

July 2, 1962

A. Krajewski, 'Assessment of Polish Position in Cuba during the Visit of Minister Rapacki, Based on the Conversations I had in Havana After his Departure'

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Summary:

According to this Polish report, Soviet Ambassador Kudryavtsev's dismissal was made at Fidel Castro's explicit request.

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Department VI

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Secret

EVALUATION

Poland's position in Cuba during Minister Rapacki's visit, based on talks I had in Havana after his departure.

The Cuban leadership has a well-founded opinion that the only country that is giving Cuba any serious, disinterested aid is the Soviet Union. This is true of China to some extent, although the amount of aid is incomparable. Economic aid from all other socialist countries is based almost exclusively on the principles of trade. Therefore, the position that the USSR occupies in Cuba is quite special.

China is taking a serious position. Treating the United States as a "paper tiger" that is supposedly easy to defeat and expecting a revolution to break out soon in all of Latin America is very much in line with Fidel Castro's messianic attitude and Cuba's ambitions to lead a national liberation movement in Latin America. The Second Havana Declaration was supposedly drafted with considerable Chinese participation. However, there are doubts - especially among the Cuban intelligentsia - about the totality of

(p. 1)

the correctness of the line adopted in this declaration. At the same time, China's own economic difficulties have meant that it has recently begun to clearly lose influence in Cuba.

Czechoslovakia enjoys great sympathy in Cuba because of the considerable economic and military aid it provided to Cuba during its most difficult period. Politically, Czechoslovakia limits itself to enthusiastically praising the achievements of the Cuban revolution and "beating the drum" for the Cuban government. Last year's visit to Cuba by Minister David passed without a trace. Other posts in socialist countries have a similar attitude of delighting in everything to the Czech one.

There were many reservations and doubts among the Cuban leadership in relation to Polish political concepts. They were caused by our policy towards the United States, our emphasis on our readiness to cooperate with the bourgeois governments of Latin American countries, and finally - in our internal agricultural policy - maintaining the capitalist form of individual peasant farms.

The great restraint shown so far by the government of the Polish People's Republic, by the Polish press, and by the Embassy in Havana in assessing the results of the Cuban revolution caused resentment and even dislike among Cubans. Today, they are beginning to feel a sense of respect and appreciation for our peace and dignity, which is so different from the constant fawning on the part of representatives of many other socialist countries.

The recent growing economic difficulties are forcing the Cuban leadership to revise its domestic policy and are raising doubts as to the complete correctness of a number of opinions and advice given by advisors from socialist countries. Polish specialists are few in number in Cuba. However, their objective and professionally correct assessments and suggestions are generating growing trust. Intellectual circles are "discovering" the values of Polish culture, art and science. Gradually, Poland's position is gaining recognition.

The visit of Minister Rapacki coincided with this positive process towards Poland. His statements were met with great interest, both among the Cuban leadership

(p. 2)

and among the intelligentsia and found a wide response in the entire society. The reasons for this interest were various. The Escalante affair forced the Cuban leadership to consider the justification for the previous uncritical acceptance of everything seen in the Soviet Union and China. The difficulties in agriculture aroused interest in the Polish method of solving the problem of agricultural production and

supplying cities. The thesis represented by Poland about the necessity of seeking allies in the fight against imperialism among the progressive layers of the national bourgeoisie and intelligentsia was, admittedly, difficult to convince, but it was listened to with attention. President Dorticós in particular showed an understanding for the role of the national bourgeoisie of Latin America and the possibilities of using this bourgeoisie to consolidate the positions won by the Cuban Revolution. The Cuban intelligentsia feels underestimated and pushed away from participating in shaping the new face of the country. Minister Rapacki's statements on the need to involve them in cooperation were, especially in their circles, followed with great attention. The broad masses of society understood the stay of the Polish minister as proof of our full support for the Cuban struggle. The assessment of the "ordinary man in the street": This Pole speaks as if he were ours!

Fidel Castro himself, emphasizing that mutual relations had so far left much to be desired, despite the fact that Ambassador Jeleń had done everything to develop them, told Minister Rapacki: "We do not need your economic aid so much as your political support." With the exception of Dorticós, who declared Cuba's willingness to join the Comecon, even if only as an observer, and Guevara, who asked for Polish technical experts, no one raised the issue of Poland providing economic aid during the talks.

The special significance given to the visit of Minister Rapacki was emphasized by:

a/ The highest level of protocol ever applied to any foreign guest. Two facts were widely commented on: the organization by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Roa of an official reception on the first day after the arrival of Minister Rapacki in Havana and the arrival at the airport of Vice-Prime Minister Raúl Castro to bid farewell to Minister Rapacki on the day of his departure.

(p. 3)

b/. Exceptional interest in the visit from the press, radio and television. Full texts of speeches published in the press.

c/ Reception of Min. Rapacki by the ORI management at a special meeting, which is unprecedented.

d/ Arrival at the reception /given at the end of the visit by the Ambassador of the Polish People's Republic, many ministers, the entire diplomatic corps, and numerous representatives of the intelligentsia, who are apparently reluctant to attend official receptions in Havana.

Minister Rapacki was the first foreign statesman to arrive in Cuba with whom Fidel Castro and the Cuban leadership had the opportunity to discuss the international situation objectively and who did not limit himself to "incensing" the Cuban leadership but highlighted the lights and shadows of the current international situation in a way that had to give Cubans something to think about. The Cuban leadership spoke seriously for the first time with a representative of a country that had been treated by them as a "second-rate" socialist country.

The subject of commentary within the diplomatic corps was the striking discrepancy between what was said in the Second Havana Declaration and in the Joint Polish-Cuban Communique, especially in the assessment of the role of Latin American governments.

[...]

The Cuban government's attitude towards Yugoslavia is decidedly negative. The Yugoslav ambassador expects that as a result of the clear détente that has taken place towards Poland, Yugoslavia may count on a change in Cuba's current hostile attitude towards it.

(p. 4)

It is to be expected that interest in Poland in Cuba will increase significantly in the near future. With the current staffing, the Embassy will not be able to cope with the tasks. It is necessary to strengthen both the quantity and quality of the staff of the Havana mission.

(p. 5)