

July 12, 1967

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

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Summary:

Meeting minutes from a conference of the Communist and Workers' parties and chiefs of governments of the socialist countries on the situation in the Middle East (held in Budapest, 11-12 July 1967). Kosygin first reports on conversations with Charles De Gaulle in Paris and with Lyndon Johnson in Glassboro.

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Minutes

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 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.