

January 24, 1963

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

Citation:

"Hungarian Embassy in Havana (Beck), Report on Soviet-Cuban Conflicts", January 24, 1963, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Hungarian National Archives (MOL), Budapest, Foreign Ministry, Top Secret Files, XIX-J-I-j-Kuba, 3.d. Translated by Attila Kolontári and Zsófia Zelnik <https://wilson-center.drivingcreative.com/document/116841>

Summary:

Hungarian Ambassador to Cuba János Beck reports on post-Cuban-Missile-Crisis conflict between Cuba and the Soviet Union. Beck highlights Cuba's tendency to act independent of socialist country opinion. He also mentions the negative influence of nationalism on the Cuban government, which has a direct influence on Soviet-Cuban relations. The Soviets believe Cubans do not understand that Soviet negotiations with the US secured Cuba from a future US invasion. The Cuban Missile Crisis also is evidence that neither the US or Soviet Union want to start a nuclear war.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

Original Language:

Hungarian

Contents:

Translation - English

Embassy of the Hungarian People's Republic

To Comrade Foreign Minister János Péter
Budapest
TOP SECRET!

36/1963/Top Secret Written: in four copies

Three to Center
One to Embassy
Havana, 24 January 1963

Subject: The essence of
Cuban-Soviet conflicts

Ref. No.:443/1962/top secret

The observation of events happening since my report submitted by the December mail and the various meetings taking place since then make it possible to prove what has been reported on the one hand, and to draw new conclusions on the other hand.

The Cuban position concerning the place and role of the Cuban revolution and the origin and course of Latin American revolutions is well-known. It was defined by the Second Havana Declaration, it has been completed and commented on by numerous speeches of the Cuban leaders and a series of editorials and lectures. It is not only the Soviet party and with them the European communist parties that cannot approve this position, but also numerous Latin American parties. Ambassador [Aleksandr] Alekseyev said that, in the summer of 1962, when Raul Castro visited Moscow, Comrade Khrushchev had a long conversation with him. He explained to Raul Castro that the Soviet party or himself, Khrushchev, could not interfere in the affairs of other parties and did not want to either, he could not give his opinion about the Havana Declaration, for example, but he thought that the Cuban party should have a debate with the mentioned parties if they did not agree in everything, the Latin American parties could not be neglected, and one could not make decisions instead of them. "After all, you are not the Comintern," added Comrade Khrushchev.

I asked Ambassador Alekseyev what Raul Castro thought about this, whether he understood what Comrade Khrushchev meant. He answered: no.

Comrade Alekseyev said that the main Cuban leaders and, first of all among them Fidel Castro, despite all the Soviet efforts, had not [believed] and did not believe or understand that, in connection with the Caribbean crisis, the Soviet Union's aim was to ensure Cuba's independence and her rescue from invasion. They are convinced that the Soviet Union was only maneuvering and being tactical, she used the Caribbean crisis and its solution and Cuba only as instruments in the political game with the United States.

Why do they not understand[?], I asked. He gave no answer. As the saying goes, ill-doers are ill-deemers, I continued, is that right? Alekseyev's deputy, Byelous answered yes, it was nationalism.

I consider unnecessary to list here as evidence the facts that may be read, heard and observed day-by-day on the basis of which I came to the conclusion already earlier that in the Cuban leadership nationalism played an important role.

In Soviet-Cuban relations Cuba's security and the Cuban ideas about it also play an important role.

Already on 23 October last year, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez told me (and at that time I also reported it) that Cuba was ready to agree to the removal of missiles and etc. if Cuba's sanctity was ensured also by the Soviet Union.

Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister [Vasily V.] Kuznetsov, visiting Havana recently, talked to Fidel Castro as well. Comrade Kuznetsov told us (the ambassadors of socialist countries) that during the conversation, without explaining his ideas and wishes, Fidel Castro had made three or four unmistakable hints, saying e.g. that Cuba's situation was singular because the European socialist countries are guaranteed by the Warsaw Treaty, the member-states of the Warsaw treaty looked upon this or that so, but they...etc.

This repeated hint could have served as an answer to Comrade Kuznetsov to some extent, who, during his report on his talks concerning the Caribbean crisis, confirmed to Fidel Castro that the Soviet Union considered Cuba a member of the socialist camp, that is, Cuba was guaranteed by the socialist camp.

The idea occurs that the Cuban position concerning the solution of the crisis is not only a result of non-understanding, but, to some extent, also of extortion toward the Soviet Union. Other ambassadors representing European socialist countries and I have also experienced such a train of thought on the Cuban side as could be summed up in the following way: During the crisis and its solution it was proved that, because of Cuba, neither the United States nor the Soviet Union was willing to start a nuclear war, what would happen then in case of a local war by traditional arms started directly by the USA against Cuba?

János Beck
Ambassador