the socialist countries and to strengthen the entire socialist community. Specifically it was important to strengthen the international communist movement.

In the international arena, several new problems had emerged which had to be analyzed and mastered. That was particularly the case with regard to the necessity to develop and implement a common strategy of the communist parties against the global strategy of imperialism.

There were also new problems in the development of socialism and in the struggle against state-monopolistic capitalism. In particular it was necessary to carry out the struggle against revisionism in the international workers movement.

For these reasons and several others already mentioned our party favors holding a world council of communist and workers’ parties. The decisive point is to demonstrate the unity of all anti-imperialist forces and their closing of ranks on a global scale.

Comrade Castro explained that the division of the international communist movement was an unfortunate occurrence which had weakened the movement. The countries that were directly confronted with imperialism were particularly affected, they were hurt the most by the schism. It was necessary to counter the global strategy of Imperialism with a global strategy of the revolutionary forces. Imperialism had managed to penetrate Yugoslavia and to turn the League of Communists of Yugoslavia into its puppet. That had already borne fruit, and specifically this policy had caused a great deal of harm in the CSSR [Czechoslovakia]. The Yugoslavs had the most contacts with West German imperialism and with NATO. They had played up the problem of protection against an alleged [potential] aggression by the Soviet Union and dramatized the problems after the events in the CSSR. For all practical purposes they have slid into the imperialist camp. Never before had they gone as far as in the context of the events in the CSSR. The events in the CSSR had unfolded in the exact same manner save for the intervention by the socialist countries.

The problem is how we get to unity. That is not easy. The differences in opinions have sharpened. Various types of resentments have formed which can only be eliminated with difficulty. There’s a lack of unified thought. It is surely necessary to analyze the experiences in this area and to draw conclusions in order to advance to the common goals. Surely none of the communist parties were entirely correct in their stance, and everybody carried a certain degree of responsi-

bility for the development of the international communist movement. Everybody had the duty to fight, even if it was difficult. The Communist Party of Cuba favors a common strategy against imperialism. It was important to increase the fighting spirit of the parties, although, as Comrade Castro emphasized, the Cuban CP was not in fact a bellicose party. It was far away from adventurism and only interested in supporting truly revolutionary spirit. It on the other hand opposed all tendencies of revolutionary impatience, that is, it opposed adventurist tendencies as well as excessive conciliation [*Versöhnlichkeit*] and reformism. It was critical to act realistically, decisively, and firmly, to consider the realities [of the situation] and correctly assess the dangers. In doing so it is important to proceed in a very principled manner within the communist movement. It was particularly important to deepen the consciousness within the revolutionary movement. The changing situation constantly posed new problems. The number of the parties has increased. And the experiences of the international communist movement have become more complex. But all share the class consciousness, the revolutionary spirit, and the anti-imperialist fighting spirit. The forms and methods differ from country to country. But they are not the basic problem. The basic problem are the common objectives, the construction of a communist society, the transformation of society, the fights against exploitation, the fight against the oppression of peoples, and the struggle against imperialist domination. These basic objectives cannot be separated from the struggle for peace. Peace is the duty of the peoples. It forms the same common line and is part of the determined policy of the revolutionary forces. This determination necessarily harbors certain risks. The Cuban CP desires peace, but not at any price.

Comrade Verner interjected that as a matter of course the fight for peace could not be separated from the struggle against imperialism.

Fidel Castro elaborated that the struggle for peace could not be separated from the struggle for the revolution. Therefore certain risks had to be taken. Sometimes concessions were necessary, sometimes they were not possible. During the events in the CSSR two positions were evident. One was the lax position of *laissez-faire* and the other the determined position, even if certain risks had to be taken. Certainly the intervention of the socialist countries had heightened tensions in a certain sense and the imperialist forces were very angry because developments had not gone their way. They now speak a more aggressive language.

The situation had shown that with regard to certain decisions, which are also associated with difficulties, one should not overestimate but also not underestimate imperialism.

Comrade Verner emphasized that although imperialism had become more aggressive, it had not become stronger. With the growth of our successes its aggressiveness had even increased. [...]

Comrade Verner declared that the views of Comrade Castro essentially coincided with those of our party. The problem was that we had a joint point of view, one we also shared with other countries. The task of the parties which had a correct and positive point of view was to fight against false, revisionist, and other faulty assumptions. That in particular could be clarified at a consultation of the communist and workers' parties. Therefore we have to participate in it, this will help to have the correct positions prevail. [handwritten corrected from "The more we are part of it, the better it is for our correct positions to prevail."]

Comrade Tisch interjected that the struggle of revolutionary Cuba was very much present in our country and had made a great impression. Numerous brigades in the socialist enterprises carried the name of Comrade Castro a[nd] o[ther] Cuban revolutionaries. In the context of holding our 7th [SED] Party Plenum the question emerged with our people why no representatives of the CP Cuba had participated in our party plenum. We have understood that some have not attended our party plenum but we could not sufficiently explain the absence of the Cuban comrades.

Comrade Castro declared that the CP Cuba had no problems with the SED. There had been a few incidents after the 7th SED Party Plenum which had been unpleasant but were cleared up now.

Party plenums always come with headaches for us. In the past they turned into centers of polemics. There were two options: either one participated in them out of courtesy, or one elaborated one's problems and considerations and got into conflicts and contradictions with other parties which did not help joint cooperation. One can argue about what is better, either to participate and raise problems or to participate out of courtesy. Our experiences have shown that participation in such party plenums always led to frictions with other parties. This general attitude of the communist party of Cuba has nothing to do with its attitude toward the SED specifically. No one can doubt the solidarity of Cuba with the GDR.

For example the assumption of diplomatic relations with the GDR was associated with abandoning certain economic interests on the part of Cuba. Opening relations with Algeria led to certain decline in relations with Morocco, which had been one of Cuba's most important sugar buyers. Cuba does not waver in its principled policy.

Comrade Verner interjected that we appreciated Cuba's attitude vis-à-vis the GDR very much.

Comrade Castro continued that his party's attitude towards the SED party plenum had been the same one they had taken towards other party plenums. The Cuban comrades appreciate the special situation of the policy of the GDR. They do not criticize us, even if we do not agree in some questions. They understand especially the GDR's attitude towards West German imperialism.

The disagreements which Cuba had with the Soviet Union should not cause a negative impact on relations with the GDR.

The great measure of empathy with the GDR results in particular from the similarities of the situation in which both countries find themselves. The Cuban party is quite capable of differentiating in this respect. Not all the socialist countries took the same attitude as the GDR, which is steadfast and firm in the questions of its struggle. This attitude especially was also particularly evident in connection with the events in the CSSR. The arguments with the "Micro Faction" had caused a certain decree of estrangement with the SED and also with the CPSU. In those days a certain critical atmosphere came about. The Central Committee plenum of the Cuban CP did not accuse the GDR technical personnel; instead the accusations were directed at the respective Cubans. They attempted intrigues and subversion against the party leadership, and they influenced the technicians from other countries who had been informed by them in a misleading fashion. If the Cuban party leadership had intended to criticize the fraternal parties it would have addressed them directly.

Comrade Verner emphasized that this matter between our parties had meanwhile been resolved and was not impairing our relations, even though we had to take the treatment of this issue on the part of Cuba as an attack against our party and in fact viewed is as such.

Comrade Castro stated that his party, moreover, did not have internal documents attacking other parties. The Hungarian party had done such a thing and had circulated internal documents within its ranks that had been directed against the Cuban CP. This was worse than public criticism. He preferred public criticism. But the best thing is when it is not necessary to criticize at all.

[Verner invites a Cuban delegation to visit the GDR in 1969.]

Comrade Castro explained that there were still certain tensions with the Soviet Union at this time but recently relations had improved. Both party and state leaderships wanted to overcome the differences, which surely was in everyone's interest.

[Discussion of the final communique follows.]

[Source: Bundesarchiv Berlin, DY 30, IV A 2/20/265. Obtained by Piero Gleijeses and translated by Christian Ostermann.]



DOCUMENT No. 9

SED CC Department of International Relations, "Note on a Conversation with Com. Carlos Rafael Rodriguez on 22 November 1968 at the Havana Airport," 25 November 1968

Gen. Rodriguez took Com. [Egon] Winkelmann [Deputy Director of International Relations, SED CC] aside and asked if the delegation was satisfied with the communique. [Winkelmann responded that] the communique was good given current circumstances even if the delegation had expected that for example the role of the Soviet Union and the necessity of the common struggle of the communist parties against imperialism would have been mentioned. Gen. Rodriguez responded: "We are delighted by the communique. It is significant particularly for our people as it demonstrates after all that we are moving closer to the socialist countries." Fidel Castro had explained the position towards the Soviet Union, he continued, in the ring [the meaning of ring is unclear—trans.] of Havana. Cuba was interested in an improvement of relations. That's after all why the foreign trade minister and other delegations had gone to the USSR. In response to the question whether Cuba would send a delegation to the USSR at the highest level in the foreseeable future, Gen. Rodriguez responded that they expected that a high[-level] Soviet delegation would come to Cuba since Fidel Castro had already been to the USSR several times. The timing was still uncertain. Gen. Rodriguez emphasized in this context that he very much appreciated our position towards the Soviet Union; the Cuban CP leadership had also been impressed by Khrushchev—except for the matter of the missiles—because he had done a lot for Cuba; even today the Cuban CP considered the USSR as an important guarantor for the maintenance of peace.

Questioned how the Cuban CP felt about future participation in party plenums of fraternal parties, Gen. Rodriguez said that this question was difficult to answer. Up to now they had not attended as they feared strong attacks by the fraternal parties of Latin America. At the last party plenum of the Bulgarian CP, e.g., Cuba had been attacked vehemently from this direction. As the relations with the socialist countries improved a change of the situation would certainly be possible, he contended.

[Rodriguez complains about Bulgarian newspaper attacks on Che Guevara and considers the GDR delegation visit a big step in the rapprochement between both parties.]

[Source: *Bundesarchiv Berlin*, DY 30, IV A 2/20/265. Obtained by Piero Gleijeses and translated by Christian Ostermann.]

Notes

1 Philip Brenner is a professor of international relations and affiliate professor of history at American University. He is the co-author (with James G. Blight) of *Sad and Luminous Days: Cuba's Struggle with the Superpowers after the Missile Crisis* (2002), and co-editor of *A Contemporary Cuba Reader* (2007). He is a member of the advisory board of the National Security Archive.

2 "Telephone Conversation between President Johnson and Former President Eisenhower," June 25, 1967; U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968*, Vol. XIV, *Soviet Union* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2000), Document No. 237.

3 James G. Blight and Philip Brenner, *Sad and Luminous Days: Cuba's Struggle with the Superpowers after the Missile Crisis* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), pp. 85-87.

4 Ernesto Guevara, *The Bolivian Diary of Ernesto Che Guevara*, ed. Mary Waters (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1994).

5 Ed. note: Specifically, Rodriguez was referring to articles in *Pravda* on 25 October 1967 by Rudolfo Ghioldi, a senior official of the Argentine Communist Party, and two days later by Chilean Communist Luis Corvalan. For an analysis, see, e.g., R. Salloch, "Old Principles and the Future of Unity," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Background Report, 15 November 1967, box 133, folder 5, report 47, RFE/RL collection, Open Society Archives, Prague, accessed on-line. The translation of the Czechoslovak record of the 24 November 1967 conversation between Carlos Rafael Rodriguez

and CPCz official Vladimir Koucky was received after Philip Brenner had submitted his introduction.

6 Blight and Brenner, *Sad and Luminous Days*, pp. 133-137. On this episode, see also Jorge I. Domínguez, *To Make a World Safe for Revolution: Cuba's Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 72-77—ed.

7 Yoram Shapira and Edy Kaufman, "Cuba's Israel Policy: The Shift to the Soviet Line," *Cuban Studies*, Volume 8, No. 9, January 1978, pp. 24-25; Maurice Halperin, *The Taming of Fidel Castro* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1981), p. 247.

8 Halperin, *Taming of Fidel Castro*, p. 245. For an examination of similarities between Cuba and Israel, see Philip Brenner and Edy Kaufman, "The Tail Without a Dog," *Davar* (Tel Aviv), June 10, 1992. See also the selection of Israeli documents on the Cuban Missile Crisis, translated and introduced by Guy Laron, elsewhere in this issue of the *CWIHP Bulletin*—ed.

9 Fidel Castro, "Radio and Television Address to the Cuban People," August 23, 1968. Quoted in *Granma*, August 25, 1968, p. 2. For Castro's 23 August 1968 speech, see also Blight and Brenner, *Sad and Luminous Days*, Appendix C (pp. 215-245)—ed.

10 Castro Speech, August 23, 1968, p. 4.

11 Though the text reads "Vilma Kapín," I cannot find any other source which refers to her by this name, although Espín seems widely accepted.

12 Ed. note: a reference to Régis Debray, *Revolution in the Revolution? Armed Struggle and Political Struggle in Latin America* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967).

13 Ed. note: this refers to the 13th Congress of the CPCz on 31 May-4 June 1966; Rodriguez co-headed the Cuban delegation. I thank Mark Kramer for supplying this information.

14 Brezhnev here apparently alludes to Che Guevara's article, published in 1967, calling for the creation of "two, three, many Vietnams" to struggle for revolution in Asia, Africa, and Latin America—ed.