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Memorandum from Bulgarian Communist Youth Union to BCP Politburo Regarding Competing Cuban and Bulgarian Candidacies to Host the IX World Youth Festival

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Summary:

Georgi Atanasov, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Dimitrov Communist Youth Union, reviews the selection process for the 9th World Youth Festival host location. Cuba and Bulgaria both are candidates. Atanasov explains Cuba's campaign and Bulgaria's concern that strong support for its candidacy will sour its relations with Cuba. Atanasov contemplates problems with Cuba's candidacy and ways to prevent a diplomatic disagreement.

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CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE DIMITROV COMMUNIST YOUTH UNION TO POLITBURO
OF CC OF BCP SOFIA

MEMORANDUM[1]

From GEORGI ATANASSOV[2]- First Secretary of the Central Committee
of DCYU

ABOUT: Some issues of the preparation of the Ninth World Festival of Youth and
Students

Comrades,

After the Ninth World Festival has been postponed twice because of the well-known
events in Algeria and Ghana, on 26-27 January this year [1967], a meeting of the
International Organizing Committee (IOC) is summoned again in Vienna. At that
meeting the presented nominations for a host of the festival will be discussed and a
resolution will be made about the time and the place for its carrying out. As members
of IOC we are also preparing to send a delegation of ours.

What is the situation at the moment, immediately before the meeting of IOC?

As it is well known, the candidates for hosts of the festival are two countries -
Bulgaria and Cuba.

The talks and the consultations up to date show that the overwhelming majority of
the organizations - members of IOC made statements in favor of our nomination.
From 42 organizations - members of IOC - up to now about 23 organizations have
supported our nomination. These are: the youth unions from the brotherly socialist
countries - USSR, Poland, GDR, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia, a number of
organizations from Africa - Sudan, Senegal, Guinea, UAR, from Latin America -
Argentina, Brazil, Chile, from Asia - India, Lebanon, Iraq and the organizations from
France, Australia, Canada and Cyprus.

Six or seven organizations support the nomination of Cuba - Guatemala, Venezuela,
Congo (Brazzaville), Japan, Indonesia, in one or other form the youth unions of Finland
and Italy give their preference to the nomination of Cuba.

Approximately the same number of organizations has not defined their position yet or
has not announced it.

Besides, it is expected that delegations of China and Ghana will not take part in the
meeting of the IOC (because of the events there) and USA (they have not taken their
place in IOC at all).

At such a configuration of the powers, the talks and the consultations between the
different youth organizations are conducted at the moment.

We want to note that recently the Cuban comrades display immense activity, sending
delegations to the different continents, manipulating youth leaders and are extremely
anxious to stand up for their nomination.

They unambiguously emphasize that a resolution of the IOC in favor of another
nomination will be interpreted by them not only as an attitude to the Union of the

young communists, but also as a lack of understanding of the needs of the revolution and the situation in Cuba.

The basic arguments of the Cuban comrades in favor of their nomination are the following:

After all festivals up to now have been held in Europe, it is only proper for the Ninth Festival to be in a country in Asia, Africa, or Latin America.

Therefore, the festival must be staged in the country that needs the most international-support and solidarity. Such a country is Vietnam. However, as the Vietnamese comrades are not able to receive it, it is only fair for the festival to be conducted in Cuba, which is undergoing difficulties because of the embargo.

This festival should be a powerful stimulus in the struggle of the young people from Asia, Africa and Latin America and a challenge to the American imperialism. This will reflect to a great extent the spirit of the resolutions of the Tricontinental Conference.

Guided by the stated motives, the Cuban comrades declare that they are ready to: accept any suggestions of IOC about the character and the structure of the festival, to grant to IOC the right to issue visas to the participants, to give one million dollars in optional currency for maintenance of the festival, and to take on a significant part of the transportation expenses.

For many years Dimitrov's Comsomol (Young Communist League) and the Union of the young communists of Cuba have kept very good contacts. We are constantly making efforts for their further development. An expression of this was the recent visit of our delegation in Cuba and the friendly meetings and talks which we conducted.

Now the nominations of our two brotherly organizations as hosts of the festival will be discussed. Provided how fervently the Cuban comrades stand up for their nomination and [given] the fact that the majority prevails in favor of Sofia, it is not impossible for our nomination to be interpreted as opposing theirs, and for this to have an unfavorable effect on the relations between our youth unions. For example, their representatives made statements that on the issue of the location of the festival they "will have to start an argument with the Bulgarian comrades." Moreover, as far as behind this explicit position stands the communist party of Cuba, as well, it is not impossible for this to affect the relations between our countries. The considerations of the majority of the youth organizations, including the most influential ones from Latin America (Argentina, Brazil, and Chile), about the rejection of the Cuban nomination have a principle basis.

This was emphasized at the meeting conducted in November 1966 in Moscow of the first secretaries of the Central Committees of the Soviet Union of the Communist Youth (SUCY) and DCYU, as well. At that meeting comrade Georgi Atanassov, after presenting the contents of the talks which he had with the Cuban comrades, he expressed the idea of withdrawing our nomination if this proves expedient. However, comrade S. P. Pavlov confirmed once again their position that the festival must not be carried out in Cuba and that they support firmly the nomination of Bulgaria. He declared unambiguously that such is the position of Politburo of CC of Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), as well.

The considerations for this are based on disagreement with the common political concepts from which the Cuban comrades proceed in the international youth movement. This includes the Cuban understanding about the resolutions of the Tricontinental Conference as a basis for the activities of the international youth

organizations, their attempts at organizational differentiating of the youth powers from Latin America under their leadership, their wrong approach to the problems of the revolution and the forms of the struggle against imperialism and so on.

On the other hand, there are definite difficulties regarding the complexity of the political situation in Cuba. There is a real danger for it to limit the possibilities for a full display of the festival slogans for solidarity, peace, and friendship. A possible festival in Cuba unquestionably would become an expression of the solidarity with the struggle of the peoples of Cuba and Vietnam, but the other problems of the world democratic youth movement and particularly those of the African youth would remain in the background. The experience up to now does not give [us] ground to believe in the declarations of our Cuban comrades that the IOC will have the full opportunity to define the contents and the character of the festival.

There are technical difficulties referring to the remoteness, transport, financing and others, which inevitably will limit the representative character of the festival in Cuba and on their behalf will turn into political ones.

What is our opinion about what should be done in this situation?

Sharing the above considerations, the Central Committee of Dimitrov's Communist Youth Union thinks that there should not be a festival in Cuba.

In order to avoid possible aggravation of our relations with the Union of the young communists of Cuba, from the viewpoint of the interests of our country, perhaps it is expedient to find a third nomination for conducting the festival. In this respect a while ago a number of researches were made which did not give a positive result.

That is why we think that we have to stand up for our nomination, launched, moreover, not because of accidental and opportunistic considerations, which we are going to present at the meeting of the IOC.

[...]

In our view, the Ninth festival, with its appeal and mobilizing power over the youth masses all over the world, based on the ideals for solidarity, peace, and friendship, must be a powerful, large-scale political demonstration of the activity and the unity of the world democratic youth.

Together with this, we are for a festival open to all powers that want to participate in it, a festival that gives a full opportunity for broad discussions and numerous meetings of different youth powers.

Therefore, from political point of view we are willing to ensure full success of the festival.

Besides, all material, cultural, geographic and other prerequisites needed for such a successful festival are available in our country.

There is a certain danger - due to the insistence of the Cuban comrades and to the fact that some youth unions support them - at the forthcoming meeting of the IOC for the decision in favor of our nomination not to be adopted unanimously and for some unions to make a statement that they do not support such a festival. It is not impossible [that] a resolution without an explicit majority [would] encourage the centrifugal forces in the youth movement and give grounds to the Cuban youth

leaders to intensify the criticism and the attacks against the World Federation of the Democratic Youth (WFDY) and the International Students Union (ISU). Of course, we do not assume the possibility that the Union of the young communists in Cuba would sever its relations with the WFDY.

This depends to a large extent on the position of the youth organizations from Africa. In order to secure their support for our nomination, two days ago the representative of SUCY in WFDY suggested to us to consider whether it is not expedient to send a delegation of ours to Africa. In our view, such a step on our behalf is unjustified. The other brotherly youth unions could do this. At the same time however, we consider it necessary for the Foreign Ministry, through the embassies of PRB in Algeria, Mali, Tanzania, Guinea, Sudan and Morocco, to explain to the leaders of the youth organizations in these countries our motives for the carrying out of the festival in Sofia.

On its behalf our delegation at the meeting of the IOC must do everything necessary and possible to preserve our good relations with the Union of the young communists in Cuba.

If there is no prospect for an explicit majority in favor of our nomination, it could be expedient to try to postpone the meeting of the International Organizing Committee as [a measure of] last resort. In our opinion only such a majority can influence the Cuban youth leaders.

We think that our nomination does not contradict the nomination of Cuba. We regard it as we do any other one, as an opportunity. We could welcome other nominations, which will present an opportunity for a better choice. We showed that this is so with our positive attitude to the previous two resolutions of the IOC about Algeria and Ghana. And now we are also ready, if the international youth movement decides that it will be more expedient for the festival to be conducted in another country, not to protest and to participate in such a festival.

CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF DCYU
SECRETARY: G. ATANASSOV

[1] Presented at CC BCP Politburo session of 17 January 1967.

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