

March 31, 1966

Embassy, Havana, Report on the State of the Cuban Communist Party

Citation:

"Embassy, Havana, Report on the State of the Cuban Communist Party", March 31, 1966, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Central State Archive of Bulgaria (TsDA), Fond 1B, Opis 81, Unprocessed Collection, 1967-1990; translated by Assistant Professor Kalina Bratanova; edited by Jordan Baev. Obtained by the Bulgarian Cold War Research Group. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116370>

Summary:

In a report on the Cuban Communist Party, Bulgarian Embassy counselor S. Cohen discusses strengths and concerns with the Cuban government. The Cuban revolutionary movement debunked the theory of geographically determined fatalism, but also displays a strong dependence on the Latin American liberation movement (e.g. Jose Mari, Simon Bolivar) for inspiration instead of socialist principles. Cohen reports negative developments including the Cuban government's growing ambition to rule the Third World revolutionary movement and strong belief in the Cuban armed struggle as a template for all national liberation movements. The Cuban delegation strongly endorsed armed struggle as the only means of socialist advancement at the Tricontinental Conference recently held in Havana. Bulgaria must remain close with the Cuban government to help it develop economically and mature politically.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

Original Language:

Bulgarian

Contents:

Translation - English

Information on the State of the Cuban Communist Party
Havana, 31 March, 1966[1]

Cuba was the first Latin American country to free itself of the imperialist yoke and take up the road of socialism. The Cuban Revolution proved the irrelevance of the so called geographically determined fatalism that had been impressed upon the minds of the people for years; this dogma preached that the Socialist Revolution could never be brought to a victorious end in Latin America, because of its proximity to the USA. Apart from that, Cuba proved to be an example to follow by the masses of people in Latin America, and [it] accelerated the revolutionary processes there.

In 1964, the embassy sent a report on the progress of the Cuban Revolution, the driving forces of this revolution, and the stages and phases the Party has gone through. Hence, we shall only mention these issues in the current Information.

[...]

With the struggle against imperialism and the necessity to keep the revolutionary awareness of people, the Cuban party's policy has assumed a dynamic nature.

Yet together with the correct stance on certain issues regarding the building of socialism, there are some trends in the Cuban Communist Party's policy that cannot be neglected and overlooked, and cause our concern.

To explain these trends, certain aspects of the Cuban Revolution must be taken into consideration.

The revolution was carried out without the party's leadership [participating] in the armed struggle and in taking power. The leaders of the revolution are patriots, revolutionaries, loyal sons to the people, yet their ideology is based on Jose Marti's views, [on Simon] Bolivar's example, [as well as] on [the example] of the other outstanding functionaries of the past, who had dedicated their lives to the liberation of Latin America.

Marti viewed Latin America as something consolidated and quite different from Europe and North America. In its evaluation of his personality, the Cuban Revolution regarded him as the apostle and savior of this separate, consolidated Third World. Bolivar and his army had liberated a number of Latin American countries from the dominion of Spain. Marti's and Bolivar's political views have strongly impacted and imbued their spirit into Fidel Castro's revolutionary ideas. The Cuban leaders have often claimed that Cuba will feel completely free, when all the peoples of Latin America are liberated. Following Bolivar's and Marti's ideas, Cuba considers taking up the struggle for the liberation of Latin America as its calling. There are certain messiah-like qualities, typical of the present Cuban leaders, which have been inherited from Bolivar and Marti.

[...]

A Marxist outlook is still taking shape among the Cuban leaders. A large part of the present communist party's leadership, including members of the CC, adopted bourgeois views just a few years ago. Of course, for the last 7 years after the victory of the Cuban Revolution, many of them, including Fidel Castro, have become acquainted with the Marxist and Leninist outlook and have adopted its postulates. However, the latter turned out a rather difficult process and has not been completed yet.

The ideological development of the relatively younger leaders of the Cuban Revolution has impacted the policies adopted by the Cuban Party. The Cuban leadership is ambitious enough to keep looking for new roads to follow and new theories to develop, and continue the building of the Party. This is a good ambition. However this is not all there is to be said. The Cuban comrades' conviction is that the "old" European revolutions have contributed all they could have, and that the new further development of the revolutionary theory and practice will be provided by the Cuban Revolution. The negative developments, [caused] by the Cuban Party's policy, stem from - the strong desire of the Cuban Party's comrades to rule the Third World and influence the development of the world revolutionary movement, by trying hard to make the Cuban revolutionary experience the guiding light and the major, even the only, objective law to determine the transition to socialism in Latin America.

What are the latest developments of the Cuban Communist Party's policy?

The new moment characterizing Cuba's policy is the deepening of the conflict with China. As it is well known, Fidel Castro has exposed the Chinese policy towards Cuba to severe criticism in his latest speeches. In his last speech of 19 March his criticism was directed towards Mao Zedong personally for China's lagging behind under Mao's regime.

[...]

The truth is that, in its argument with the Chinese leaders, the Cuban party has not adopted the international communist movement's stance, since they share essentially common views on certain issues.

Why did Fidel Castro then start the argument with China?

One can assume several reasons for this to happen:

First, the preparation and holding of the Tricontinental Conference has aggravated the contradictions between the two countries, since there was a clash of ambitions to rule the Third World.

The expanding influence of the Chinese policy in Latin America was already threatening the Cuban Party's aspirations for hegemony in this part of the world.

The Chinese propaganda made great effort to discredit the Soviet Union and the socialist countries in Latin America and undermine their prestige. The Cuban Party, out of its own considerations, did not oppose in any way China's anti-Soviet policy. However it has become quite apparent that China's influence prevents Castro from achieving his political aims, and, therefore, he wants to restrict this influence and eliminate it.

Second, after the political gaffes and failure of China's policy and the dead-end the Chinese leaders have found themselves in, the Cuban party thinks it is high time that it made a statement on China's policy. This statement was necessary to make a clear distinction between Cuba and China, especially in Latin America.

Third, the Chinese made serious mistakes in Cuba. Not only did they flood the country with a wealth of propaganda materials, manipulating public opinion in their well-known consistent and insolent manner; they even made an attempt to manipulate officers from the Cuban army and use them as their weapon, employing various means to achieve this end: sending them presents, granting them foreign currency, etc. There was an impending danger of a conspiracy against the Cuban

leadership and an attempt to take power on the part of a pro-China military core.

There is an obvious reason to arrive at the conclusion that Cuba has been arguing from its own standpoint and has adopted its own policy in treating the issues of the international communist movement; one reason is that the heated argument between Cuba and China is not backed up by support for the Soviet Union, denying China's libeling and mudslinging against the latter while emphasizing their role and significance in our modern age.

There is a major issue that remains unsettled relating to the discord between China and Cuba. A number of Latin American countries have set up pro-China factions. Under the present circumstances, the Cuban Party must take a stance on these factions. This, however, is a difficult task for the party, since it has maintained its relations with the pro-China factions so far, it has relied on their support and will most probably want to win their support. It is difficult to forecast how these relations will develop further.

The Cuban leaders' ambitions to assume the leading role in the world revolutionary process determine their attitude of overlooking and underestimating the Soviet Union's role and that of the CPSU.

[...]

As a matter of fact, the Cuban leaders have demonstrated their independent and non-aligned policy in a strange manner. Fidel Castro is regularly stating that nobody has taught the Cuban revolutionaries how to seize the political power; the party will therefore not let anyone tell them what course the revolution should take.

At the meeting of the Latin American delegations during the Tricontinental Conference Fidel Castro stated he was against the "ideological nationalism and segedism (a term condemning the support for and solidarity with the CPSU and the international communist movement); he also declared that no influence on Latin America was to be allowed, no matter where it came from.

The Cuban leaders have often stated their not being committed to satellitism.

No matter how hard we try to account for these statements on the nature of the Cuban Revolution, one cannot but realize that they essentially attack the Soviet Union and the communist parties. They are aimed at causing a disruption between the Latin American Revolution and the international communist movement.

These claims on the part of the Cuban leadership to be leading an independent and specific policy in the international communist movement can be detected in the theories developed recently.

The available data reveals that the French /Regis/ Debray, well-known for his theories of the nature of the Cuban revolution, has started a book that will provide the grounds to justify the political stance, adopted by the Cuban leaders concerning the Marxist ideology. After publishing his article in the "La Casa de las Americas" and "Bohemia", Havana University has published his book called: Castroism: the Long March of Latin America. We have already informed you of his viewpoint that Castroism is the new Leninism of our modern age, and that the European type of Leninism is outdated. The book elaborates on these ideas further. The author maintains that "Castroism is Leninism recovered and adapted to the needs of a continent Lenin had known nothing about . . . Castroism is nothing else than a renewal of Marxism and Leninism on the basis of the specific Latin American political

environment and the historical development of each country. That is why Castroism will never be absolutely the same as Leninism."

In the same book the author writes about /Leonel/ Brizola as "the greatest revolutionary leader in Brazil."

The question that naturally arises is whether Debray is committed in any way to the Cuban leaders. Do they share his views? Cuba is a country where even a single word cannot be uttered publicly unless it has been approved by Fidel Castro; it is therefore impossible that such an article might be published without Castro's consent. It is highly unlikely that Debray published his articles without receiving any response by anyone since the Cuban leaders disagree with him. Fidel Castro himself has spent a lot of time with Debray. During his stay in Cuba he has been offered the accommodation and attention of a high and honored guest. Of course one cannot claim, formally speaking, that the Cuban Communist Party has adopted Debray's views. We wouldn't devote so much of our time and attention to analyzing these views if they hadn't impacted the action and measures taken by the Cuban Party.

Thus the fears, relating to Cuba's firm insistence that the Tricontinental Conference be held in Havana, are reinforced. The Embassy has been sending a number of bulletins on Cuba's sending people to certain Latin American countries to do training and organize a guerrilla movement, disregarding the attitude of the brotherly parties. The Che Guevara case is being considered of mythological importance, an example to follow by every Cuban and Latin American. The propaganda, carried out in the military divisions to take part in the struggle against imperialism in any country, has intensified. Even the particular country, appropriate for certain cadres, has been specified. The information that the Latin American guerrilla groups include Cubans has been confirmed as well. There is a setback to the period before the Havana Conference of the communist parties. The Cuban press has not published even a single word about the resolutions of this conference, which laid the basis for the regulation of the relations between the Latin American communist parties. The Cuban leaders keep building up their relations with the Latin American communist parties depending on whether the latter have adopted Cuba's policy. The difference is in the fact that action is to be taken on behalf of and via the committees of the Tricontinental and Latin American organizations.

One of the major aims of the Cuban leaders is to carry out a revolution in Latin America. Despite the importance of economic matters, the latter are not the focus of attention and not as much effort is made to solve them, as [is devoted to] the Latin American revolution. The issues, concerning the guerrilla activities and their simultaneous beginning in as many countries as possible, are considered the task of prime importance. Fidel Castro had interesting talks on these matters with Asdrubal Dominguez, member of the leadership of the Dominican Communist Party. Castro elaborated on his thesis that the establishment of a guerrilla movement in the Dominican Republic was to be immediately carried out, since there were American troops deployed on its territory. Dominguez replied that should the party, at that moment, call for an organized armed struggle and set up guerrilla units, then the consequences might be the following:

First, this would bring about a break-up of the united Democratic front;

Second, the party would isolate itself from the masses of people;

Third, such action would expose the communists to the risk of being wiped out.

Moreover the armed struggle in Santo Domingo is carried out mostly in the towns and this struggle is, therefore, closely dependent upon the traditions and experience of

the workers' movement. Sending groups of people in the mountains would not solve any of the problems of the Dominican Revolution at this stage.

Dominguez explained that the revolution's major task was to consolidate the activities of all progressive forces in the country to achieve their common goal, and to organize the people neither hastily, nor too slowly. The Party should decide upon the appropriate time to call for armed struggle to take the political power. Fidel Castro did not approve of Dominguez's position.

The Cuban leaders were acting impatiently, neglecting the specific situation when taking revolutionary action, which was not the Cuban style. The Cuban leaders' attitude towards the Colombian Party at the Tricontinental Conference was not friendly, although the party had already organized an armed struggle; it however disagrees with the Cuban leaders' methods of guidance.

In brief, what are the arguments in favor of the fact that it was high time the peoples of all Latin American countries took up armed struggle as the only means to achieve their political aim?

The example the Cuban revolution gave, was the major argument. A large part of Fidel Castro's introductory speeches at the meetings of the Latin American delegations was devoted to the experience of the Cuban Revolution and, in particular, to the fact that a couple of people could start the armed struggle and achieve victory. The very fact that these countries are highly exploited by and dependent upon imperialism, and that the present situation does not provide for a peaceful action, expressing the people's will, suffices to consider that the objective conditions to start an armed struggle and take the political power are present. The starting of an armed struggle does not presuppose other factors, which will develop in the course of the revolution. The main task was to find an armed group to start the struggle.

This action and development of the revolution may be metaphorically compared to the following: the people's struggle is the bigger engine, whereas the guerrilla movement is the smaller one. The only way to trigger off the big engine was to start the small one. That was the road Latin America was to follow.

The second argument is to be found in imperialism's global strategy.

The revolution's global strategy must counteract the imperialist one. It is necessary that a simultaneous armed struggle be organized in all countries of the continent. There may be a need for exporting the revolution. Raul Castro's position in this respect is interesting. Major events are expected to take place in Latin America, he said. Soon similar events are likely to happen in Venezuela as well. The USA will never let Venezuela slip out of their control and will therefore deploy armed troops there. A heated struggle will follow. Such a situation is likely to be created not only in Venezuela, but in a number of other Latin American countries as well. We must never forget the potential might of a giant that is still sleeping, namely Brazil. And when imperialism deploys its armed forces throughout the continent, we will then be able to fight it and destroy it.

Such a strategy to provoke imperialism to deploy its troops and occupy a number of Latin American countries, so that the anti-imperialist struggle might be set off and imperialism may be eventually wiped out, is difficult to understand.

The issue of triggering off the armed struggle has many aspects. One of these is that Cuban policy turns Cuba into the potential target for direct military action on the part of imperialism. And the Cuban leaders are well aware of this impending danger. Not only do they realize this danger, the most responsible among these leaders feel Cuba

is doomed to be the target of military intervention; they claim that Cuba realizes what its undertaking is and assumes the risks of its present policy.

[...]

The Cuban Party's policy, despite the fact that it's claimed to be revolutionary in nature (it is constantly being stated that the Cubans are ready to fight imperialism everywhere), actually hinders the revolutionary process and the establishment of powerful united fronts in the countries of Latin America, underestimates the role of the communist parties, and encourages terrorism in these countries.

The Latin American communist parties, or least most of them, are being blamed for the lack of a pro-active attitude as well as for being too theoretically-minded, unwilling to start a revolution. This criticism may be relevant for some leaders. Yet this does not give the Cuban leaders the right to organize a guerrilla movement in the countries of Latin America, disregarding the respective communist parties' opinion, and to establish close contacts with anti-party adventurous elements, willing to start an armed struggle without any delay.

[...]

We are not against an armed struggle. On the contrary, we will always support such a struggle, in case it is relevant and appropriate in the context of a country's particular revolutionary situation. However, we cannot adopt the view that armed struggle is the only means of struggle, and that the action taken by the guerrilla forces must start simultaneously in all Latin American countries, irrespective of the specific situation in each country. This assumption gives rise to a schematic and formalistic attitude, which results from the desire to turn the Cuban revolution into an example to follow and an objective law of the revolution in general. Even less acceptable is the policy adopted by the Cuban leaders to organize the armed struggle abroad, disregarding the communist parties' stance. The latter results in substituting the socialist revolution's objective laws with petty bourgeois views of the revolutionary process.

[...]

The positive developments in the Cuban Party and country are determined by the assistance and cooperation of the socialist countries. Specialists and experts from the socialist countries work in all industries of the national economy. They share their positive experience and help Cuba in its development. The contacts with these experts and their work contribute to bringing closer both the parties and the countries.

It might prove advisable that COMECON, the Soviet Union and some other socialist countries discuss the problems of providing assistance to Cuba and outlining the prospects of its economic development. The efforts to improve the economic situation in Cuba and the results of these efforts, may play a significant role in re-directing Cuba's policy.

The contacts between the Cuban Communist Party and these of the other Latin American countries, are of prime importance. Fidel Castro has made self-criticism several times before representatives of these parties; he claims that he has not been informed on separate issues and has, therefore, made wrong judgments and statements. The Latin American parties can best discuss Latin America's problems in depth, as well as the problems of the revolutionary movements in this part of the world.

Of course the other brotherly parties and the communist parties of the socialist countries must help the Cuban Party. Underestimating the existing differences between the Cuban Party and the international communist movement results in their

deepening. It is necessary that the contacts and meetings with the Cuban comrades be more frequent, as well as the exchange visits of delegations. Our Party is considered an authority in Cuba, and its efforts, coordinated with the efforts on the part of the CPSU, can be of great help.

Reality remains the most significant factor. The Cuban comrades' ambitions and infatuation collide with reality; it is reality that will help them overcome these problems. Cuba is a small country and its economic resources are limited for its leaders to become leaders on a world scale.

It is obvious that whatever measures are decided upon to provide assistance to Cuba's party, it would take a long time to implement them. We cannot maintain that correcting certain wrong views will be an easy task. The Cuban comrades need more time to arrive at the right conclusions. The time, when information of this kind will be directed at analyzing Cuba's positive experience, will hopefully come.

Havana

31 March 1966□□□

Counselor /Bulgarian Embassy/:

S. Cohen

[1] Entered at CC BCP "Foreign Policy & International Relations" Department's register with incoming No. 16941 of 28 April 1966.