

December 31, 1975

**Todor Zhivkov, Reports to Bulgarian Communist
Party Politburo on his Visit to Cuba**

Citation:

"Todor Zhivkov, Reports to Bulgarian Communist Party Politburo on his Visit to Cuba", December 31, 1975, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Central State Archive of Bulgaria (TsDA), Sofia, Fond 1-B, Opis 35, a.e. 5581; translated by Julia Cherneva, edited by Jordan Baev. Obtained by the Bulgarian Cold War Research Group.
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/116462>

Summary:

Todor Zhivkov reports his impressions of his recent visit to Cuba. The report is a rough outline of topics ranging from advancements in the Cuban revolution since 1959 to prospective ways to improve Bulgarian-Cuban relations. In the report Zhivkov presents his assessment of the Cuban Communist Party congress. Party documents show a maturing understanding of Marxism-Leninism and a new clarity in the Cuban Communist Party as a whole. Zhivkov's report includes examples of Cuba's self-criticism and Zhivkov's own criticism of Cuba's leadership. Some topics of discussion include: cultural and economic specialist exchanges, the price of sugar, Cuba's increased collaboration with Soviet Union and other socialist nations, and economic subsidies and aid.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

Original Language:

Bulgarian

Contents:

Translation - English

INFORMATION

of comrade TODOR ZHIVKOV about his visit to the Republic of Cuba delivered at the meeting of Politburo of CC of BCP on 31 December 1975

If we are to give an assessment of the congress of the Cuban Communist Party, it has to be the following: a historical event in the life of Cuba and the Cuban revolution. An important stage in the singular development of the revolutionary and communist movement in Cuba is completed.

What does this uniqueness consist of?

The period since 1959 is a difficult period, during which three objective and mutually linked processes developed.

1. Deep qualitative changes in the economy (industry and agriculture), culture, ideological life, which determine the socialist character of the Cuban revolution.
2. Strengthening and consolidating of the hegemonic role of the working class and of its union with the rural masses and the progressive intelligence.
3. Consolidation of the subjective factor and formation and stabilization of the Cuban Communist Party as a militant vanguard, successor, and follower of the revolutionary traditions of the first Marxist-Leninist party in Cuba, of the "July 26th" movement and of the other revolutionary forces.

The congress adopted basic documents in which this revolutionary development is reflected and fixed normatively and the main directions in the development of the party, the state, the economy, as well as the political line are outlined.

[...]

In the development of these materials the documents of our party are utilized creatively.

About the report of CC, about the documents and about the Congress in general.

- Thorough and comprehensive analysis of the basic domestic and foreign problems, analysis in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism;
- Distinct, definite and open brotherly attitude to CPSU and the USSR, to their role in the Cuban revolution and the international life;

It was emphasized that:

- "They infinitely believe in Lenin's motherland."
- "Without the USSR the fighters of Cuba could have died heroically like the fighters of the Paris Commune but they would not have won;"
- "The USSR is a world mainstay of socialism."

About China:

In his report Fidel Castro indirectly criticized the Chinese leaders and their policy. The passage in our greeting, in which the Maoists were openly condemned, was loudly applauded by the congress. Comrade [Soviet politburo member Mikhail] Suslov did not speak about the Chinese. We were the first to speak about them in our greeting

and we were loudly applauded not only by the congress but also by Fidel Castro and the other Cuban leaders.

About self-criticism:

- About the October crises and the withdrawal of the Soviet nuclear weapons from Cuba;
- About underestimating the experience of the USSR and the other socialist countries, especially with regard to economics;
- Against Utopianism and for the necessity to use economic categories: cost price, price, profit, stimulus, and so on;
- Abandoning of the wrong views about the guerrilla movement in Latin America, [and] for proceeding straight to communism and so on;
- Correct attitude to the first Marxist-Leninist party in Cuba, founded in 1925, to the working class and its role;
- "The old communists - spiritual fathers of the young revolutionaries." Three distinguished men were elected in the new Politburo, including Blas Roca.

The Congress turned onto a singular international forum: 87 delegations of communist parties, of other revolutionary and democratic movements and a great number of representatives from Latin America and Africa.

[...]

About the attitude of CPSU towards the Congress:

- Official greeting of CPSU to the Congress, published in the press.
- Greeting of comrade Suslov.
- Personal message from comrade Leonid Brezhnev.
- Leonid Brezhnev personally met and saw off the delegation in Moscow.

About Fidel Castro:

- Honest revolutionary, clever, mass leader with charisma and critical of himself.
- Lack of the necessary statesman experience. He got carried away, especially in the closing speech, about Angola and the USA. He says things against America and against [US President Gerald R.] Ford which one must not speak about. We are representatives not only of communist parties but also of states.

General conclusion:

The First Congress of the Cuban Communist Party laid the beginnings of a new historical stage in the life of the party and the country. Now there is clarity in the line and the basic directions in the development of the socialist revolution in Cuba. There is an experienced political vanguard, [as well as] fraternal relations with the socialist community and especially with the USSR.

About the attitude towards our delegation and generally about the relations between Bulgaria and Cuba:

- Extraordinary attention. Pronouncedly warm brotherly attitude from the first till the last day. It was displayed:
- On behalf of the Congress;
- On behalf of the working people;

- On behalf of the Cuban leaders;
 - Personally on behalf of Fidel Castro.
- [...]

All this is a new and impressive proof for lasting and positive development of the Bulgarian-Cuban relations, of the friendly sentiments of the communists and the working people in Cuba to Bulgaria, to the Bulgarian communist party, to our party and state leaders and for the huge authority of Bulgaria and the BCP in Cuba.

Reasons:

- Common socialist road of development;
- Consolidation of the socialist character of the Cuban revolution, clarifying the ideological and political views of the Cuban leaders and personally of Fidel Castro;
- Analogical historical development in Cuba and Bulgaria, approximately identical size of territory and population;
- The positive experience of Bulgaria;
- The work of the Bulgarian specialists in Cuba and the mutual visits of delegations;
- The particular significance of the correct line of our leaders to the Cuban revolution and to Fidel Castro; the visit in Cuba in 1970;
- Considerate attitude to the Cuban requests;
- The personal friendship between Fidel Castro and Todor Zhivkov also plays a certain role;
- It can be said that now we are picking the fruit that we planted in due time.

About the prospects of Bulgarian-Cuban relations.

- The necessary objective and subjective prerequisites for strengthening and deepening of these relations exist.
- About the activities of the Bulgarian-Cuban committee for economic cooperation. We have to take measures to consolidate it.
- About some unresolved economic issues (the price of sugar, our late deliveries of equipment and so on).
- Problems in the sphere of culture.
- There is a requirement on behalf of Cuba for new specialists - fitters. We have to discuss this issue and improve the work of our specialists. [...] The Cubans have no food. Our specialists use the shop for diplomats, buy food [products] and sell them. Some Cubans possess old valuables -- gold, silver (rings and necklaces). A great majority of our specialists are engaged in the "black market." Besides, we send them individually, not in groups. For each of them it has to be determined what post he is going to occupy, because when they go there, they begin to fight [over] who the leader will be. There is no political leadership. Regardless of who the comrades that intercede are, we have to make a check to give them confidentially a note - so that we concern ourselves very seriously with these intrusions. We send there people who discredit our country. This is everywhere, in all countries.

About some new forms of cooperation between Bulgaria and Cuba.

- We can think about that.
- Fidel Castro promised to come to Bulgaria before or after the CPSU [Communist Party of the Soviet Union] Congress. It would be difficult for him to come to our congress.
- The expansion and the intensifying of the comprehensive relations with Cuba - this is our international and patriotic duty.

This is the most important. Now I am ready to answer your questions regarding our visit.

SUPPLEMENT

to the information of comrade TODOR ZHIVKOV about his visit in Republic of Cuba, delivered at the meeting of Politburo on 5 January 1976.

TODOR ZHIVKOV:

I have to say that on the documents - the Program platform, the project for Constitution, the directives and the Statutes - which were sanctioned by the Congress and about which we gave positive assessment, have been developed by a group of Soviet comrades. This is very interesting, too. It shows that Fidel Castro and the leaders of the Cuban communist party do not only make a turn towards us and first of all, to the Soviet Union, but also that they coordinate most closely their foreign and domestic affairs with the Soviet comrades. This is very pleasing. Why? Because it is good that they treat us well, but if they do not treat well the Soviet Union - this would be bad.

In conversation with Fidel Castro I asked him to give the floor first not to me, but to Janos Kadar. But they did not comply and I had to speak first. Fidel Castro declared the following: "Comrade Zhivkov, bear in mind that not only do I love Bulgaria but also everybody, elected in Politburo, has no reservations towards Bulgaria. We are studying your experience - the Program, the Statutes and so on. Second, if there is something in our economic cooperation, in our trade, just say, and we will arrange it. We are ready to do everything for Bulgaria, but without declaring it [in public], so that the others will not press us. And third, I want to come to Bulgaria, but not in order to receive a generous welcome, but to talk with you."

Those were the talks that I had with him on different occasions.

We talked with comrade Stanko Todorov[1] and comrade Tano Tzolov[2] and we think that we must not dramatize the disruption that took place in our trade. [...] Let's act tactically and wisely. [...] At the end, we can give 100 million leva, because this is Cuba. The Soviet Union gives everything. They provide for the whole army. They pay 500 rubles for a ton of sugar.

Now, let's come to an agreement and when Fidel Castro comes, we will move forward to a broader cooperation and we will find a way to make up for the losses. There is no need to dramatize this event. [...] Our party has earned exceptional trust in Cuba. We must not lose it because of the trade relations. Besides, they are on the right path, they have [established] ties with the Soviet Union and they remain true to the Soviet Union. This is a great achievement.

[1] Bulgarian Prime Minister (1971-1981) and Chairman of National Assembly (1981-1990).

[2] Deputy Prime Minister and a Politburo member.