

April 9, 1968

**Secret Speech by Leonid I. Brezhnev CPSU CC
Plenum, 'About Current Problems of the
International Situation and the Struggle of the CPSU
for the Cohesion of the World Communist
Movement'**

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Summary:

An excerpt on Cuba from Communist Party of the Soviet Union General Secretary Leonid I. Brezhnev's secret speech, "About Current Problems of the International Situation and the Struggle of the CPSU for the Cohesion of the World Communist Movement," to the CPSU CC Plenum on 9 April 1968.

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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,"¹ 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)

[1] 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.