

August 4, 1970

**Reports Regarding Bulgarian leader Todor Zhivkov's
visit to Cuba, July-August 1970, at Bulgarian
Communist Party Politburo Session (including
excerpts from Zhivkov-Fidel Castro memorandum of
conversation)**

Citation:

"Reports Regarding Bulgarian leader Todor Zhivkov's visit to Cuba, July-August 1970, at Bulgarian Communist Party Politburo Session (including excerpts from Zhivkov-Fidel Castro memorandum of conversation)", August 4, 1970, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Central State Archive of Bulgaria (TsDA), Sofia, Fond 1-B, Opis 35, a.e. 1575; translated by Julia Cherneva, edited by Jordan Baev. Obtained by the Bulgarian Cold War Research Group. <https://wilson-center.drivingcreative.com/document/116443>

Summary:

The Bulgarian Communist Party Politburo report includes three main documents: a protocol and resolution with notes, a top secret information note, and a top secret protocol from 30 July 1970. The first section includes the Politburo's approval of the delegation's negotiations with Cuba, proposals to restructure economic partnership, and the Bulgarian delegation's statements on miscommunication between Cuba and Bulgaria. The second section, top secret information note, summarizes important exchanges during the Bulgarian visit to Cuba (e.g. Zhivkov's discussion on the importance of economic cooperation (COMECON) to the development of socialism). The third section, the top secret protocol, includes portions of a conversation between Bulgarian delegation and Cuban Politburo members. Castro summarizes ideas exchanged during the state visit.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

Original Language:

Bulgarian

Contents:

Translation - English

PROTOCOL "A" No. 468
OF THE MEETING OF POLITBURO OF CC OF BCP
ON 4 AUGUST 1970

ISSUES ON THE AGENDA:

1. About the visit of our party-governmental delegation in the Republic of Cuba.

RESOLUTIONS:

1. The information of comrade Boris Velchev about the visit of the party-governmental delegation led by comrade Todor Zhivkov in the Republic of Cuba from 25 July till 1 August this year is accepted. The activities of the delegation and the results of the conducted talks and negotiations are approved and highly valued.

2. Comrade Todor Zhivkov is assigned the following: to give a talk on the Bulgarian radio and television about the visit of our party-governmental delegation in Cuba; to talk with comrade Leonid Brezhnev and to inform him personally about our impressions, conclusions and assessments about the situation in the Republic of Cuba, and also about some pressing issues of the cooperation of the countries members of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance with Cuba.

3. The leaders of the fraternal parties in the socialist countries, besides the Socialist Republic of Romania, [are] to be informed about the visit of our party-governmental delegation in Republic of Cuba.

4. The "Foreign policy and international relations" Department of the CC of the BCP and the Foreign Ministry, coordinated with the respective ministries, institutes and departments, [are] to develop and put forward for approval in Politburo an overall program for consolidation and expansion of the relations and the cooperation of our country with the Republic of Cuba in the economic, political, and cultural spheres.

5. To take immediate measures for the consolidation of the diplomatic and the trade representation of PRB in Havana with personnel that is capable of solving the issues connected with the further expansion of the economic, the political, and the cultural relations and cooperation of our country with the Republic of Cuba. First of all the ambassador of PRB Diko Dikov^[1] and the commercial representative Fidan Avramov will be replaced by suitable people.

[...]

NOTES

From the statements [made] during the meeting of Politburo about the information regarding the visit of our party-governmental delegation in the Republic of Cuba

TODOR ZHIVKOV:

We can consider as unanimous the positive assessment about the work of the delegation and about the results of its visit to Cuba.

The motion for drafting a special resolution in relation to the visit of the delegation and the further expansion of the relations and the cooperation of our country with the Republic of Cuba is correct. Next we have to consider what the contents of this resolution will be and what actions it will encompass.

Obviously, we have to make a reassessment of lot of things, a political reassessment,

first of all. Where do our mistakes and delusions in relation to Cuba come from?

- From underestimating the main, the most essential [fact] about Cuba, namely, that the leaders there, including Castro, do not stand on consistent Marxist-Leninist positions, those of scientific socialism, and that we were not sufficiently aware of this circumstance in developing our approach to Cuba.

[...]

- About the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. We have to convince the Cuban comrades to begin to coordinate their prospective plans with the plans of the member countries of COMECON gradually, so that the cooperation and the aid for Cuba will become more expedient and more effective.

About the ration system. COMECON has to spare a few milliards in order to eliminate this system. This situation cannot be tolerated any more. This is a crime for which one day history will condemn us.

- [According to] our impressions, assessments and conclusions, it is appropriate to inform the leaders of the fraternal parties in the socialist countries, with the exception of Romania, [about the findings of our visit].

Notwithstanding the talks with comrade Brezhnev, possibly with comrade Kosygin, it will be expedient to prepare written information and to send it to the leaders of the brotherly parties in the socialist countries.

- About our representations in Cuba. Comrade Diko Dikov is not acquainted with the situation there. At the meeting that we had in the embassy he informed us at great length, but he could not reveal the true picture. It is necessary that he be immediately replaced and given another assignment.

[...]

PEKO TAKOV

- The situation in Cuba is complicated and the difficulties there are great. However, it is most important that there they strive decisively to construct a new socialist society.

[...]

That is why their hesitation and obscure concepts on a number of basic issues of the revolution and of the construction of socialism are not a coincidence. For example, let's take the money issue. Castro declared that he was convinced that money was not necessary and they could do without it. In this respect he even makes attempts to quote Marx (what he wrote about the Gothic Program). However, on the following day he told us about the production of their state factory for shoes. He boasted that their shoes were very cheap. However, they sell them three times more expensively and in this way they collect revenue from the population and effect accumulation. In other words, practically, he admits the need for money and its role (and the population there has a lot of money).

Like the other Cuban leaders, Castro thinks that covering money with goods in general is impossible and that this problem can be resolved only with rations, [and only] partially at that.

In this respect, too, the Cuban friends need assistance in order to gradually adopt the scientific understanding of this matter and to convince themselves that this can be done gradually by the creation of industrial and commodity funds and by the development of the industrial powers and the construction of modern socialist economics.

[...]

What else can I note? These are very honest people (for example, the price of sugar. I ask Castro why we have to receive Cuban sugar at a lower price than the Soviet Union. And he answers - because Bulgaria is not a rich country to pay a higher price.) However, these comrades are sensitive and, therefore, we have to work very carefully and sincerely and to apply a special approach. However, it turned out that we were not working in this way. Let's take for example the issue with our specialists in Cuba. Each receives 150 dollars monthly. Let it be 100-120, but why 150? The same applies to payment of the leaves of these people and their families. And this is a big colony.

About our aid and the Soviet aid for Cuba and the developing countries. The aid is enormous but it is scattered in dozens of countries and in a lot of cases it turns into consumers' aid, without playing the role of a factor for the development of the productive forces of these countries and [without] being a constructive factor in their economies. In many cases the effect of this aid is diminished and sometimes it is even lost. In this respect it is necessary to resort to concentration, to a better gradation of the needs and the objects, to assess where to concentrate the efforts at a certain time, in order to attain the maximum economic and political effect from our aid.

[...]

Top secret!

INFORMATION

About the visit of our party-governmental delegation in Cuba from 25 July to 1 August 1970 disclosed at a meeting of Politburo in August 4th this year by comrade Boris Velchev

Comrades,

In order to assess correctly the results from the visit of our delegation in Cuba we should be reminded at what moment it took place.

We can definitely say that we visited Cuba at a favorable moment. Lately, a positive process is taking place there. It is expressed in the aspirations of the Cuban party and state leaders on a number of basic issues of the development of Cuba and its international activities to be founded upon Marxist-Leninist principles and to cooperate more closely with the Soviet Union and the other brotherly socialist countries.

What precisely do I have in mind?

From the research conducted before the departure of the delegation the following was ascertained:

1. The main problem for the Cuban leaders now is not the implementation of revolution in Latin America but the development of the economics of Cuba and the solving of the tasks of the socialist construction.
2. The Cuban leaders adopt a course of rapprochement and all-embracing cooperation with the USSR and the other brotherly socialist countries in which it seems they see one of the main prerequisites for the success of socialism in Cuba.
3. The leaders more and more definitely make statements for unity of the socialist

community and of the international communist movement, while supporting the claim that this should happen on a bilateral basis. There is still a reservation towards the documents [presented] at the meeting in Moscow and towards the importance and the role of our common organizations, for example COMECON.

4. They take more and more realistic positions on the issues of the struggle against imperialism and so on.

At the same time it must be emphasized that the good state of Bulgarian-Cuban relations and the special attitude of Cuba towards Bulgaria, manifested on numerous occasions, along with Cuba's willingness to cooperate with our country, [created] favorable circumstances for our visit.

[...]

In this chain of ideas I would like to say that we displayed willingness to understand their positions, and while composing the Communiqué, we agreed to drop some passages and to transform others in order to [make the text] more acceptable for them.

Thus, for example, we agreed not to mention anywhere the CPSU and the Soviet Union. Their motive was that the world was well aware of the relations of Cuba and Bulgaria with the USSR and that it referred to bilateral relations and it was not necessary to speak about a third party.

Also they made it clear that they will not cede.

Everyone understands that if on this and on some other issues we had not displayed the necessary flexibility, it could have only harmed our efforts to attain the major goal, which we sought after.

We agreed not to mention the communist parties of Latin America, but as it is said in the Communiqué the Marxist-Leninist ideas and the communists.

Something else, [we agreed] not to speak about the international meeting of the communist parties, since they were not actual participants in it. But in the Communiqué were included passages that both parties would fight for the unity of the world socialist system and of the international movement, as well as for intensifying the anti-imperialistic struggle.

Practically they consented to record the essence of the resolution of the UN Security Council for the Middle East, but they did not agree that such a resolution should be mentioned, since they had not voted for it.

What was the second peculiarity of our tactics?

They were convinced that we had a sincere wish to cooperate with them and to assist them. They thanked us for the aid, which we had rendered them up to now. From our behavior and from the offers we made them, they saw that we have come with an open heart. During the talks comrade T. Zhivkov gave them an opportunity to get a better sense of our intentions.

[...]

And something very important - comrade Todor Zhivkov posed the question for assistance on a broader basis. He recommended to the Cuban comrades to think

about partial or complete participation and membership of Cuba in COMECON [Council for Mutual Economic Assistance].

The third peculiarity of our tactics was in an appropriate form to show better than ever that Bulgaria was a partner, from which they could benefit. This happened with the statement comrade Todor Zhivkov made at the meeting with Politburo and also during his talks with comrade Castro about the issues, which we were solving, about our experience now and in the past, and about the prospects for our country.

I would only like to note that they were strongly surprised when comrade T. Zhivkov spoke about the tasks ensuing from the resolutions of the September Plenum of the CC BCP. It was obvious that they had not seen the problems of the scientific and technical progress in such a way. We had the impression that the words of comrade Todor Zhivkov sounded to them as if in an unknown language. Comrade Fidel Castro displayed keen interest and a few times asked how and when we had discovered all this and whether it was the same in the other socialist countries. He took detailed notes. The other comrades did the same.

We could not implement fully this scheme in our tactics - not to argue with them and not to moralize, but to tell them more about our experience (how we overcame the difficulties, how we resolved the problems, and so on) - because the time was not enough. And obviously, it was necessary to talk with them more about some other very important problems of the construction of socialism.

Such are the specifics, which first of all, comrade T. Zhivkov suggested. And in these circumstances, we could not but attain good results.

[...]

Top secret!

PROTOCOL

about the talk between the delegation of CC of BCP and Politburo of the Cuban Socialist Party, which took place on 30 July 1970

From the Bulgarian delegation, comrades Todor Zhivkov, Boris Velchev, and Peko Takov took part at the meeting.

From the Cuban side the meeting attended comrades Fidel Castro, Osvaldo Dorticos, Raul Castro, Sergio del Valle, Ramiro Valdez, and Armando Hart.

FIDEL CASTRO: Our meeting has no agenda.

TODOR ZHIVKOV: In Bulgaria they say- a meeting without a speaker.

BORIS VELCHEV: There is an agenda. This is the Bulgarian-Cuban friendship.

FIDEL CASTRO: The question is that there are no big problems between us.

TODOR ZHIVKOV: So it seems to us, too.

FIDEL CASTRO: This saves us time. There are big problems but we are small countries and they do not fall in our radius of action.

TODOR ZHIVKOV: It is the small pebbles that overturn the cart.

OSVALDO DORTICOS: Maybe comrade Zhivkov would like to take the floor before the talks begin.

FIDEL CASTRO: We are interested in your plans during the next five year period. You told me about the trade, the trusts, and the agrarian industrial complexes. Comrade Zhivkov is more informed than we are. We are isolated and we know less. We are interested in everything about Bulgaria, about what we talked about and the prospects of COMECON. About COMECON we know only about the issues, which are affecting us directly. For example, we know that the GDR will stop producing busses, that Poland will stop producing airplanes, and so on. We hear about COMECON when we meet difficulties with the import of some goods. We do not hear about COMECON anything that could favor us. When we tried to coordinate the issue about sugar at the political level, we came to an agreement, but after that things did not go well. The administrative apparatus hinders the implementations of the resolutions of the political leadership.

However, we have to say that we are not complaining of anything in our relations with Bulgaria. We only want comrade Todor Zhivkov to act as our representative where it is necessary and to represent a friendly voice for us. However, this is already a reality and I want something which I know is true, since comrade Zhivkov is already a friend of ours in COMECON.

As comrade Zhivkov said, the coordination of our efforts is difficult and there are problems. What he said about the trusts is very important. Bulgaria and Cuba are small countries and they have not many natural resources. That is why, as comrade Zhivkov said, you are supporters of coordination and cooperation. The numbers, which comrade Zhivkov announced about the role of the foreign trade in the formation of the national revenue of Bulgaria, are very interesting. The same refers to us, as well. The other thing, which interests us, is the foundation of trust among the socialist countries. I told comrade Zhivkov that we are ready for bilateral cooperation. This is attainable at the moment. There are small problems, which can be resolved at the annual meetings of the Committee for economic and scientific-technical cooperation.

I would like to emphasize our goal and willingness to attain maximum cooperation with Bulgaria. Nevertheless, we are improving our relations with the Soviet Union, with which our connections have been developing very well recently, and we would like to develop our relations with Bulgaria. Generally, our relations with the USSR and the other socialist countries are developing very well. We have good will in this respect. The admiration of our people for the Bulgarian Communist Party and the Bulgarian people was expressed these days in various ways.

We would like to make our relations closer and to exchange experience. This does not require many expenses and we benefit more from such cooperation. Of course, it is not what motivates us. In the end, the benefit will be for the cause of socialism. I proceed from the real state of affairs. We do not wish to resolve our problems by creating difficulties for others, since all socialist countries have their own problems. Bulgaria has no natural resources and you should work a lot in order to overcome these difficulties. We would like to cooperate on issues of mutual interest.

[...]

Comrade TODOR ZHIVKOV focused on the problems of COMECON. He gave an assessment that COMECON played a big role for the development of the socialist countries. He concentrated on the role of COMECON for the victory of socialism in

Bulgaria. After that comrade Zhivkov spoke about the new tasks, which confronted us. He told us about some difficulties and problems of COMECON. In this connection Fidel Castro expressed the position that it would be better if there were common economics for all socialist countries and he asked where the crack, which Cuba could squeeze in COMECON through, was.

Comrade Zhivkov answered that Cuba could cooperate with the countries from COMECON. For example, he pointed out that Cuba could participate in the building of a big metallurgic enterprise in the Soviet Union, in the plant for caustic soda in Bulgaria and in the development of the manganese ore in Bulgaria. He expressed the idea that with the efforts of all socialist countries a common enterprise for exploitation of nickel ore, and so on could be built in Cuba .

[...]

[1] Minister of Internal Affairs (1962-1969), Ambassador to Cuba (1969-1971).