

## **September 3, 1989**

### **Record of a Meeting in Berlin between Hermann Axe and Raul Castro Ruz**

#### **Citation:**

"Record of a Meeting in Berlin between Hermann Axe and Raul Castro Ruz", September 3, 1989, Wilson Center Digital Archive, SAPMO-BArch, Berlin. Document obtained by Christian F. Ostermann and translated by Grace Leonhard.  
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/113168>

#### **Summary:**

Record of a meeting in Berlin on 3 September 1989 between Hermann Axen, member of the Politburo and Secretary of the SED, and Cuban politician Raul Castro. Also present were Cuban politicians Juan Almeida Bosque, Vilma Espin and Carlos Aldana. Topics include US involvement in Panama and its effect on Latin America, internal problems with the Cuban government and acknowledgment that socialist governments in Eastern Europe were changing.

#### **Original Language:**

German

#### **Contents:**

Translation - English

## Record

of a meeting in Berlin on 3 September 1989 between Comrade Hermann Axen, member of the Politburo and Secretary of the Communist Party of the Social Unity Party [SED], and Comrade Raul Castro Ruz, Second Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba and First Deputy of the State Council and Council of Ministers of the Republic of Cuba

The meeting took place during a brief stopover the Cuban delegation had en route to the Conference of Non-Aligned Countries.

Comrade Hermann Axen welcomed Comrade Raul Castro, along with Juan Almeida Bosque and Vilma Espin, the members of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba accompanying him, and Carlos Aldana, member of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, on behalf of Comrade Erich Honecker, Secretary General of the Central Committee of the SED and Chairman of the State Council. He expressed the great pleasure he took in being able to welcome to the capitol of the GDR such long-standing comrades-in-arms from socialist Cuba.

He noted that Cuba's unwavering efforts to advance the causes of peace, disarmament, and detente were followed with great interest in the GDR.

Comrade Raul Castro expressed his heartfelt thanks for these words of welcome and passed on to Comrade Erich Honecker Comrade Fidel Castro's greetings and best wishes for a rapid recovery. He noted that leading the Cuban delegation to the summit meeting of the non-aligned countries was an unusual assignment for him -an assignment that was linked to the complex international and regional situation. In fact, the decision to give him the assignment was made at the last minute. Consideration had been given to appointing Comrade Carlos Rafael Rodriguez leader of the delegation, but he became ill several weeks ago.

Currently the escalation in imperialist pressure is perceived very clearly in Cuba. The Bush administration's reaction to international events has been increasingly aggressive in the Caribbean sphere. The situation in and around Panama, in particular, has intensified. Washington has not recognized the new government in Panama. The constant military maneuvers conducted by US troops in Panama are extremely provocative. The situation has escalated to the point that any shot could lead to a serious military conflict. Cuba's leadership is very concerned about this situation and is following it closely. A military clash in Panama could also directly impact Cuba and Nicaragua.

Addressing the recent trials of members of the military and Ministry of the Interior, Raul Castro characterized them as very serious proceedings that led to a "regrettable outcome" of four death sentences and stiff sentences for a large number of officers. The situation in the Ministry of the Interior is particularly complex. Given the trial of Abrantes, the former Minister of the Interior, the Ministry has been completely reorganized. All high-ranking officers at both the Ministry and Province level have been dismissed. Fidel Castro is personally involved in the reorganization. In terms of the trial of General Ochoa, all of the trial materials have actually been published. More reserve was exercised for the trial of Foreign Minister Abrantes. The "Granma" official Party organ published a detailed lead article on the trial several days ago.

This should be the end of the matter.

Raul Castro remarked that imperialist propaganda is attempting to exploit these

internal problems for intensified subversive action against Cuba. Intensive preparations are currently underway in Cuba to record American television propaganda broadcasts. Given these conditions, it is a great consolation to Cuba that it has dependable allies. "The stability of the GDR is extremely important to us."

Raul Castro noted that Cuba considers its relations with the GDR and SED to be very good. It was remarked with great satisfaction that the main statements made by Comrade Fidel Castro at the 30 Anniversary of the Victory of the Cuban Revolution, as well as on subsequent occasions, were reported in detail in the GDR press. "We are very proud of how our views are in concordance with those of the SED."

Comrade Hermann Axen expressed his thanks for this candid assessment and told his Cuban counterparts about the basic course of the GDR's domestic and foreign policy. It is evident that development in the GDR is stable and dynamic. The resolutions of the XI Party Congress are being attained on an on-going basis. The stability of the German socialist state is demonstrated by the fact that it has been possible to increase national income by 4 per cent. The local elections held in May 1989 are another affirmation of the SED's policies.

At the western edge of the socialist society, the GDR is fulfilling its obligations with the Warsaw Pact. The GDR is a solid barricade, a solid bulwark at this sensitive border in the heart of Europe.

It is increasingly apparent that crises and erosion are occurring in some socialist countries, that is, in our own backyard.

The GDR fundamentally supports and welcomes the changes underway in the Soviet Union. At the same time, however, the GDR rejects any attempts by imperialist propaganda to exploit "Perestroika" and "Glasnost" for counter-revolutionary purposes in the GDR. Because of its steadfast stance, the GDR is currently a special diversionary target against socialism for the most aggressive imperialist forces.

Comrade Hermann Axen noted that the GDR is satisfied that bilateral cooperation between our two countries and parties is operating at a high level. The SED will do anything it can to continue to enhance this cooperation in solidarity. He asked Comrade Raul to convey to Comrade Fidel brotherly regards from Comrade Honecker.

Comrade Raul Castro expressed his gratitude for the [GDR's] hospitality and his best wishes for the GDR as it prepares for its 40th anniversary.