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Note on the Final Talk with the CP Cuba Delegation on 21 November 1968

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Summary:

A Note on the Final Talk with the CP Cuba Delegation on 21 November 1968 about Cuba's foreign relations with various countries, including the Soviet Union and GDR.

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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 struggle 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 responsibility 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 [Versoehnlertum] 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 degree 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.]