

**March 16, 1962**

**Hungarian Embassy in Havana (Beck), Report on the  
Federal Republic of Germany and Cuba**

**Citation:**

"Hungarian Embassy in Havana (Beck), Report on the Federal Republic of Germany and Cuba", March 16, 1962, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Magyar Országos Levéltár (MOL) [Hungarian National Archives] Budapest, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Top Secret Documents, XIX-J-1-j-Kuba, 2.d. Translated by Attila Kolontári and Zsófia Zelnik  
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116756>

**Summary:**

Ambassador János Beck reports on diplomatic relations between the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) and Cuba. Beck speculates that FRG does intelligence work for departed Americans. Central to Beck's report is the fact that Cuba wants to preserve diplomatic relations with as many countries as possible. Relevant is the Hallstein principle and the presence of FRG diplomats and German Democratic Republic's Political Commission. (There are two self-governing and independent German states in Cuba.)

**Credits:**

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

**Original Language:**

Hungarian

**Contents:**

Translation - English

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

Top Secret!  
98/1962/ top secret  
Havana, 16 March 1962

Subject: The Federal Republic of Germany and Cuba.

There are normal diplomatic relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and Cuba. The FRG is represented in Havana by an ambassador, who has a staff of seven diplomats and numerous administrative and assistant staff.

As I have already reported, the Cuban Republic did not recognize the GDR [German Democratic Republic; East Germany] officially because the GDR considers it more valuable than formal recognition that the so-called Political Commission headed by the ambassador may demonstrate in reality in Cuba, that is, in Latin-America, day after day the existence of the two self-governing and independent German states. Formal recognition would probably have meant the FRG breaking off diplomatic relations with Cuba corresponding to the Hallstein doctrine.

The number of the staff of the Embassy of the FRG, considered very large among Havana conditions, can by no means be justified by the diplomatic, economic, or other relations between the FRG and Cuba. The political relations between the two countries are well known and need no comments. Their trade relations can be considered insignificant compared with other great Western countries. Neither the public, nor the Cuban authorities, know of any diplomatic, political, or maybe cultural or other work by the Embassy of the FRG. It may be presumed and I have heard this opinion of the Cuban side several times that the Embassy of the FRG took over the intelligence work of the USA Embassy after their leaving [in January 1961]. Anyway, once I found, myself, that on a commercial ship calling at the Havana port, among the crew there traveled an officer of the FRG military navy disguised as a sailor. Certainly this was not the only case.

At the great Cuban national events, at the receptions held to commemorate national holidays, etc. the ambassador of the FRG is present regularly and asks the protocol chief every time, pointing at the ambassador of the GDR, who this man is and what he is doing here. The protocol chief always explains that he is the head of the GDR political mission, who has been invited similarly to the members of the diplomatic corps to represent his country. The West-German ambassador is usually satisfied with the answer and it has happened several times that the protocol chief or other foreign affairs staff asked him whether he wanted to protest about it or something like that and he answered no and said he only wanted to point out and state the fact.

It seems that it is the interest of the Bonn government to maintain diplomatic relations with Cuba, they may not carry out the break off required by the Hallstein principle or if they did so, only with a heavy heart, because, on the one hand they would change their position in the Latin-American countries for the worse and on the other hand, it would make its now intensive penetration into the new African countries more difficult. West Germany tries to act differently from other imperialist countries in Latin American and African countries and she wants to penetrate into them with her great economic power as deeply as possible. Her anti-Cuban attitude or even her break off [of diplomatic ties] with Cuba would meet with antipathy in some of these countries in the leading circles themselves and everywhere in the various progressive or even patriotic petit bourgeois and other circles—and this would prevent her penetration. The Cuban side is aware of all this, but at present it is also in

the interest of Cuba to maintain diplomatic relations with as many countries as possible, it would be particularly disadvantageous to heedlessly provoke breaking off diplomatic relations with one of the NATO countries.

János Beck  
ambassador