

**May 25, 1965**

**Memorandum of Conversation between Senior Cuban Communist Carlos Rafael Rodriguez and Czechoslovak Communist Party (CPCz) official Vladimir Koucky, Prague, 25 May 1965**

**Citation:**

"Memorandum of Conversation between Senior Cuban Communist Carlos Rafael Rodriguez and Czechoslovak Communist Party (CPCz) official Vladimir Koucky, Prague, 25 May 1965", May 25, 1965, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Czech National Archives, Prague, Kuba files, CPCz CC collection. Obtained by James Hershberg, translated for CWIHP by Adolf Kotlik  
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**Summary:**

Rodriguez met with Koucky to clarify misunderstandings which could possibly arise because the reasons were not explained for Cuba's positions on issues of the international communist movement, and for speeches and statements of some leading Cuban comrade.

**Credits:**

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

**Original Language:**

Czech

**Contents:**

Translation - English

05/25/1965

For Information

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Record of a conversation of c. V. Koucky with c. Carlos R. Rodriguez, member of the national leadership of the Unified Party of Socialist Revolution of Cuba.

Carlos Rafael Rodriguez first said he was pleased to be able to talk with comrade Koucky confidentially and to contribute to the elimination of misunderstandings that could possibly arise because the reasons were not explained for Cuba's positions on issues of the international communist movement, and for speeches and statements of some leading Cuban comrades. At that he emphasized that Fidel Castro was happy to accept an invitation for a UPSR delegation to visit Czechoslovakia, because he as well is very much interested in better and more frequent relations of our two parties. He also keenly agreed with c. Koucky's remark that due to extensive economic and state cooperation of our two countries, contact between the parties is insufficient.

He further said that the UPSR strives for better contacts with fraternal parties. In August of last year, a Korean [Workers'] party [KWP] delegation was in Cuba and a delegation of the Italian Communist Party [PCI] is there now. In order to improve relations with fraternal parties and to inform the UPSR leadership better, the apparatus of the UPSR national leadership will be augmented by a Secretariat for International Affairs. The head of this international department will be the current Minister of Construction c. Osmany Cienfuegos, who since student years had sympathized with the youth of the Popular Socialist Party [PSP]. Carlos Rafael Rodriguez fully trusts Osmany Cienfuegos and will help him in every way. The need to build this department is felt more and more urgently. Absence of such a work group is the reason why leading comrades are poorly informed about important issues of relations among parties and of international politics. In addition, Carlos Rafael believes that establishment of this department will be the next step to implementation of the principle of collective leadership of the UPSR.

Efforts to apply this Leninist principle to the party life began to develop promisingly by late 1961. The case of Anibal Escalante, who was dismissed from the leadership of the UPSR for sectarian methods [in March 1962], was a serious setback. Fidel Castro has since been very suspicious. He is convinced that the Communists are old friends of his, but he also knows that this friendship is not personal but is based on politics. To wit, the investigation of Anibal Escalante's activities revealed that the Unified Socialist Party was developing cooperation with Raul Castro and Ernesto Guevara, without Fidel's knowledge, already in the mountains of Sierra Maestra. This finding greatly strengthened Fidel's distrust.

Around Fidel Castro, there is a group of capable and honest people who are loyal to him uncritically. They are not communists, but "fidelists". Fidel takes a purely personal position on many problems. Non-critical closest personnel and Fidel's popularity sometimes become a negative factor.

Fidel takes sometimes measures, with which, for example, even the organizational secretary of the National UPSR Administration [Emilio] Aragones disagrees, who is otherwise unconditionally loyal to Fidel. He [Fidel] interferes with the competence of personnel who are responsible for assigned sections. It happened very often for example at the Institute for Agricultural Reform [INRA], whose President was until recently Carlos Rafael [Rodriguez]. Differences and disagreements were thus happening between him and Fidel, which some people were taking advantage of. Carlos Rafael Rodriguez therefore offered his resignation to Fidel three times.

Comrade Koucky commented that the report of Rodriguez leaving the Institute for Agricultural Reform was not immediately clear to us. Carlos Rafael Rodriguez explained the untenable situation in the management of this important office, which

was created by Fidel's interventions. He said he believed that Fidel really always wanted to take full control of agriculture. The only obstacle was that he did not want to offend Carlos Rafael. Carlos Rafael combined his last resignation with a suggestion that Fidel himself takes over the management of the Institute for Agricultural Reform, which indeed happened.

To Comrade Koucky's question whether Anibal Escalante remains now in Cuba, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez said that Anibal Escalante asked for an approval of his return to Cuba. He returned on the occasion of the death of his brother, Cesar Escalante, who was in charge of ideological work within the national leadership of the UPSR. Personally, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez believes that Anibal Escalante should not stay in Cuba. His presence will revive bitterness of many middle party cadres, who were previously members of the Popular Socialist Party, and in connection with criticism of Anibal Escalante were removed along with him. (Carlos Rafael did not mention that Anibal Escalante would be put in a position of responsibility in the State Bank, as it follows from some reports.)

To c. Koucky's question what he thought about the case of Joaquín Ordoqui, Carlos Rafael replied that this was a complex and not yet fully clarified issue. There is evidence that a number of matters has been leaked to an imperialist agency. Almost all of these cases are from the time of Anibal's stay in Mexico. Moreover, it was found that only Ordoqui knew about some of the things that were leaked. Ordoqui denies guilt, but does not react well; responds in an unclear, unconvincing manner. He is 65 years [old] today. He demands vigorously a public discussion about his case. However, such a discussion will be very dangerous. Personally, Carlos Rafael believes that Ordoqui's guilt will not be proved but neither does he prove his innocence. Carlos Rafael Rodriguez referred to the whole thing as "very ugly matters." (Note: the wife of J. Ordoqui c. Buchaca, accused along with him, was formerly the wife of Carlos Rafael Rodriguez.)

Carlos Rafael further said that the Ordoqui case was water to the mill of anti-communist elements.

Carlos Rafael then mentioned that the situation in the party leadership and among middle-rank cadres is improving. By contrast, the influence of counter-revolutionary elements still persists in the state administration and especially in some ministries. Part of the followers of pro-Chinese views came from there. The Chinese attacks and slanders against the USSR were a platform for these elements from which to spread their anti-Sovietism with impunity.

Even many honest people sympathized or still sympathize with the Communist Party of China. As contradictions in the international communist movement develop, these honest and mostly young people lose illusions and their feelings about China are cooling down. (For example, today's sugar plants minister and former deputy of Ernesto ["Che"] Guevara in the Ministry of Industry Borges is one of those people.) The Chinese, however, use various ways and let their people speak at meetings. For example, one large meeting in Beijing featured a Haitian immigrant, or rather a man who posed as one. It is definitely an Asian; even his physiognomy is typical of an Asian, not of a Latin American.

When asked about Minister of Communications [Faure] Chomon [Mediavilla]'s current attitude, c. Carlos Rafael Rodriguez replied that still from his college times, Chomon is literally surrounded by a group of negative people with whom he is closely linked. Chomon has a revolutionary past; he participated as one of the commanders in the second guerilla section in [the Sierra] Escambray [mountains], and led terrorist actions against the people of the Batista regime in Havana. Carlos Rafael believes that it is possible to influence Chomon because he understands many things well. He talks especially well about the Soviet Union, where he was an ambassador. However, it is necessarily to keep him away from the group that influences him. His positive development would surely accelerate under the conditions of collective leadership.□

Carlos Rafael Rodriguez then returned several times to shortcomings in the application of Leninist norms in the inner life of the UPSR. He said it was initially very difficult for him to work, and he could not adapt to Fidel's style for a long time. It is true that Fidel's perseverance and his extraordinary ability can correct many mistakes but it cannot prevent undisciplined acts of some individuals. He mentioned Che Guevara as an example.

To c. Koucky's remark that Guevara's Algerian speech was incomprehensible to us, and left a very uncomfortable impression, Carlos Rafael said that [Cuban] President [Osvaldo] Dorticos and he were also very surprised. Raul Castro, who was in Moscow [in March 1965], emphatically rejected this speech. Fidel Castro said that he agrees with some parts of the speech, however, neither the form of the speech nor the place where Guevara delivered it was appropriate.

In this context, c. Koucky noted that the CPCZ must work on two tasks simultaneously: to help nations that are liberating themselves, but first and foremost to fulfill its duty to its own working class. Socialism must be reflected in practice by increasing production and living standards because only that has a meaning for workers. Only then can an example of a socialist state be attractive for workers in advanced capitalist countries.

Carlos Rafael replied that he fully understands the complexity of our problems. Collective leadership would certainly help to eliminate errors like Guevara's speech in Algiers.

When asked how Guevara's absence in May Day celebrations in Havana is explained, and what Guevara is doing now, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez said that Guevara does not want to go back to the Ministry anymore or to lead any administrative or economic department. However, they are not sure how to arrange his departure.

There are also other kinds of difficulties with him. Guevara is a Cuban national and a member of the Cuban government. As such, he was involved in Argentine affairs too much. On his own, he organized in Argentina (his homeland) guerrilla units, which were easily destroyed. He also sent there with this mission [Jorge Ricardo] Masset[t]i, his personal protégé and former director of Prensa Latina, Massetti (who is known as a former Peronist).

The Ministry of Industry is currently managed by a group of young professionals. They are fully aware of the depth of and relations among economic problems. Thanks to the Soviet ambassador, they found out that in Cuba, there is \$200 million worth of various uninstalled and partial or complete investments, delivered from socialist countries. Che Guevara was simply doing whatever he wanted. It will take a long time to correct the consequences. That task will be even more difficult because the level of the Unified Party of Socialist Revolution cannot be compared with levels of for instance the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.

However, Carlos Rafael said that despite all these difficulties, the first positive results are already appearing. Sugar production this year will reach almost 6 million tons. On the other hand, however, a decrease in world prices of sugar will have an impact. Also, volume of industrial production will not increase in 1965.

Carlos Rafael did not give even an approximate date when the founding congress of the UPSR of Cuba would convene. He again expressed hope that the visit of the Cuban party delegation in Czechoslovakia would be very beneficial. Fidel Castro's visit in the CSSR would be beneficial as well. However, it is absolutely necessary to act directly with Fidel, without any diplomatic protocol.

At the end of the conversation, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez responded positively to the

question of c. Koucky whether he was satisfied with the course of talks, and with our economic experts.