

March 24, 1959

Resolution of the 42nd Meeting of the Czechoslovak Communist Party Politburo, Regarding Talks with Representatives of the People's Socialist Party of Cuba

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Summary:

This presents evidence of Czechoslovak-Cuban relations forming in 1959, which includes the somewhat sensitive issue of Prague's attempting to grasp the relationship and balance of power within Havana's rulers between Fidel Castro's "July 26th" movement and the traditional, pro-Moscow communist party, the People's Socialist Party (PSP).

Credits:

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Contents:

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It is necessary to return these materials to the Technical Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia within one month at the latest.

Enclosure I

Resolution

Of the 42nd meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, 24.3.1959.

Point: News about an interview with a representative from the People's Socialist Party of Cuba (Comrade J. Hendrych)

Passed resolution:

On the basis of news about the meeting with a representative of the People's Socialist Party of Cuba the following points are approved:

The sending of a trade mission to Cuba with the goal of preparing the road to normalizing diplomatic ties,

To express agreement for eventual negotiations about supplying arms should the Czechoslovak delegation be asked,

To provide the requested aid with regards to technical equipment for the People's Socialist Party of Cuba's printing house.

To be carried out by: Comrade J. Hendrych

Comrade V. David[1]

Comrade F. Krajčír[2]

Enclosure III

Memorandum

On talks with Comrade Severo Aguirre, member of the Politburo, Central Committee of the People's Socialist Party of Cuba.

Comrade Aguirre provided information about the situation in Cuba and the work of the People's Socialist Party of Cuba.

He stated that the partisan movement in Cuba, which began as an isolated action of armed petty bourgeois democrats, gradually changed into a mass movement of armed workers and peasants who form 90% of the revolutionary army. Considerable credit for this development goes to the communist party, which has for many years led the masses of landless people and petty farmers to fight for land reform: the rebel mutineers' leader, Fidel Castro, started to look for support amongst the masses of peasants after the tactic of isolated terrorist acts against the Batista dictatorship failed, and the masses of peasants supported Castro when he adopted the communist slogan of democratic land reform.

In 1958 the Central Committee of the People's Socialist Party of Cuba sent a member of the Politburo, Comrade [Carlos Rafael] Rodriguez, to the headquarters of the rebel movement. The Party gave its support to the rebel movement and gained high positions within the organization. A series of significant command posts were held and are held by communists. Fidel Castro, who at the beginning of 1957 still yielded to anticommunist attitudes on the assumption that communists intend the "misuse"

him for their own goals, gradually shed his anticommunist prejudices. American imperialism itself had much to do with his positive political development, since on the one hand it flirted with Castro's movement and pretended to sympathize with it, and on the other hand embraced the fascist dictator Batista with all-round military aid.

According to the Cuban comrades, Castro is sensitive to the requests of the masses. In the past the communists criticized Castro often—even publicly—for his incorrect approach that testified to the petty bourgeois mentality of the uprising's leaders. For example, in the spring of last year an appeal for a revolt was made to the soldiers in Batista's army—together with a warning that in the event instructions would not be followed, the leaders of the uprising would be shot. As a result, the honorable members of the ruling army and fascist criminals were brought together for a time.

Fidel Castro belongs to the leftist group the "July 26th of July Movement," to which his younger, though politically more mature brother Raul also belongs (the present leader of the armed forces). In government, Fidel Castro has surrounded himself with honorable, uncorrupted politicians who are partly fearful of the increasing pressure of American imperialism. The Popular Socialist Party of Cuba is pushing for cooperation not only with the leftist elements in the "July 26th Movement," but also with its center. In the realm of politics the widest democratic front is working to neutralize the rightist elements in the "July 26th Movement."

The party enjoyed considerable success during the reorganization of workers' divisions, though it must overcome sabotage from the rightist wing of the "July 26th Movement," which is opposed to the consistent democratization of the divisions and does not want to cooperate with the communists. In the countryside, communists are working in 300 local peasant unions. The party supports shared land reform that was begun on the liberated partisan territory and gives landless peasants (so-called precaristas) and petty farmers free land up to an area of 26 hectares, and the option of leasing land up to 39 hectares at a low rate.

The Popular Socialist Party of Cuba is requesting a change in the institutional law on land reform, which currently requires payment for land in advance, and in cash. In the next stage of the struggle for land reform the Party will request the confiscation of property belonging to landowners. American firms, which own 66% of the agricultural land, fall into this category. Thus, the fight for land reform is related to the fight against imperialism. At the head of the revolutionary government, Fidel Castro took the first step in nationalizing American companies by installing a state control commission into the staff of the American firm [International] Tel. & Tel. [ITT] Comp., which maintains disproportionately high telephone rates for its customers.

The bourgeois democratic revolution in Cuba was, and remains, largely led by the anti-imperialist petty bourgeois and the national middle-bourgeois. However, the tone is currently not set by the representatives of democratic opposition in the government, but rather by the petty bourgeois leaders of the revolutionary army (Fidel and Raul Castro, E. Guevara), who rely on the people's army. Communists have a high level of influence in this army, and they sympathize with these men [Castro, etc.]. The Cuban revolution included a combination of the people's partisan struggle and the actions of the working class in the cities, who came to support the people's armed uprising. The actions of the working class (which were above all actively organized by communists) frustrated the intentions of the USA to replace the inevitable fall of Batista's government with a new puppet.

During the course of the progressive bourgeois democratic revolution, the state bourgeois apparatus was largely broken-up: the army has only an insignificant number of the lower-ranking officers from the former ruling army (those who could prove that they did not participate in military actions against the people). The police forces were replaced and the so-called "bureau for the subjugation of communism"

was closed down. Those political parties that compromised themselves by participating in the election farce of November 1958 were dissolved. People were replaced in the departments of justice and the municipal boards, including the mayors. Members of the Popular Socialist Party of Cuba were actively involved in all these revolutionary actions. Though the Cuban bourgeois democratic revolution did not begin under the leadership of the proletariat, the proletariat's example did influence and continues to influence its course with progressive slogans and tactics. The communists continue to develop increasingly better conditions for fulfilling the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolution. Counter-revolutionary forces are currently disorganized and limited to individual groups of reactionary bourgeois that are isolated from the masses. They are gradually reorganizing themselves, especially with the support of the reactionary press. This process will reinitiate individual counter-revolutionary fronts of the bourgeois, though according to the opinions of the Cuban comrades, this will still take some time. Therefore, American imperialism cannot openly take up supporting the counterrevolutionaries who pretend to agree with the revolution and propagate the slogan: "for the revolution, but away with the communists." This situation is allowing for the renewal of the Popular Socialist Party, which had over 10,000 members at the end of December. Since then, the number of members has apparently increased considerably. The Party publishes a daily, Hoy (Today); a weekly bulletin for its functionaries, Carta Semanal (Weekly Letter); and it is preparing to once again publish the theoretical magazine Fundamentales (The Basics). The Party's propaganda has two important tasks: firstly, to explain to the masses that they must become the main force which will determine further development in Cuba, and secondly, to paralyze the anti-communist propaganda spread widely by the bourgeois press, which abuses "freedom for all."

Comrade Aguirre emphasized the fact that the revolutionary commanders, including Fidel Castro, are counting on the fact that after a time, should its planned economic boycott of Cuba prove futile, the USA will proceed to provoke an armed struggle. In this case the exceptional assistance of socialist countries acquires meaning. Of these, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic has in Cuba particularly favorable conditions to provide aid. Diplomatic ties between the two countries were not interrupted (as they were with the USSR), but they were settled practically as a consequence of the fact that the Czechoslovak charge d'affaires was recalled before February 1948 for economic reasons. Trade with Cuban companies continued even during Batista's dictatorship.

These concrete questions were raised during the discussion:

The sending of a Czechoslovak trade mission to Cuba. It would have a semi-official character and arrive without any publicity. The mission would discuss the possibility of expanding Czechoslovak trade with Cuba, and would emphasize the wish to grant the Cuban government economic aid on the basis of a mutual agreement. The Cuban comrades pledge that for such a trade mission, equipped with full powers and politically well-prepared, they will arrange meetings with the major representatives of the Cuban government, including Fidel Castro.

This is a suitable moment for such a step. According to Comrade Aguirre, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic can figure as "an ice-breaker of the socialist camp" in the Caribbean region. In relation to this he said that for example, the Chinese People's Republic could purchase Cuban sugar through the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (thus far it is purchased through England). In the near future the Cuban comrades will determine which of the Castro government's diplomatic representatives would be best suited to carry out an authorized probe. On the 11th of this month, Comrade Aguirre discussed with Comrade Hloch at the Ministry of International Trade some detailed questions related to the eventual sending of an unofficial Czechoslovak trade mission to Cuba.

With regards to the Cuban comrades' request dating to the end of 1958 (the supply of arms to the insurgent army), Comrade Aguirre emphasized that the situation changed with the quick overthrow of the Batista dictatorship. However, in the event that the Cuban government should request the sale of military technology, it would be correct for the Czechoslovak side to oblige. According to the Cuban comrades, such an act would have a very positive psychological effect not only on the masses, but also on the leadership of the "July 26th Movement," for which it was always difficult to secure arms.

Furthermore, Comrade Aguirre requested technical aid (type-setting machines) for the Popular Socialist Party of Cuba's new printing press. He said that the Popular Socialist Party will receive assistance from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the East German Socialist Party, which will donate a rotary press. From our side it would be possible to provide five well-kept line presses that have been utilized until now.

In advance, Comrade Hendrych voiced his agreement with the suggestions and requests of Comrade Aguirre, adding that he will inform the Party's leadership.

10.3.1959

[1] Václav David was the Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs.

[2] František Krajčír was the Czechoslovak Minister of International Trade.