

January 28, 1963

**Hungarian Embassy in Havana (Beck), Report on
Soviet Deputy Foreign Ministry Vasily Kuznetsov**

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Summary:

Hungarian Ambassador to Cuba János Beck recounts an evening at the Soviet ambassador's home with other socialist ambassadors to Cuba. Soviet functionary Kuznetsov reported on deliberations between the Soviet Union and United States on the Cuban Missile Crisis and nuclear issues. Beck also describes events that Kuznetsov attended while visiting Cuba, not all welcoming. Kuznetsov met with Castro while in Cuba and addressed the crisis among other problems.

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Embassy of the Hungarian People's Republic
To Comrade Foreign Minister János Péter
Budapest

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Havana, 28 January 1963

Subject: Comrade Kuznetsov's Report

On the evening of January 17 in the apartment of the Soviet ambassador [Aleksandr Alekseyev], Comrade Kuznetsov gave a report to the Polish, Czechoslovakian, Romanian and Bulgarian ambassadors and me. (The GDR's ambassador was back home at the party congress.)

During the report he talked about the meetings between the Soviet Union and the USA concerning the Caribbean crisis, about the talks on disarmament, the ban on nuclear experiments and Berlin. I consider it unnecessary to report on this part because Comrade Kuznetsov said that in New York there had been close cooperation between the Soviet Union and the other socialist missions concerning one group of the questions. And about his meetings with Kennedy he informed the socialist missions already in the USA.

Comrade Kuznetsov had no pre-determined program for his stay in Cuba. He had his most important, single conversation with Fidel Castro on the 17th. It lasted about two hours. Previously, on the evening of the 15th, Comrade Kuznetsov participated at the special closing sitting of the Latin American women's congress together with the Soviet ambassador, where Fidel Castro gave a speech (I will report on this separately). Here, in the theater, he was introduced to Fidel Castro before the beginning of the special sitting, who said to him, "I do not offer you a cigar, because Khrushchev, too, gave the cigar I presented to him to Kennedy."

Comrade Kuznetsov, who had never met Fidel Castro before, was surprised at this reception. And the speech heard afterwards shocked him. He scolded his ambassador why on earth he had to be there.

After such preceding events, he looked forward to the longer talks and meetings with Fidel Castro a bit worried. By the 17th, however, Fidel Castro had calmed down and proved a completely different person during his conversation with Comrade Kuznetsov. The conversation, which was interpreted by the Soviet ambassador, consisted of two parts. At the beginning, for about 40 minutes Comrade Kuznetsov reported on the talks between the Soviet Union and the USA on the Caribbean crisis, then a lot more briefly and not mentioning some of the important details he had mentioned to us, he outlined the talks concerning other problems.

Fidel Castro listened to him very carefully, without interjections, then he said he completely agreed with the Soviet Union concerning the essence of the talks on the Caribbean crisis, and he thought that they, that is Cuba, should not do or say anything that would lessen the Soviet Union's possibilities for maneuvers. But he criticized some things concerning forms.

At first Fidel Castro contradicted the evaluation according to which the USA president

formally obliged himself not to attack Cuba or allow any other American states to do so. Comrade Kuznetsov had to explain it for a long time that there were numerous ways of making agreements between states and governments, one form of talks and agreement was e.g. what had been realized by the published correspondence of Comrade Khrushchev and Kennedy. After long explanations, Fidel Castro understood it finally.

Comrade Kuznetsov did not mention any other important things that Fidel Castro would have told him, except for the repeated hints, which I am reporting on in my report No. 36/1963.t.s. submitted by this mail.[1]

Comrade Kuznetsov evaluated the conversation saying that Fidel Castro and the Cubans seemed to be forced by the situation to follow the correct policy.

During the conversation started following Comrade Kuznetsov's report, I told what I had heard from Blas Roca about the "details of form" Fidel Castro was criticizing. (Cf. my report No. 479 submitted by this mail.)

Instead of Comrade Kuznetsov, but with his approval, Ambassador Alekseyev gave a reply and repeated very emphatically that Blas Roca's statements were not true basically. The Cuban leaders had received the right explanation both from him and Comrade Mikoyan, when he was here. Concerning Khrushchev's letter of 28 October to Kennedy, the situation was the following: when it was ready, it was published immediately and announced on the Moscow radio. The statement concerning it sent by the Soviet government to the Cuban government arrived three hours after the publication as a result of the necessary double encoding and listening-in. The situation, however, did not make it possible to wait for three or more hours.

Anyway, the Soviet side has explained that at that time they considered this step pre-harmonized with the Cuban government and they have the right to stick to this evaluation.

János Beck
Ambassador

[1] See Hungarian Embassy in Havana (Beck), Report on Soviet-Cuban Conflicts, 24 January 1963