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Information of the Bulgarian Embassy in Havana Regarding the Situation in Cuba in 1963

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Summary:

The Bulgarian Embassy in Havana reports to the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party and the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on political, economic, and cultural developments in Cuba circa 1963. Cuba is politically united, but is experiencing economic hardship after the "Caribbean Crisis" primarily because of the US embargo. In the report, embassy staff reviews developments between socialist countries and Cuba throughout 1963. Some examples include communist aid to Cuba after Hurricane Flora and Cuba's stance on Sino-Soviet relations. Bulgaria's show of solidarity resulted in concrete political, economic, and cultural cooperation. Embassy staff notes the drawbacks and benefits of Bulgaria's relationship with Cuba.

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INFORMATION

On the political, economic and cultural development of the Republic of Cuba in 1963

The Republic of Cuba, the first socialist country in [Latin] America, passed the fifth year of its existence in a more favorable international situation and in a more difficult economic situation.

The general détente exerted an influence on the Cuban people's life and struggle for the building of socialism. Having survived the Caribbean crisis, which showed the great strength of the Soviet Union, and of the whole socialist community, the Cuban people, united around its revolutionary government, continued more confidently along the path it had chosen.

Political situation in the country

1963 was a difficult year for the Cuban people. It was the year of the revolutionary government's and Cuban peoples' new efforts to further strengthen the economic development of the country, to overcome the new aggressions and economic difficulties, caused by the imperialists. After the end of the Caribbean crisis, the USA promised not to attack Cuba, yet its aggressive acts and provocations did not stop. In spite of the general alleviation of [the tension in] the international situation, they continued to transfer Intelligence Service agents and contra revolutionaries, to import arms in the country and thus to sustain tensions in Cuba. The USA undertook new measures for economic repression against Cuba and exerted influence on the capitalist countries to tighten the economic embargo.

In addition, we have to mention the serious internal economic difficulties that play a significant role in the country's deteriorating economic state.

The fierce Chinese propaganda against the Soviet Union and the international communist and worker's movement, which intensified extremely after the Caribbean crisis, exerted a negative influence on the country's political life.

[...]

II. The Cuban International Situation

After the Caribbean crisis, Cuba's international situation improved significantly. The USA was forced to promise, before the USSR and the whole world, not to attack Cuba. The USSR and the socialist countries backed up the Cuban revolution, ready to perform their international duty to defend, at any rate, the Cuban peoples' revolutionary achievements against the imperialists' aggression. These circumstances strengthened the Republic of Cuba's international position and increased its authority amongst the Latin American and other countries. It contributed to a lot of non-aligned nations' and some capitalist countries' improvement of their relations with Cuba by activating their political, economic and cultural relations with it.

We must note that the Cuban government leaders and Fidel Castro, above all, are especially sensitive toward the USA and are constantly dealing with it and its policy in their speeches. They do this more [often] than necessary, even at the expense of the more vital to the revolution questions and the construction of socialism. These circumstances have an impact on the attempts to normalize the relations between the two countries and to apply the principles of settling controversial issues among different countries by peaceful means. At the basis of this behavior is the Cuban leaders' will to emphasize their unyielding attitude towards the American imperialists and their attempt to assert themselves as the most ardent defenders of the peoples of Latin America, Africa, and even Asia.

A positive fact is that recently there have been certain signs of improvement of the situation in this respect, especially after Fidel Castro's second visit to Moscow, but it is still early to draw conclusions.

As a result of the Cuban government's policy and the USSR's and other socialist countries' fraternal help, the "walls" built by American imperialism around Cuba have been demolished.

[...]

What were the relations between Cuba, on the one hand, and the USSR and other socialist countries, on the other?

As in the preceding years, so in the year that has just ended, the USSR thoroughly backed the Cuban people's attempts to build a socialist society in the country and their heroic struggle against the American imperialists' aggressive acts.

The USSR would not allow the life of the country to be interrupted due to the lack of petrol, it would not allow Cuba's economic development to be at risk because of the canceling of the sugar quota by the USA. It helped Cuba to strengthen its defense. In October 1962 it stopped the campaign to overrun the country. The USSR paid great attention to and cared for the internal difficulties Cuba was experiencing when transforming its life, economy, and state organization. It helped with the training of personnel, and the education of the army. Thousands of young people went to the Soviet Union to study in its plants, collective farms, and universities. A great part of them came back in 1963 and were sent to work at different sites in the country.

This comprehensive assistance, which was self-evident in all spheres of life, shattered all attempts of the slanderous propaganda to create distrust and discord in the immediate aftermath of the Caribbean crisis, when the conditions were most favorable [for such propaganda]. Quite a lot of people were hoping that this discord will intensify, but they experienced a great disappointment when Fidel Castro went to Moscow in April 1963. The disappointment was still greater when, seven months later, in January 1964, he went to the Soviet Union again. Fidel Castro's double visit to the Soviet Union made the Cuban people extremely happy. It demonstrated the strong and indestructible friendship between the Soviet Union and Cuba.

[...]

We must note that during both visits a lot of political, economic and other issues were discussed; joint declarations of the two countries on the countries' attitudes towards the international situation and to issues concerning Cuba were signed. These are valuable political and state documents on the further activities of the two countries. These are documents with which the USSR has added to Cuba's international prestige as a country and Fidel Castro's personal authority as a state leader. Of considerable importance to the Cuban people is the signed long-term economic agreement for the sale of sugar to the Soviet Union that places the economic relations between the two countries on a new basis and marks a new stage in the economic cooperation between the two. This agreement will from now on exert a great political impact on the Latin American peoples and the other countries, economically dependent on imperialists.

Similar relations of fraternal solidarity are being established between Cuba and the other socialist countries. The latter saw the great economic difficulties that Cuba was faced with and offered economic and scientific help as far as they could afford it. In the current accounts of their balance sheets the result was positive balances. Because of its internal and external difficulties, Cuba was not able to make up for them. In spite of their own economic difficulties, the socialist countries helped Cuba in

accordance with the fraternal relations and international solidarity that existed among them.

When the natural disaster, the cyclone "Flora," befell Cuba, the socialist countries were the first to offer not only symbolic, but effective help so that the damage incurred is promptly made up for.

[...]

It is necessary to concentrate on some of the most typical points in the revolutionary government of Cuba's foreign policy which distinguish Cuba's foreign policy from that of the other socialist countries. The most important among them is the revolutionary government's special attitude to the Moscow agreement for a partial ban on the nuclear weapons experiments, to the creation of a nuclear-free zone in Latin America, to the revolutionary struggle of the Latin American peoples, to the ideological differences between the international communist movement and the Chinese Communist Party etc.

Under the pretext of preserving the unity of the communist parties, Cuba's leaders undertook a centralist position in the ideological dispute between the CPSU and the other communist and workers' parties, on the one hand, and the Chinese CP, on the other. They created favorable conditions for Chinese propaganda. The United Party of the Socialist Revolution kept silent on the differences that had arisen. It published the letters between the CPSU and the ChCP without expressing a clear and definite opinion on them, without acquainting its party members and the people with its stand on this important question of the revolutionary struggle. The party members and the people were given the "freedom" to orient themselves alone.

The role of the Chinese embassy in Havana in this respect was very pernicious. It took advantage of the favorable conditions that were created in order to carry out the basest anti-Soviet campaign. The "Xinhua" [Chinese state news] agency bulletin which had been published in 25 000 copies till then, was spreading mean slanders against the USSR, the CPSU and against comrade Khrushchev personally. Thus an attempt was made at creating a public opinion against the Soviet Union, the latter having helped the Cuban revolution generously and gratuitously. The same bulletin also distorted the statements of important comrades from the fraternal countries, caused disputes on definite issues with the aim of blurring the working class's political ideas.

The Cuban leaders find the "theoretical" works of some Chinese theoreticians especially appealing and they rely on them in their practice. This refers above all to the so-called building of socialism on their own; to the ways the working class should seize power etc.

Quite interesting is Cuba's attitude to the Moscow agreement on a partial ban of the nuclear weapons experiments. On the very next day after the agreement had been signed in Moscow Fidel Castro declared in his speech that the agreement on stopping the nuclear weapons experiments is "a victory of the world conscience of peace, a victory of the Soviet Union's policy."

[...]

But after all that it was difficult to explain the situation in which the Cuban government found itself after the delay on their part to join the agreement, and later with its refusal to sign it.

[...]

It would have been more appropriate if the Cuban government had signed the agreement and together with it had made its objections and notes on the US aggressive policy. This would have corresponded to both Fidel Castro's stand on the agreement in the beginning and to the Cuban people's desires.

It didn't do that and practically doubted the correctness of the Soviet Union's and other socialist countries' peaceful mutual coexistence policy.

In terms of its foreign policy Cuba has a special understanding and attitude toward the Latin American countries and their revolutionary struggle. It takes for granted the existence of a revolutionary situation in all Latin American countries and the necessity of revolutionary actions. The Cuban leaders declare all Latin American communist parties, not adopting their line of behavior old, defeatist, unable to undertake a revolutionary struggle and seek other social forces to lead the struggle. Similar was their attitude to the Costa Rica, Honduras, Ecuador and Peru parties, inflicting considerable harm on their revolutionary struggle.

We must note that their actions coincide with those of the Chinese Communist Party in that respect.

Why is it so?

Because there is a non-Marxist view common among the Cuban leaders that a revolutionary situation in a country can always be created if there exists a group of brave people to become partisans /guerrillas/ and lead the people to a revolutionary struggle.

Moreover, another widespread view among them is that Cuba is entitled to lead the revolutionary struggle in Latin America and that is why they abruptly interfere with the other parties' deeds. There is also a tendency to lead the anti-imperialist struggle not only in [South] America but on other continents as well. So when we talk of Cuba's "own line of behavior," we have to take into consideration these peculiarities of its foreign policy.

In spite of all this we must note that there is a tendency to eliminate mistakes [and] to clarify the party's line and foreign policy to the [other] socialist countries. This was particularly evident after Fidel Castro's second visit to the Soviet Union.

[...]

IV. Political, economic and cultural relations between the People's Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of Cuba

Political relations

The relations between the two countries in the preceding period were constantly developing, expanding and strengthening.

In the first place, our political relations with Cuba developed under the conditions created after the Caribbean crisis. Our country, together with the other Warsaw Pact countries showed complete solidarity and support for the Cuban revolution. Some vague points in the events that took place during the crisis were gradually clarified, in spite of the propaganda of the Chinese Embassy here. The cold attitude towards the Soviet Union during the Caribbean crisis, due to the withdrawal of the missiles, was felt towards our country and our specialists here as well. But we must admit that this situation did not continue for long. Life proved the correctness of the way the crisis was resolved and the nuclear war avoided; and what was very important for Cuba -

the salvation of the Cuban revolution. More and more people were becoming convinced that the socialist countries of the Warsaw Pact had defended Cuba and helped avoid the immediate threat for Cuba. The idea that Cuba's economic problems had to be addressed was coming to the fore.

Our Party, government and people did not miss a single opportunity to express their solidarity, help and support for the Cuban revolution. The solidarity and help was realized in different ways. First, we should mention our government's support for Cuba against the aggressive North American imperialist acts in front of the international organizations, the UN above all. We should also mention the manifested solidarity with the Cuban revolution in our country; the contribution of the press and radio in this respect, the delegations which were exchanged. And finally, we should mention the scientific and technical help and the help offered when the cyclone struck the eastern part of the country.

Mentioning these solidarity acts [in support of] the Cuban people and revolution, we should emphasize the positive role played by some of these [acts of solidarity] in bringing the two countries closer and in strengthening and improving the relations between them.

In the second place, we should mention the significant role played by the exchange of delegations in improving the political relations between the two countries. The exchange of delegations on different levels is extremely important. During this year, unlike the preceding ones, our top-level delegations came here.

[...]

We should also mention here that the Soviet Union and our country were the only ones to send a youth specialist brigade to help the Cuban agriculture. This visit was important not only for the technical support for the Cuban agriculture but for the solidarity expressed by our Youth communist organization /Comsomol/ to the Cuban Union of young communists. A lot of friendship activities took place and the young people came to know each other better in their work activities. This is the only relationship of this kind between the two youth organizations, not taking into consideration the [cooperation with the] Soviet Union. The role of the youth brigade is extremely positive. These relations between the two youth communist organizations should, in one way or other, continue in the future.

[...]

2. Economic relations

The economic relations between the People's Republic of Bulgaria and Cuba improved a lot. The trade for 1963 amounted to 20,640,000 dollars in the two countries. Our country undertook the design and equipment of 12 Cuban industrial enterprises. Over 230 Bulgarian specialists helped the socialist construction in Cuba with their knowledge and experience. Bulgaria is second after the Soviet Union in the number of specialists sent to Cuba. The current year laid out the basis of a close scientific and technical cooperation, which, from now [on], will develop on a larger scale. Undoubtedly, this is a significant success, a result of the Embassy's and Commercial Representative's efforts to improve the economic relations between the two countries.

In spite of all that was mentioned above, the economic cooperation between the countries did not reach the [desired] level [based on] the opportunities [for cooperation] that existed between the two fraternal countries. Both the trade and the scientific and technical help to Cuba could be greater, could be realized on a larger scale.

[...]

The drawbacks of our practical economic cooperation with Cuba became most evident during the trade negotiations for 1964. We happened to be in a situation in which we couldn't gather goods to pay the 110,000 tons of sugar supplies, although we received them at an old price; our active balance of trade, the repayment of our debt and other receivables were taken into consideration. Our country was obliged to assume additional duties to supply Cuba with other valuable goods, which it was short of in satisfying its own needs.

[...]

3. Cultural cooperation

As was already mentioned in the report in November and in different information and reports, the existing cooperation regarding the cultural agreement was not satisfactory. The main reason for that was that there were no budget funds in Cuba to cover the plan for applying the cultural agreement between Bulgaria and Cuba, signed in May 1963 in Bulgaria. Quite a lot of its good and useful initiatives simply remained hanging in the air.

[...]

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