

November 30, 1962

Hungarian Embassy in Havana (Beck), Report on Cuban-Soviet Divergence

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Summary:

Hungarian Ambassador to Cuba János Beck reports on Cuban-Soviet divergence after the Cuban Missile Crisis. Cuba's divergence includes other socialist countries, while preserving a special relationship with Czechoslovakia. Beck offers criticism of Cuba's leadership, politics, and independent stance, but along with the Soviet Union reinforces that Cuba is true to the revolution.

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Embassy of the Hungarian People's Republic

To Comrade Foreign Minister János Péter
Budapest.

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Havana, 1 December 1962

Subject: The essence of Soviet-Cuban divergences
of opinion.

Since my return from New York on 20 October I have not once managed to talk to Cuban leaders. Since then no ambassadors of the friendly countries, including Czechoslovakia, have managed to contact any Cuban leaders. As for the Czechoslovakian ambassador [Vladimir Pavlíček], being the first representative of socialist countries to Havana, he used to meet first of all Foreign Minister [Raúl] Roa several times a day and often the other leaders as well. Foreign Minister Roa first of all because in the United States Cuban interests are represented by Czechoslovakia, between the Czechoslovak embassy to Washington and the Havana embassy there is a special direct code connection and courier service. In this period he has not been able to get in to Cuban leaders and Foreign Minister Roa, who had the closest and most confidential relationship with him, has behaved toward him coolly, or even if this coolness has become relaxed in the past days, he has not been willing to say anything important to him.

As, similarly to the other socialist ambassadors, I was soon convinced that I could not get in to the higher leaders, similarly to them, I decided to turn to lower-ranking Cuban functionaries working in different places and talk to them about the political problems. So since the end of October my colleagues and I, first of all counselor Görög and commercial counselor Sós, have talked to 20-25 middle functionaries.

I have had the closest relationship with Czechoslovakian ambassador Pavlicek since the beginning of my stay in Havana. We have often exchanged our information, we have always discussed the different problems. This relationship has become even more intensive in this period of crisis, and meant sometimes several phone conversations a day or, if necessary, meetings at night in each other's apartments. I have had almost such a close relationship with the Romanian and Polish ambassadors as well. They have met about 20-25 middle functionaries too, we have exchanged our opinions, we have discussed our conclusions, so what will follow in my report is not only my opinion but what I concluded from our conversations and their comparisons concerning the crucial issues.

I consider three factors important and I would like to deal with them one after the other. The first one is the individual attitude of Cuban leaders. I must say, when it comes to Cuban leaders, I think of three people, Prime Minister Fidel Castro, his brother Vice-Premier Raul Castro, and Minister of Industry Ernesto ["Che"] Guevara. As during the crisis it has turned out that no other than these three people have a serious and important say in the government, the party secretariat, and most of all in

the party's central committee, as a matter of fact, the opinion of these three people in crucial matters cannot be successfully contradicted even by their closest colleagues. So President of the Republic Dorticos or Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, the director of the national land reform institute, could not have a significant influence on the events.

The fact that Cuba became a country independent of the United States, the greatest imperialist power, unaided, through the movement led by Fidel Castro, that Cuba could develop the fight for independence and the democratic revolution into a socialist revolution on her own, made the people especially jealous and sensitive concerning everything related to the independence, self-government, and freedom of the country. This can be understood, as it is a relatively small country enjoying the benefits of modern technology but lacking industry, a mono-culture country with colonial conditions, which was liberated after several centuries of colonial or half-colonial oppression. This sensitivity and jealousy concerning freedom, self-government, and independence is especially strongly reflected in leaders, most of all, in the mentioned three leaders.

As for the leaders, this is also complemented by the fact that they arrived at the socialist revolution, Marxism-Leninism, in a different way from all other countries. This is also coupled with the individual ambitions of leaders, which is partly the consequence of the fact that they have been appointed to lead a historic movement and victorious revolution and such a country that is in the center of world politics at the moment.

The second factor, which plays a role at every level, in the great masses of the Cuban people as well, but is particularly strongly seen among the leaders, can be called revolutionary romantics with many petit-bourgeois and anarchist features. It can also be mentioned here that the Cuban people and, of course, the present leaders of the Cuban people have never experienced any great events shocking the whole Cuban society like a war, revolution, or natural catastrophe.[1] So they know nothing of the country-wide misery, decay following the great war, the participation of large masses in the revolutionary fight, or the famine striking the whole society or at least its majority or other similar blows. It is a characteristic of the great Cuban masses and, I must repeat, particularly of the leaders, the different ranks of leading layers what can be described by the Spanish expression: *inmolación*. This could be translated as self-sacrifice. Here can be mentioned the lack of knowledge and under-estimation of economic building work, of doing small jobs for a long time every day and imagining all solutions by great, heroic, revolutionary deeds.

The third and most important feature, which is, however, related to the first two, is political. In the political ideas of Cuban leaders the idea that there have been three great revolutions in the world plays an important role. The first is the Russian revolution, the main significance of which is, however, limited to Europe. The second is the Chinese, which concerns Asian people mainly. And finally, the latest, the third is the Cuban, which is crucially important to Latin America. Taking such an idea as a starting point, the Cuban leaders often judge the events of world importance not from the aspect of the world-wide victory of socialism, or from the aspect of the international world movement, but from the so-called Latin American aspect.

This point of view is not Marxist. But when Latin America is concerned, their conception, opinion diverges from or is contrary to the Marxist-Leninist conception several times. The "Second Havana Declaration" could be a good example, which judges the origin, course, and victory of Latin American revolutions differently from the Marxist way in various aspects. (The preparation of the revolution and the revolutionary fight are not carried out by the Marxist-Leninist party, but mainly the small group of partisans supported by peasants, the working class joins the fight only later, and the Marxist class analysis and class aspects are completely ignored). The Cuban leaders under-estimate the role of the party in Cuba herself, which is proved

by the extremely slow organization of the party. According to my information, the official number of the members of the party does not reach four thousand. The reorganization is going on very slowly and since the [Anibal] Escalante case about two thousand earlier party members were excluded.

The above-mentioned explain taking offence toward the Soviet Union not having discussed her urgent steps with the Cuban leaders in the gravest moments of the crisis, this way already offending Cuba's sovereignty, for ignoring Cuba's self-government, independence during the talks with the Americans when she discussed control and other issues concerning Cuba's sovereignty. That they were unwilling to accept the solution suggested by the Soviet Union for weeks meant they did not disagree with the method only, but to some extent with the aim of the Soviet Union too, probably they always had in mind their idea about their Latin American role.

Finally I would like to present Comrade [Anastas] Mikoyan's opinion concerning the Cuban leaders, which I agree with:

The Cuban leaders are young, honest people, they are true to the revolution, the people; in a difficult situation in their country they were able to ensure a greater unity and had less chaos than other nations would have had, for this they deserve respect and appreciation, and there is every reason to trust them and the impending progress in the future.

János Beck
Ambassador

[1] Beck is obviously talking about the lack of experience of the current, post-World War II generation in Cuba and when making general comments on the country's history, he fails to remember the long struggle for independence from Spain in the nineteenth century. His claim that the present leaders know nothing of "the participation of large masses in the revolutionary fight" clearly indicates that he regarded the Cuban Revolution led by Fidel Castro as more a coup d'état than a genuine popular uprising—CB and MK.