

June 21, 1963

Hungarian Embassy in Moscow (Szipka), Report on Soviet-Cuban Relations

Citation:

"Hungarian Embassy in Moscow (Szipka), Report on Soviet-Cuban Relations", June 21, 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/116849>

Summary:

Hungarian Ambassador to Cuba József Szipka reports on Soviet-Cuban relations from the early stages of the Cuban revolution to the present. The Cuban government depends on economic, military and political aid; trade agreements; and cultural and scientific exchanges from socialist governments, primarily the Soviet Union. Szipka adds that the Soviet Union's flexible political steps during the Cuban Missile Crisis ensured Cuba's security from a US invasion. From Szipka's perspective, the missile crisis was a valuable learning experience for Cuban officials.

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 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Budapest

TOP SECRET!

486/top secret/1963 Moscow, 21 June 1963

Subject: Soviet-Cuban
Relations.

001254/1/top secret/1963

Official: Pál Mátyik
Written: in three copies
Two copies to Center

One copy to Embassy

Since the victory of the Cuban revolution Soviet-Cuban relations have been characterized by continuous development. This is also a result of the anti-imperialist, socialist character of the Cuban revolution and the consistent, internationalist politics of the Soviet Union. The appearance and consolidation of the first socialist state on the American continent is due to the existence and never-ceasing continuous support of socialist countries, mainly the Soviet Union.

It is well-known that the Soviet Union has provided all help to defend the independence and restore the economy of the revolutionary country from the beginning. From the beginning the Soviet Union has fought for the rights of the Cuban people in the UN and at other international forums. The Soviet Union has sent her representatives and specialists to Cuba to assess on the spot what the Cuban people needed. Parallel to the Cuban progress, personal connections between the two countries are increasing. Economic and cultural delegations have visited each other's countries. It was a great help to the Cuban economy threatened by American economic blockade that the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries supported them generously and directly when they took over the surplus of sugar of the country, which has a mono-culture economic structure, and they provided the most needed means and loans to rebuild the country's economy.

The visit of the Cuban government delegation headed by Raoul [Raúl] Castro to the Soviet Union last fall [sic; summer] and the agreement signed as a consequence was of historic importance too. The declaration published about the talks pointed out unambiguously and clearly that the Soviet Union undertook the responsibility to defend Cuba's independence by all means-including the most modern military technology as well-if the imperialists should attack Cuba. It is well-known that during the Caribbean [i.e., Cuban missile] crisis the Soviet Union carried out this duty by providing the country with appropriate military technology, then, replying to the aggression of the imperialists, making definite and flexible political steps, she ensured Cuba's sanctity and, by this, peace in the whole world.

In the days of the crisis and afterwards, as a result of the complicated international situation, we could observe the signs of hesitation in the statements of some Cuban leaders, which the imperialist press and the opponents of the policy of peaceful co-existence tried to exploit. At the same time, Comrade Fidel Castro and other leaders have always stressed definitely the extremely important help received from the Soviet Union and the inviolable friendship with the Soviet Union. The Caribbean crisis meant great experience for the leaders of the Cuban revolution from an international political aspect too. Since then the events following it have proved numerous times the rightness of the Soviet politics. The Cuban leaders have seen this

politics justified in connection with the situation of their own country as well. This was expressed to full extent in Comrade Fidel Castro's historic trip to the Soviet Union [27 April-3 June 1963]. It is well-known that Comrade Fidel Castro's declarations unambiguously and definitely pointed out their full agreement with the foreign policy steps of the Soviet Union.

The news published about the talks and agreements of Fidel Castro and his delegation in the Soviet Union show that the relations between the two countries will develop at an even greater pace in the future and are based completely on the principles of Lenin concerning cooperation between the socialist countries. The agreements signed here determine the direction of relations between the two countries for a long time.

Both among the representatives of the competent departments of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and among the leading members of the Cuban embassy, we can observe the opinion that Soviet-Cuban relations are developing in a really good direction and are characterized by sincere, comradely cooperation.

There was a great reaction in Cuba to Castro's visit, which increased the unity of the two countries. The mentioned opinions, however, reflect Cuba's present economic difficulties as well. But the country's leaders can see well that these difficulties can be counterbalanced only by persistent and pre-planned work, by the complete mobilization of the people for work. The party being formed now will play a crucial role in providing foundations for this development.

Cuba's international position has become consolidated due to Castro's visit and the political reactions to it. According to the head of the Latin American Department of the [Soviet] Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cuban leaders have understood that they should achieve a firm position. They have understood that they belong to the American continent, the neighborhood of American imperialism, which requires a determined but, at the same time, flexible policy. In recent times, we have seen that the Cuban leaders have reacted in a reserved and moderate manner to the USA's policy and there has been a decrease in the sharpness of the declarations against American policy in general. The Cuban leaders can see that the Americans cannot ravage around freely in the Caribbean and the Soviet Union can defend the country's sanctity. They can also witness that Kennedy has given up aggressive experiments for a time and has taken measures to control Cuban emigrants. The head of the American Department of the MID [MFA; Ministry of Foreign Affairs] has considered recently that, although the Cuban crisis cannot still be looked upon as being solved, the tension has decreased considerably in the past weeks. There are still provocations and they can expect them in the future too, but it seems that it is not so important any more for Kennedy to maintain the tension in Cuba and American politics is paying attention mainly to other international issues. Kennedy can see that the Soviet Union always stands up for Cuba and Cuba has not become isolated. Fidel Castro's visit to the Soviet Union warned even the American leading circles to take a more sober position.

Comrade [Vladimir] Bazikin has said that they are not sending a high level Soviet delegation this year to Cuba's national holiday on 26 July, because Comrade Khrushchev is expected to visit Cuba in the near future. This will probably take place in August. At the celebrations of 26 July last year, the Soviet Union was represented by Comrade Nina Popova, and they are likely to send a similar delegation to Havana this year as well.

During the conversation Comrade Bazikin confirmed that the Cuban press had published the letter of the Chinese CP. It is difficult to understand why the Cuban comrades considered this necessary.

As a result of the talks of the end of 1962 and the beginning of 1963, the Soviet-Cuban goods exchange agreement concerning the year of 1963 was signed on 6 February 1963. According to the agreement, the Soviet Union is going to supply Cuba with crude oil and oil-products, black and non-ferrous metal, artificial fertilizers, chemical materials, sawn timber, cellulose, paper, cotton, various machinery, instruments, wheat, wheat flour, animal and vegetable fat, canned meat, medicine and other industrial, agricultural articles and articles of consumption to Cuba. In exchange Cuba supplies the Soviet Union with sugar, alcohol, articles containing nickel, tobacco, cigars and other articles.

The Soviet government provides Cuba with a long-term loan under the best conditions to counterbalance their advantage concerning the balance of foreign trade.

At present, the Soviet Union is on the first place in Cuba's foreign trade, about half of it concerns the Soviet Union. Such important needs of the people's economy as, for example, crude oil and oil-products, mineral artificial fertilizers, sulfur, asbestos, cotton, sawn timber, trucks and special cars, machine-tools and a lot of other important needs are satisfied completely from Soviet imports. Similarly, it is the Soviet Union that provides Cuba's population with bread and wheat flour completely.

Besides this, the Soviet Union also provides technical-scientific help to Cuba. Concerning the geological research work, the reconstruction of metallurgy works, power plants, oil-processing factories, car service stations; and concerning the building of educational institutions, the development of nickel and chemical industry, irrigation work and hospital equipment, Cuba receives considerable help from the Soviet Union.

A direct maritime and air connection has been established between the Soviet Union and Cuba. There is also a direct phone and telegraph connection between the two countries. In the Soviet Union there are a great many Cuban students, and a lot of Cuban workers attend professional re-training courses in the Soviet Union.

In 1960 an agreement was signed on Soviet-Cuban cultural and scientific cooperation. Since then they have laid down in cultural work plans the specific actions of cooperation every year. In the past three years the volume of cultural and scientific exchange has almost trebled. The work plan of 1963 signed in March (similarly to previous work plans) reflects the Soviet comrades' intention to help in all of its points. In 1963 about 350 specialists are travelling to Cuba and about 400 Cubans to the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union provides Cuba with help in all spheres of culture and science, mainly in the training of specialists and in the organization of new institutions to be set up. In the near future about 120 Soviet specialists are travelling to Cuba to help with the building of a technical network, and numerous professors and university lecturers are going there to convey their experience in teaching economics. At present 100 Russian-language teachers work in Cuba and 75 would-be language teachers and translators study in the Soviet Union. This year about 360 Cubans attend the Soviet Union's higher education institutions (out of them 138 students will start their studies this year).

According to the cultural and scientific work plan, a group of 25 Soviet artists, the ballet of the Great Theater and, at the request of Comrade Fidel Castro, probably the Ukrainian Popular State Ensemble will travel to Cuba. In the Soviet Union the Cuban popular dance ensemble and popular orchestra will appear as guest-artists. They will organize the week of Cuban and Soviet films respectively to show the latest films of the other countries. The Soviet Union will send an exhibition of books, graphics, and posters to Cuba and will receive an exhibition of theatrical scenery. Besides the above, a great many directors [and] choreographers will travel on study trips to the Soviet Union. The work plan prescribes the regular exchange of publications between

the central libraries; too.

The societies of artists (writers, composers, journalists, architects, theatrical and fine art artists, etc.) will exchange delegations according to the work plan. The Alliance of Soviet Fine Art Artists will send an industrial art exhibition to Cuba and will present a considerable part of the material to the Cuban comrades.

There is remarkable progress in health and sports relations between the two countries as well. At the request of the Cuban comrades, several expert physicians travel to Cuba, in the field of sports, apart from the various tournaments; the work plan includes sending Soviet trainers to Cuba.

According to the work plan, there will be a regular exchange of programs between the Soviet and Cuban radios and televisions.

The Soviet-Cuban scientific cooperation will become a lot wider through the agreement on scientific cooperation signed in Moscow recently. The Soviet comrades will provide help in the solution of various scientific problems and organizational help in the organization of a science academy in Cuba.

From the above it is clear that, in the present stage of Soviet-Cuban cultural and scientific cooperation, the most important factor is the help of Soviet comrades in training specialists in the various fields of science, education and culture and the experience they convey in the organization of the newly formed Cuban institutions.

I request you to send a summary report on the development and present situation of Hungarian-Cuban relations so that the Soviet organs could be informed about them.

Ambassador
[József SZIPKA]