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**Hungarian Embassy in Havana (Beck), Report on
Deputy Foreign Minister Péter Mód's talks with
political leaders in Cuba**

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Summary:

Ambassador János Beck reports on Foreign Minister Péter Mód's visit to Cuba, and with whom he met. The report is divided among four different official meetings: Foreign Minister Raul Roa, Prime Minister Fidel Castro, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, and the Integrated Revolutionary Organizations (ORI). Beck summarizes each meeting separately. Topics include Cuba's expectation of a US invasion and the US's current clandestine activities, Organization of American States (OAS) and its use as a political tool in US-Latin American relations, Sino-Soviet relations, socialist unity and the importance of Soviet trade, Cuba's perceived Soviet military advantage over the US, and the Communist Party's development/popularity in Cuba. Many of these topics appear in various meetings outlined in the report.

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HIGHLY CONFIDENTIAL!
Havana, 9 January 1962

Subject: Deputy Foreign Minister Péter Mód's political meetings in Cuba

Comrade Mód visited Cuba between 28 December 1961 and 6 January 1962. He conducted important political talks with the following personalities:

- 1./ With Cuban Foreign Minister Raul Roa on the day after his arrival,
- 2./ With Prime Minister Fidel Castro on 3 January,
- 3./ With Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, one of the leaders of ORI and the chief editor of its central paper, on 3 January
- 4./ With the secretary of the county organization of ORI Oriente in Santiago de Cuba on 4 January.

Although I was present at Comrade Mód's every meeting and occasionally also participated in the discussion, I will not separately indicate what Comrade Mód said and what I said and I will not specify which answers refer to his or to my questions.

1./ Meeting with Foreign Minister Raul Roa

Foreign Minister Raul Roa explained that in his view the United States was preparing for another invasion against Cuba. There are several sign of this attempt, and the Cuban party also has some confidential information on these preparations. Actually, one should say that the invasion has already begun, not only in the form of political preparations and actions but also in a military sense. The United States has sent various agents, diversionary troops and saboteurs to Cuba through various illegal channels; weapons, ammunition, explosives, various types of bombs, transmitter-receiver units and various other equipments are constantly being smuggled into Cuba. The agents and saboteurs arriving in Cuba were ordered to kill, explode and destroy wherever they can. All this can be seen as the initial phase of the invasion. He stated that if the USA had begun using these tactics last winter on the same scale, it would have caused immense damages to Cuba, whose consequences would have been unpredictable. Since then, however, the so-called Comités de Defensa de la Revolucion (Committees for the Defense of the Revolution) have been organized all over in the country in cities and villages. Thanks to their activity, the tactics of the United States have ended in failure and the damages caused by them are insignificant.

(By way of explanation I note here that on the one hand these committees were created at every workplace, and on the other, in the cities they were based on blocks of houses while in the villages the setup depended on the nature of the particular place. Their members were workers and ordinary people in general with a revolutionary conviction who signed up on a voluntary basis. There were a lot of women, housewives and old people among them since young people and those who were willing to take a greater sacrifice were doing service in the armed militia—also on a voluntary basis, giving up most of their free time. The work of each committee is led by the chairman elected by the members. Their task is to defend the revolution at their workplace or at home against the sabotage of counter-revolutionists as well as agents and saboteurs coming from abroad. They do not have an office, a budget, a uniform or any equipment of their own. They seem to be operating quite effectively.)

Furthermore, Roa said that one of the main political tools used for the preparation of the invasion was the OAS [OEA in original, for Organizacion de Los Estados Americanos or the Organization of American States]. The United States made every effort in the OAS—in vain—to maintain or get unanimous support for the resolution

regarding Cuba. However, there has been a qualitative change in Latin America. The Cuban revolution gave rise to a new situation in every country. Although the Cuban revolutionary government declared itself to be Marxist-Leninist and the revolution to be a socialist movement, the OAS is no longer an obedient executive body that remains loyal to the USA to the very end. Several countries, among them some of the most important ones, object to the invasion plans of the United States. The political secretary of state [at the Cuban Foreign Ministry], Dr Carlos Olivares, is just visiting the Latin American countries and—as far as it can be seen in the short telegraphs—he has given definite promises for the support of Cuba in several places (Brazil, Ecuador, Chile and Mexico), or at least for not adopting the American proposal that appears in the guise of a Columbian motion. He reported on bad news only from Argentina; it seems that [Argentine President Arturo] Frondizi decided to back Kennedy. A unanimous resolution is simply out of the question. Thus, the USA will take care not to submit, or not to have another country submit, a proposal that explicitly condemns or imposes sanctions on Cuba. There are two reasons for it: 1./ The USA wants to prevent the OAS from splitting apart or possibly being totally disintegrated as a result of the opposition of the Latin American countries. This does not mean that it will not make every effort to obtain a two-thirds majority in accordance with the regulation, that is, 14 votes; 2./ The military sanctions proposed by the OAS requires the approval of the [United Nations] Security Council, which cannot be obtained because of the Soviet Union's right of veto; there is no point politically in trying to put military sanctions to a vote under such circumstances, with Brazil, Mexico, etc. objecting.

Nevertheless, all this does not mean that the USA will now give up on the political and military role of the Latin American countries in the invasion. As the OAS charter provides that in case one of the member states is attacked, the military sanctions adopted as retaliation will come into force immediately and in this case the only thing the charter requires is to inform the UN, there is a clear danger of self-aggression [i.e.—a US-organized provocation that could be blamed on Cuba]. Self-aggression may take place against the American base in Cuba (Guantanamo) where there are many Cuban counter-revolutionists that can be used for such a purpose, or against a Central American country, also using Cuban counter-revolutionists hired by the USA. This is what can explain the USA's efforts in the OAS.

Then the foreign minister stressed that the situation was extremely tense and we were having hard times. He was convinced that the USA would take serious action, perhaps including a second invasion at around the meeting of the foreign ministers of the OAS states scheduled for 22 January [in Punta del Este, Uruguay]. The invasion is to be expected right before, during or right after the meeting, depending on the course of preparations for it. He requested that this information be forwarded to the Hungarian government and announced that as soon as he had more detailed information, he would summon the ambassadors of the socialist countries one by one and inform them so that they could also report to their respective governments.

Finally I should note that Roa repeated the information that in the spring he will travel to the Soviet Union at the invitation of [Soviet foreign minister Andrei] Gromyko and spend only two weeks there. Right before this visit, or after it, he will accept our invitation and visit Hungary too.

2./ Conversation with Prime Minister Fidel Castro.

After a rather casual introductory part, upon learning that Comrade Mód had lived and worked for quite some time in France and I had come to Cuba from there too, Fidel Castro asked us about our views on the situation and the activity of the French Communist Party. When he heard that although we did not wish to criticize the PCF's policy or pass a judgment on it, we could not help mentioning the fact that we had some doubts whether their policy was right, he explained his own opinion. According to Fidel Castro, the French party's policy is not bellicose and fails to mobilize large masses of people, which is especially apparent in their policy regarding the Algerian

war. He believes that it is not right to have only legal options in sight and consider only parliamentary methods.

Then suddenly, he put the following question: "Are there any preparations underway for negotiations between the Soviet Communist Party and the Chinese Communist Party to eliminate the antagonism between them? The answer was very briefly this: "I hope so." Next the Prime Minister explained at length how concerned he was regarding this antagonism, saying that in his view this was one of the major problems in the present situation, and with Albania the entire problem further intensified. Any break in the unity of the socialist camp can severely harm the fight against imperialism and the USA. The coordinated international action against the imperialists is threatened by serious dangers. One of the first signs of this danger is what happened at the meeting of the Peace Council in Stockholm. It should not go on like this and become even more serious, or else various international consultations, congresses and actions will meet with failure and the imperialists will benefit from arguments made public and from deepening antagonism. At the moment it seems that as soon as a discussion is started at an international forum, the disputed issues between the Soviet and the Chinese parties immediately come up. As if thinking aloud, he examined its impact on the international political situation, especially regarding the international position of Latin America and Cuba, and then spoke about the need for somebody—it could also be them, the Cubans—to take the initiative in order to resolve the issue.

Then he asked what the Soviet-Chinese debate was really all about; what was the essential reason for their antagonism.

The answer was practically the following: the Chinese view and position that differ from those of the Soviet party cannot really be understood in and of themselves because they are obviously based on the internal Chinese situation, the local conditions and working methods, etc. However, as we have not been to China, we don't know the Chinese conditions.

Fidel Castro largely agreed with this but when he returned to this point during the conversation, he provided a different answer to this question, somehow like this: the Soviet-Chinese antagonism is essentially based on practical problems that arise in the cooperation between the two countries. He doesn't know the origin and details of these problems, nor does he fully understand the entire range of problems. He has heard about various things, including some problems that emerged along the common border, some kind of a complication that emerged in connection with a tribe there.

Fidel Castro returned again to analyzing the extremely harmful consequences that may follow from breaking up unity in the socialist camp, and the analysis of the international, especially the Latin American situation led him to conclude that this was the worst time possible for a debate like this and especially the worst time for the deepening of the antagonism between the Soviet and the Chinese parties.

The response to this analysis was as follows: it is always the worst time for a debate or antagonism to emerge within the socialist camp during the fight against imperialism. However, Hungary and the history of the Hungarian counter-revolution demonstrate, among other things, that the issues raised at the 20th and the 22nd congresses of the CPSU [Communist Party of the Soviet Union] must be addressed and resolved. The failure to resolve the range of problems called a personality cult would, sooner or later, have led to much more serious complications than the confusion that has been caused by raising the issue.

Fidel Castro first explained in detail that the personality cult, everything that this term covers, should not be the topic of dispute. A personality cult is indefensible, and

anybody who supports a personality cult is unable to conduct a political debate. He gradually returned to presenting the joint fight of the socialist camp against imperialism, stressing that coordinated action was not only possible but also necessary, despite any differences and specific features. The Soviet Union and Cuba are examples for that. We, he said, are talking about something in a way that the Soviet Union should not speak about, or at least not in this way. The differences in terms of actions and statements, he added, are only apparent among the rest of us; in reality they are coordinated. Despite any debate or antagonism, it should be like that in the entire socialist camp.

During the conversation Castro suggested that the Soviet-Chinese debate might have very harmful consequences here in Cuba too. For now it has not been made widely known but the public wouldn't understand it anyway. He noted that the nations that are engaged in a difficult, perhaps armed fight see things differently from those that are already enjoying the results of the fight they have already fought.

Here is where this part of the conversation ended. When we were saying goodbye before leaving, Fidel Castro noted he was not sure why he had raised these issues to us since he hadn't discussed anything like this with any of the delegations he had received before.

As for the probability of the invasion and its impact on Latin America if it occurred, Castro essentially said the following: in the present situation—disregarding the unpredictable factors that characterize the USA—the probability of the invasion to take place is not very high. Should it occur, a serious reaction with unpredictable consequences can be expected first of all in Venezuela. The situation in Venezuela is very unstable and [President Rómulo] Betancourt can hardly hold out.

Talking about the Latin American situation he said there was an opportunity for objective, armed revolutionary fight in several countries, mainly in Venezuela and Brazil but elsewhere too. These opportunities are not being utilized although their utilization could easily result in the acceleration and completion of the process that would, on the one hand, mean the total liberation of Latin America and on the other, a fatal blow to the American imperialism that would lose all of its strength. The United States is now making strong efforts to win or enforce the support of as many governments as possible against Cuba in order to keep the Latin American countries in a semi-colonial state. It is using huge economic pressure to achieve that. For example, there are serious economic problems in Brazil and if the situation doesn't change significantly, in two years a serious revolutionary situation may develop in that country. In some sense the USA is in a dead-end street. Instead of supporting highly reactionary layers of society, it should promote a land reform that would help the emergence of conservative land owners who are loyal to capitalism. By refusing to give loans and money it can only increase bitter feelings and create a revolutionary atmosphere. Sooner or later it will have to give money. Some of the Latin American governments still appear to be unable to recognize and make the best of this. The suspension [i.e., poor functioning—CSB] of the Alliance for Progress by Kennedy is a short-sighted policy. Chile's approach—which was surprising even to him—is typical. It seems that the conservative Chilean government took the firmest stand against the invasion [at the Bay of Pigs in April 1961—ed.] and by the side of Cuba's autonomy, apparently firmly resisting any economic pressure by the USA. Chile intends to rely on the Soviet Union in these efforts by significantly increasing Soviet-Chilean trade. In order to characterize the USA's difficult situation he mentioned the rapidly growing economic strength of the Soviet Union which is gradually becoming an important factor in dependent countries and in states being liberated as well as elsewhere. All this is taking place in a situation when on the one hand the imperialist powers are coming up against one another in different parts of the world (e.g. in Congo) and on the other hand, they are afraid to attack the Soviet Union because of its advantage in terms of military technology. Fidel Castro suggested he didn't know whether the advantage would remain, increase or, quite

the contrary, decrease or totally disappear in the future. Therefore, as long as the Soviet Union has this advantage, we need to make use of every opportunity to strike a blow at imperialism.

As for some of the other topics that were raised during the meeting, I need to mention that Fidel Castro sees the liberation of Goa by India [from Portugal in December 1961] as a major defeat for the USA. He finds it unlikely that Indonesia, that is, Sukarno, will decide to take a similar step [to capture West Papua New Guinea, i.e., West Irian Jaya, from the Netherlands—ed.]. He believes that Sukarno has made the best of the situation; although he is bluffing, the results can already be seen: the Netherlands has already made concessions and is willing to negotiate.

[insertion:] At the time of the preparations for the Moscow conference held in 1960, “when there was no collective leadership in the revolution yet” in Cuba, the Cuban position was worked out by a group made up of Fidel Castro, Raul Castro, and Ernesto [“Che”] Guevara as well as several other old communist leaders (Blas Roca, Anibal Escalante, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez), which was then represented by Anibal Escalante who participated in the preparation of the Moscow conference. At that time there was consensus on the issues to be discussed.[1]

3./ Conversation with Carlos Rafael Rodriguez

This discussion addressed not only one but several issues of which I will report on the most important ones.

We informed Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, one of the Cuban leaders whose relationship is perhaps the best with Fidel Castro, about Fidel Castro’s statements on the relationship between the Soviet and the Chinese parties. Comrade Rodriguez said the following as an answer to this: the problem of unity and cooperation among the socialist countries and parties is extremely important for Fidel Castro, just like he is taking care of the unity of all the revolutionary forces in Cuba. The Soviet-Chinese relationship is causing problems in Cuba too. The old Communists see everything clearly; however, the situation is different with other revolutionists who have just joined the communists but have been raised in a different way. Fidel Castro’s careful and expedient work and caution are required to ensure unity and development for everybody. There had been a long debate in the leadership and it was difficult to achieve a unanimous decision on the adoption of Blas Roca’s article, which was then published in the December 4 issue of Cuba Socialista in 1961 (I wrote about it in my report 199/1961). By way of an example, he noted that when the Soviet Union recalled its ambassador and the entire embassy from Albania [in August 1961—ed.], several of the new people thought it was exactly what the United State did to Cuba. Our experienced comrades had to work patiently for a long time to ensure that the honest but inexperienced and uninformed young people who had just joined the Communists, the Communist party, began to see things in the right way.

In addition, he said that in their talks with the members of the Cuban government and other leading politicians, the Chinese ambassador to Havana [Shen Jian] and the officials of the Chinese embassy always bring the conversation to the disputed issues and the result is: anti-Soviet propaganda. He mentioned one single example. He was asked to contact the Chinese ambassador and discuss the issue of reducing the volume of Chinese trade. After discussing the trade-related questions the ambassador started talking about Enver Hoxha’s article, so the conversation ended in a rather unpleasant atmosphere with Comrade Rodriguez pointing out the position of the party.

Carlos Rafael Rodriguez was afraid that it would not be possible to prevent this debate from becoming public until the end of time, which will raise serious problems.

Later, when talking about economic matters, Comrade Rodriguez said that last year the Cuban state budget had a deficit of 400 million pesos (that is, dollars). They prepared a balanced budget for 1962, and essentially it will certainly be balanced. The current budget, without loans, etc. and investments to be implemented, amounts to 750 million. 270 million was earmarked for military spending for 1962 (obviously, this figure will not be made public). 115–125 million will be spent on education and culture. According to current plans for the future, the actual industrialization of the country will begin at around 1970; by that time they will have all the necessary conditions in place, e.g. metallurgy. At the moment, they are focusing all their resources on agriculture. The results will soon come and show their effect gradually in the near future.

As far as the talks on the Hungarian–Cuban exchange of goods are concerned, he noted that their results were satisfactory.

Later the conversation turned back to Fidel Castro again, and Comrade Rodriguez said the following: Fidel Castro and Soviet ambassador [Sergei M.] Kudryavtsev met on 2 January. Comrade Kudryavtsev requested the meeting because he had received a long telegraph from Moscow and he wanted to provide Fidel Castro with some information on international affairs, especially regarding Latin America. At the same time, he wanted to suggest in some way what kind of statements the Soviet Union would see as right and necessary regarding some issues that affected the Latin American countries and also some other matters. After three years [sic; Kudryavtsev was actually appointed in July 1960, roughly one-and-a-half years earlier—ed.], it was perhaps the first time that the Soviet ambassador was able to send home a reassuring telegraph after the speech. Fidel Castro had never delivered such a successful speech before from the point of view of international political relations. When leaving the rally, Fidel Castro turned to Carlos Rafael Rodriguez in his car: “Tell me, did I break with any country today?” The political nature of the speech was shown by the fact that under its immediate impact even the Brazilian ambassador [Luis Bastian Pinto], who has just arrived in the country, and the ambassador’s deputy of Ecuador rushed to Castro still on the stand and very warmly congratulated him.

The foreign ministers’ meeting of the OAS states will be held on 22 January. The so-called Second Havana Statement will be issued on the same day. Fidel Castro has already prepared the draft, whose tone is very aggressive. This will be discussed by the leadership later. It will be based on the following principles: Cuba has the right to build socialism. Nobody has the right to intervene in it under any title. Worded in the necessary form, the Statement should also include that the independent Latin American countries have the right, at their own discretion, to be faithful to a different social order.

4./ Conversation with the ORI38 organization in Santiago de Cuba

Unfortunately, Raul Castro was not in Santiago de Cuba when Comrade Mód visited Oriente County, so he only had a chance to meet with the ORI’s secretary. The conversation was about the situation of the party in the county. I can summarize it as follows (this county is significantly different from the other five counties in several respects): the county’s population is 2 million and 250 thousand. The number of party members is a bit over 8 thousand, about half of which came to the ORI from the 26th of July Movement. The creation of party branch organizations, so-called nuclei [núcleos] is nearly complete, and their number currently amounts to 1200. The average number of members in a branch organization is between 6 and 7. There is a branch organization in every state farm, in the majority of cooperative farms and sugar factories as well as in the major industrial plants, transportation and commercial companies, etc. In addition, there are branch organizations set up by residential districts as well as special branches organized for scattered villages in the

highlands. Most of the members are between 20 and 40 years of age, with 20 to 30 year-olds slightly exceeding the number of 30 to 40 year-olds. The ratio of women is 11%. The number of black and other colored party members slightly exceeds the average national ratio of colored people (which is roughly 30%) in the city itself and along the coastal region of the county, while it is below the national average in other parts of the county, with a county average below the national average. Members of the working class have a relative majority among the party members; the number of peasants is also significant, while intellectuals are very rare in the party.

Unlike the national leadership, which is not complete as it still has only 17 members, the county leadership is complete: it has all the requested 35 members. Unlike in the other counties, here, the county leadership also has a head: Raul Castro.

Credit should be given not only to the revolutionary nature of the county but also to the special form of organization in the highlands and the work of the ORI for the fact that there have been no counter-revolutionary gangs active in the territory of the county for a long time and for about a year, there hasn't been a single perpetrator of diversionary attempts or sabotage acts that has been able to flee punishment; all of them were caught successfully.

After Comrade Mód's departure I contacted Soviet ambassador Kudryavtsev and informed him about the meeting with Fidel Castro, especially about the discussion regarding the Soviet-Chinese debate. I added that both Comrade Mód and I had the impression that Fidel Castro might have received more information from one of the parties than from the other one.

Comrade Kudryavtsev made the following comments: Fidel Castro has received all the documents, including that of the 22nd Congress [of the CPSU]. After returning from Moscow, Blas Roca gave a detailed account, which was followed by a three-day long debate in the leadership of the ORI where Fidel Castro took the correct position. Speaking about the Chinese embassy in Havana he pointed out that the number of staff working there far exceeds the number of staff at the Soviet embassy, although the Soviet Union has a huge volume of trade with Cuba, there are a large number of specialists working in the country, and the Soviets provide a lot of aid for Cuba, while China is not doing anything like that. Under such circumstances, the main task of the Chinese embassy can only be propaganda—this may be the reason for the Cuban sympathy with China. He wonders what Castro may have meant when he talked about the border and a tribe, unless he was referring to the Mongolian People's Republic. True, the Chinese are not happy about the existence of Mongolia, although they have never raised this issue. Anyway, what could be done now that Mongolia is already an independent state? With its excessively left-wing ideology and fake revolutionary slogans that assist the reactionary forces in the long run, the Chinese propaganda managed to have an effect on several Cuban leaders too, e.g. on Minister of Industry Ernesto Guevara, who cannot understand the need and the conditions for peaceful coexistence.

/János Beck/
ambassador

[1] This paragraph was added to the document later on a special sheet titled "Insertion"—trans.