

February 14, 1984

Record of a meeting on February 13, 1984 between Erich Honecker and Fidel Castro

Citation:

"Record of a meeting on February 13, 1984 between Erich Honecker and Fidel Castro", February 14, 1984, Wilson Center Digital Archive, SAPMO-BArch, Berlin. Document obtained by Christian F. Ostermann and translated by Grace Leonhard.
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114532>

Summary:

Record of a meeting held in Moscow on 13 February 1984 between Comrade Erich Honecker and Comrade Fidel Castro. Some of the topics include the U.S. invasion of Grenada, Ronald Reagan's policies and improvements in Cuban industries.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

Original Language:

German

Contents:

Translation - English

Berlin, 14 Feb 1984

Department of
International Relations

Record

of a meeting held in Moscow on 13 February 1984 between Comrade Erich Honecker, Secretary General of the Central Committee of the Social Unity Party [SED] and Chairman of the State Council of the GDR, and Comrade Fidel Castro, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba and Chairman of the State Council and Council of Ministers of the Republic of Cuba

Comrade E. Honecker: remarked that although it is a lamentable occasion that brings him together with Comrade Castro, he [Honecker] is very pleased that they are meeting. Cuba and the struggle of Cuban comrades is very dear to the GDR. The GDR has close ties to Cuba, Nicaragua, and the people of El Salvador and Grenada. He agrees with everything Comrade Castro said about the lessons to be learned from the fate of Grenada. He is interested in how Cuba's comrades are faring in their struggle today.

Comrade F. Castro: This is truly a bitter time, but he is also pleased to meet with friends. It really is true that Cuba, as well as Nicaragua and the people of El Salvador, have become stronger since the fall of Grenada. In the final analysis, the US has waged an unsuccessful battle against this small country. After this invasion it will be much more difficult to attack Nicaragua, to destroy the liberation movement in El Salvador, or even invade Cuba.

Cuba had half a million citizens under arms, including the Reserves; today the figure is one million. Another half million may be added to that figure. The country and the people are prepared to mount unparalleled resistance. Cuba has thus become stronger. He wants to take this opportunity to offer his heartfelt gratitude to Comrade Honecker and the GDR for the support they provided in the form of arms and other equipment. This is the equivalent of another 500,000 soldiers.

Comrade E. Honecker: The GDR and Cuba are fighting the war on the same front. It [GDR] will mobilize all of its forces and do everything possible to provide even more support to the region. Some deliveries have already been made. Additional capacities have been made available so that the equipment needed can be produced. The SED considers this to be part of the battle that Cuba, Nicaragua, and other Latin American peoples are fighting today.

Comrade F. Castro: The US is currently experiencing a crisis of mistrust in Latin America as it never has before. The right-wing dictatorships in Chile, Brazil, and other countries are falling apart. The US's clout is disappearing. Latin American countries are deeply in debt. The \$350 billion they owe cannot be repaid. The US's budget deficit policy is strangling Latin America, just as it is strangling its West European allies. In Brussels there are already increasing complaints that the policies of the US are more dangerous than those of the Soviet Union. At the same time, in Quito 30 Latin American countries stated that they are prepared to proceed together against the economic policies of the US.

Comrade E. Honecker: The positions of the revolutionary forces in Latin America have matured considerably. As a result of all of this, Cuba is practically immune to attack. There is support from a number of Capitalist countries. These countries feel more strongly today that the US is not taking their interests into account. Western Europe is losing \$50 million annually due to its high interest policies. There are 33 million people unemployed in the OECD countries. Pressure on governments is intensifying as a result of this. The army the unemployed increases even during periods of

so-called upswings. In the GDR, the fact that we are continuing our economic upswing during the same period, that we promote the professional development of our young people, and that we are raising the standard of living -while at the same time that there are so many unemployed in the Capitalist countries -3 million unemployed in the FRG -all of this has an effect on the citizens of the GDR. It demonstrates the alternatives. The GDR's [economic] development is convincing despite all the difficulties. Productivity is rising, and material consumption is falling. The labor for new factories comes from workers who have been freed up. A hard battle is being waged to intensify economic capacity, to guarantee the standard of living, and to ensure defense.

The news from Cuba and Nicaragua about events in Latin America are an inspiration for our people. The events in other countries such as Venezuela also demonstrate that Latin America is now in a different situation and that progressive positions have blossomed. He welcomes the resolution by the Preparations Committee in Havana to conduct the next World Games in Moscow. It will be good to bring Cuban enthusiasm to Moscow.

Comrade F. Castro: The festival will be an important event. Cuba will do everything it can to make it a great occasion. Last Sunday a major announcement was prepared in Havana. Then the news came that Comrade Andropov had died. Nevertheless, the demonstration took place and the festival flag was passed on in silence. This is how the youth of Cuba demonstrated their solidarity with the Soviet Union.

Comrade E. Honecker: The festival will certainly be a powerful occasion. The FDJ [Free German Youth?] will also do its utmost. The FDJ puts up a good fight -the young people are to be commended.

Comrade F. Castro: asked Comrade Honecker to return to Cuba soon, even if only to vacation. Much has changed in Cuba. In 1970, 370,000 were employed for the sugar cane harvest. In 1983 that figure was just 85,000. This is an indication of the tremendous up-swing in productivity and efficiency. Oil consumption for production of raw sugar is a tenth of what it was just seven years ago. In this sense Cuba had its most spectacular Zafra in 1983. The economy is doing well. Annual average growth is 5 percent. There have also been good results in education and health care. Things in Cuba are improving, while the majority of Latin American countries have been shaken by the crisis. If peace endures, Cuba believes that this favorable trend will continue. The problems in Latin America cannot be resolved in any other way. Even conservative politicians now see that profound changes are needed. Cuba has problems, but the problems of Imperialism are disproportionately worse. The GDR differs from the FRG in the same way that Cuba differs from Latin America. Cuba's social-economic development increasingly illustrates alternatives.

Comrade E. Honecker: The SED is pleased about these successes in Cuba. Cuba is different from what it was in the past. There is growing sympathy for Cuba, and not just on the part of Communists. A totally different situation has in fact developed in Latin America. The invasion of Grenada demonstrates that the US cannot find any other way out of its situation. But the US cannot take such a step again.

Comrade F. Castro: Given the Reagan administration's politics of extortion, it is important to stick together and remain strong. It is possible that Reagan will be re-elected. But we should not give him any assistance.

Comrade E. Honecker: The GDR will not give Reagan one centimeter of ground. He met Chancellor Kohl in the evening and spoke to him about the major problems today. The US's new first strike weapons have been deployed in the FRG. Operational-tactical missiles with a longer range have been deployed in response. The deployment [of these weapons] has done nothing to provide greater assurance of

peace. They agreed about that. He suggested to Kohl that the GDR and the FRG support a proposal to remove the missiles from both countries.

After our countermeasures had been introduced, the Springer press published in the FRG a photo of missiles that have a range of 120 kilometers and that are deployed in the GDR. This was an attempt to deceive the people of the FRG and other western European countries. In his interview with the French publication "Revolution", he said that the missiles deployed in the GDR cover the entire area in which American first-strike weapons are deployed. Thus in the West it is said that they have "gone into the rain".

Indirectly the countermeasures also benefit Cuba in that they are one element in the battle to prevent a nuclear inferno. The SED is also proceeding on the assumption that Reagan will be re-elected. The Democrats are unfortunately split. Reagan has changed his manner of speaking somewhat. He, Comrade Honecker, pointed this out at the SED Conference of Delegates in Berlin. These are his campaign speeches in a bourgeois country. Reagan is attempting to present himself as a soldier in the battle against nuclear war. But he is even preparing Star Wars. Obviously a large proportion of the US's national income will be devoted to the military. This is how the crisis will continue to intensify despite the so-called up-swing. The GDR is setting its course assuming that Reagan will not win the election. But the election is a decision by the people of the US.

In conclusion, Comrade E. Honecker again expressed his thanks for the opportunity to meet and gave his assurances that the GDR will do everything in its power to support Cuba in its struggle.

The members of the Party and state delegations of both countries attended the meeting.