

January 18, 1962

Note to the GPRA Minister of Foreign Affairs, 'Mission to Cuba'

Citation:

"Note to the GPRA Minister of Foreign Affairs, 'Mission to Cuba'", January 18, 1962, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Dossier 10/03/22; Fond: GPRA, 1958-62; Archives Nationales d'Algérie, Alger. Translated from French and transcribed by Pierre Asselin, with Paulina Kostrzewski.

<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/121596>

Summary:

Report from Lakhdar Brahimi -- GPRA representative at celebration of Cuban revolution in Havana -- on meeting with Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, both of whom express considerable interest in Algerian revolution. Fidel Castro pledges Cuban support, both material and diplomatic, advises Algeria on how to proceed in negotiations with France, and strongly encourages the opening of an Algerian diplomatic mission in Cuba. Brahimi concludes with recommendations on how best to respond to Cuban suggestions and an outline of potential strategic benefits from a diplomatic relationship between two countries.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from MacArthur Foundation

Original Language:

French

Contents:

Translation - English

Note to the Minister of Foreign Affairs

Subject: Mission to Cuba

1. Appointed to represent the GPRA at the celebrations of the anniversary of the Cuban revolution, I visited Havana from 31 December 1961 until 9 January 1962.
2. Meeting with Fidel Castro, prime minister of the revolutionary government, and Che Guevara, minister of industry. Both men are considerably interested in the Algerian revolution, which they follow rather closely. Both strongly insisted that an Algerian mission be opened in Havana. Both have reaffirmed that their government was ready to do everything it could for us, and ready to take under consideration all suggestion made by the GPRA.
3. Castro's point of view concerning negotiations: "Algeria has made enormous sacrifices and the sooner the war, ends the better. It is in this phase of the struggle that Algeria needs the most support from the international community. I pledge to convince all the friendly countries to recognize the GPRA. With respect to negotiations between the latter and France, what is most important to take from France is power. You cannot let the levers of political control in the hands of the French. Specifically, the maintaining of public order (public security) must be in your own hands. Make the largest concessions possible with respect to economic matters (oil in particular), guarantees to the European minority, and military bases. Once peace has been restored and you are firmly in control, then you will be able to do anything you want. Because international conditions are such that once France has exited politically, it will never be able to come back."
4. Concrete proposals made by the Cuban prime minister: Castro told me that a special envoy had already contacted the GPRA to study the areas where Cuba could help. He reminded me that:
 - a. We could have all the sugar we want. Not only for the consumption by our 300,000 refugees, but also to sell or exchange it for other items.
 - b. Cuba could accept not 1000, like its envoy indicated, but 2000 children to be educated in Cuba.
 - c. The University of Cuba could admit as many Algerian students as the GPRA wants to send.
 - d. Weapons assistance could be envisaged and studied jointly.
5. Conclusions and suggestions: It seems to me that it would be very useful, even indispensable, to rapidly assign a chief of mission to Cuba. Because,
 - a. the mission will most probably be taken care of by the Cuban government.
 - b. the mission could, at no expense, print all the publications that we would like to distribute in Latin America. Such publications could even be sent to Mexico or Brazil or anywhere else via the diplomatic pouch, and disseminated [elsewhere] from there. But we must make sure that no one knows this was done in Cuba.
 - c. the Cuban revolution and its leader are very popular across the entire South American continent. And the masses in this country attentively listen to everything said in Havana. Moreover, many opposition leaders from other Latin American

countries live in or frequently visit Havana.

d. The Cuban experience is among the most interesting for a country struggling against colonialism, neo-colonialism, foreign domination in all its guises, and which has socialist ambitions. Studying the development of this experience could be very useful for us.

e. The Cuban authorities and Fidel Castro himself seem disappointed to see themselves "neglected" by the Algerian revolution. They are aware that they are one of the rare countries friendly to this revolution where an Algerian mission does not exist. They suggested that they did not understand that the GPRA, to spare its North and South American enemies, would be willing to abandon their friends.

6. Concerning the concrete proposals advanced by the Cuban government regarding the assistance that it wants to offer us, it's appropriate to answer with suggestions that are as precise. For example:

a. Accepting the sugar that it offers.

b. If, as it is likely, it is not possible to send 2000 children to Cuba, then propose:

a) Symbolically sending 10 or 20 children if such propaganda can serve either Cuba or the GPRA or both at the same time.

b) Ask the Cuban government to subsidize schools, housing, etc., for a number of Algerian children in Tunisia and in Morocco to be determined jointly (it cannot be 2000 since here, Cuba would have to pay cash).

c) The situation in Cuba: This subject warrants a separate report which will be made from Cairo.

Tunisia, 18 January 1962

LAKHDAR Brahimi

P.S. It should be noted that also attending the celebrations of the revolution this year were 3 officials of the ALN. Fidel Castro insisted on seeing them and visited them at their hotel. They made, along with other delegations invited by the Association for Friendship with Other Peoples, various visits and contacts, in particular with Raul Castro, the defense minister. It would probably be useful to obtain a copy of the report they produce upon their return.