

June 25, 1963

Report from Hungarian Embassy, Prague, on Czechoslovak-Cuban Relations

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Summary:

Hungarian ambassador to Czechoslovakia Lajos Cséby summarizes Deputy Head of the Sixth Main Department [of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs] Stross's report on relations between Cuba and Czechoslovakia. Stross reports friendly relations between the two countries, which did not experience difficulties during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Stross outlines Cuba's problems, economically and politically, and believes that Cuba's revolutionary success depends on its economic growth. Cuba misunderstood the Soviet Union's approach to the Cuban Missile Crisis. This led to signs of Chinese influence on Cuban politics, which Stross believes are reversing since Castro's [1963] visit to the Soviet Union.

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Based on the above order, Stross, the deputy head of the Sixth Main Department [of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs], reported the following:

Since the victory of the Cuban revolution, relations between Czechoslovakia and Cuba have been developing at the highest level. Czechoslovakia has provided the young Latin American republic with both political and economic help from the beginning. In the field of politics [the relationship developed] in such a form that Cuba has been visited by different government delegations at ministerial level /the visits of the minister of foreign trade, the minister of educational and cultural affairs, and the foreign minister, etc./ and from Cuba have arrived similar level delegations in Czechoslovakia besides the President of the Republic [Osvaldo] Dorticos. Czechoslovakia has sent lecturers to Cuban universities and colleges, and a large number of various experts. Czechoslovakia has built a cultural center in Havana, a lot of students have come on scholarship to Czechoslovakian colleges, specialized schools, and factories from Cuba. The exchanges of delegations between the two countries covered almost all spheres of party, state, social, scientific and arts life.

A direct air service has been set up between Cuba and Czechoslovakia, being the first among socialist countries, and they [i.e., the Czechoslovaks] have also provided help to equip the Cuban army. In the field of economy, based on trade agreements signed between them, they have provided loans of different size and length for the Cuban government. Recently, the problems coming up in the economy on both sides have made the talks last for a long time. The loans demanded by Cuba, the prolongation of loans, and, mainly, the demands concerning articles of consumption have an influence on the talks to some extent because of our difficulties, but, as a result of the mutual efforts of both parties, they will end with success.

During the talks both parties are looking for the best solutions. According to Stross's information, the signed agreements are precisely carried out on both sides.

Cuba's present economic situation is very difficult. There are objective and subjective causes of the difficulties. Before Cuba's liberation, she played the role of a complementary, mainly agricultural base for the United States. Her production was of mono-cultural [i.e., sugar-based] character, her products were bought by the USA at a price determined by the buyer, at the same time, the USA supplied the industrial appliances needed by the country. Tourism played an important role in the country's economic life.

When economic life got under state control, Cuba did not have enough well-trained leaders and middle cadres, they did not have experience in the field of industrial planning and management and distribution. It cannot be ignored that from 1 January 1961, Cuba was in a state of permanent military preparedness, when the attention of the leadership was mainly drawn toward military-political matters and the problems of economic life were only of secondary importance. Despite the present difficult

economic situation, the Czechoslovak comrades think that some economic consolidation will start, even if only slowly, with the help of the Soviet Union and the socialist countries. The firm price of sugar, Cuba's main product in world markets, will contribute to this, too. Production is getting systematic compared with the past and we can see the outlines of the prospects of the development of economic life. The assessment of needs has more and more come to the foreground when deciding about industrial and commercial tasks and in the field of distribution, too. One cannot ignore such problems as, e.g., that the existing Cuban industry is equipped mainly with American machines, the further functioning of which is made very difficult by the American embargo, which makes it almost impossible to get spare parts. So the mere functioning of factories is a great burden on the industrial leadership. Until recently, it has also been a problem that, since the victory of the revolution, few changes have been made in the organizational structure of industry and trade, basically, they have preserved it as it was inherited from the earlier system. As a consequence, while it was the industry that determined the need of new and old factories for machines to be bought, the distribution of purchased machines fell within the sphere of authority of the ministry of internal trade.

In the field of agriculture there have been long discussions about the line of production. Some suggested that they should give up mono-cultural production and start manifold production in the growing of plants. As a consequence, the territory of sugar cane plantations has decreased almost by half. According to the present position, on the remaining territory crops must be increased by the reconstruction of sugar plantations and the development of cultivation technology and, on the other territory under cultivation, they should grow mainly rice, peanuts, industrial plants /e.g. sisal/. The greatest guarantee of development is that the leaders now know the place and importance of economic problems in the life of the state and so, the solution of the problems of economic life is more and more moved to the foreground. The leaders can now also see that the development of Cuban economic life is far from being an internal question alone, but it is also an international political question of special importance. The popularization of the revolution cannot simply be limited to some questions of principle, their influence may depend on to what extent Cuba can set an example to the peoples of Latin America in the sphere of the development of economic life, and in the raising of the standard of living of the masses.

Simultaneously with the understanding of economic problems, they started to realize a lot of other things. In the Cuban foreign policy, mainly toward the Latin-American countries, one could see the signs of dogmatism, adventurism [sic; adventurism] and subjectivism. One could seriously feel the Chinese Communist Party's influence on Cuban politics. These signs could be best seen in the guerilla fights in Guatemala and Venezuela, in the support of [Francisco] Juliao's Brazilian policy. The leaders of the Cuban political life and their enumerated allies did not understand properly the importance of winning over the national bourgeoisie in the interest of the revolution and they overestimated the role of peasantry as the leading force of revolution. They wanted to make Cuba a center of revolutions on the American continent, which resulted in the mechanical application of the experiences of the Cuban revolution to other countries, where the fight against imperialism and for national liberation had to be carried out in a different international situation and amid other internal political events, under different conditions.

They ignored that in every country every party had to work out their revolutionary tactic and strategy based on their own special situation. As a consequence of these realizations, e.g. they do not support the extremists any more in Brazil, but the BCP [Brazilian Communist Party].

In Cuba the formation of the Uniform Socialist Party has made little progress so far, which can be explained partly by the fact that the role of the party has not been clarified yet. Organization is also hindered by the lack of cadres, mainly middle cadres. The formation of the party and the triggering off of its activities are being

realized after Castro's trip to the Soviet Union [27 April-3 June 1963]. One consequence of the mentioned lack of cadres is that after the creation of the basic organs they have not set up the district yet, so there is a large gap between the central leadership and the basic organs. Simultaneously with the organization of the party, we can observe the problems of ideological consolidation, the enforcement of the Leninist norms in the work within the party.

In the period of the Caribbean [i.e., Cuban missile] crisis and directly after it, the Cuban leaders generally did not understand the Soviet Union's position. As the majority of Cuban leaders come from the army, being equipped with modern weapons, they thought the conflict was a problem between Cuba and the USA only and could not understand that it would mean a fight between the camps. After the Soviet-American agreement, they felt alone, they were influenced in this direction by the Chinese CP's position too, and that it had a great impact can be proved by [Anastas] Mikoyan's stay in Cuba longer than planned and that even at the time of his departure, he could not completely convince the Cuban leaders that the Soviet Union's position was right. Castro's trip to the Soviet Union meant a decisive turn in this field too.

As the Czechoslovakian comrades also see it, Castro's trip has had a decisive impact on Cuba's further development. The visit and the joint declaration published afterwards clarified the relations between Cuba and the Soviet Union, the relationship between Cuba and the socialist countries. As a result of the visit, he considers unjustified certain dogmatic and avanturist [adventurist] views in the Cuban political life, and the Cubans themselves are beginning to pay more attention to the solution of economic problems, which they have only talked about so far. Castro still has a completely firm position and dominant influence in the sphere of ideology. His views are of decisive importance from the aspect of Cuba's general development. After his trip to the Soviet Union, he will completely clarify the role of the party as well, the party's organization will be accelerated.

Finally, Stross remarked that the relations between Czechoslovakia and Cuba did not change during the Caribbean crisis and the time following it, even amid the biggest hardships, and they are not changing in the future either. They treat their embassy accordingly, in the practice of which the problems of party and state relations are dealt with in the correct way as a result of the development. There has not been any change in the level of the relations either, and both parties do their best to carry out the signed contracts consistently.

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Budapest