

**June 19, 1968**

**Letter, Charge d'Affaires Kulitzka to Ministry of Foreign Affairs Comrade Dr. Butzke, Head of the Latin America Department**

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**Summary:**

The letter from the GDR Embassy in Cuba outlines the outcomes of the Second Meeting of the Economic Committee, emphasizing progress in bilateral relations despite previous tensions. Significant agreements were reached for long-term economic cooperation, marking a turning point in restoring trust and fostering mutual benefit, which Cuba had previously resisted. The GDR positioned itself as a model for socialist collaboration by balancing international solidarity with pragmatic economic planning. These achievements are seen as laying the groundwork for strengthening Cuba's socialist development while improving its alignment with broader socialist bloc policies. The letter also highlights the need for careful follow-up and coordination with Berlin to sustain this momentum. This document summary was generated by an artificial intelligence language model and was reviewed by a Wilson Center staff member.

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## EMBASSY OF THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC IN THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA

To Ministry of Foreign Affairs Comrade Dr. Butzke, Head of the Latin America Department

Confidential

Havana, June 19, 1968

Dear Comrade Dr. Butzke!

As a result of the coincidence of the last K-Post with the departure of the Albrecht delegation, I was unfortunately unable to communicate our opinion on the outcome of the Second Meeting of the Economic Committee at an earlier date. This should and can only be done with this letter, especially since we in the management and in the staff meeting of the embassy have been unable to clarify the most important criteria that should be used in such an assessment. Since Comrade Albrecht also asked me personally for this assessment of the embassy on the work of the delegation, I would be grateful if you could evaluate the following findings and send them to the appropriate distribution list.

I. After a thorough evaluation of the activities of the delegation, the management and staff meeting of the Embassy reached the following conclusions:

1. For the first time in more than three years, agreements were reached that are on a par with the protocol on long-term supplies of Cuban sugar to the GDR until 1970, which Comrade Dr. Jarowinsky signed at the end of 1964. This made it possible to establish a link to constructive bilateral economic and political agreements on a long-term basis (until 1970, 1975 and 1980) and to create a basis for further realistic measures.

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2. The importance of this progress is further increased by the fact that these three years of intervening time were essentially filled with a Cuban-induced

- constant political and ideological aggravation of relations with the majority of socialist countries and the world communist movement,
- strong deformation in the tasks of socialist countries (external revolution takes precedence over socialist construction practiced in Cuba)

and

- permanent, at times extremely pronounced efforts to reduce relations with the socialist countries, not least as a result of the proclamation of completely unjustified conditions such as the strict rejection of the principle of mutual benefit.

3. Completely ignoring the special position of the USSR, whose invaluable, all-round assistance offers the Cuban revolution vital opportunities for existence and development, the GDR, through this approach to solving problems of the economic and political relations of the socialist countries with Cuba, created a previously unique example, the essence of which lies in the optimal combination of assistance in accordance with the principles of socialist internationalism and the constructive safeguarding of mutual benefit on the basis of long-term, prospective cooperation.

II. Other aspects of important details of the negotiations and the negotiation results are:

a) It has evidently been possible to initiate a gradual renewal of the level of trust in the relations between the two sides, which had previously been greatly devalued by the Cuban side, on the basis of the existing realities and starting from the sphere

of economic and political interests.

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b) The effective transition from the mutual advantage, which the Cuban side had strictly rejected for a long time, to the internal-declarative recognition of this principle (1967) and the final practical implementation of this procedure with public recognition was brought about, based on clearly defined, but indirectly delimited, objects arising from the interests of both partners.

c) Significant import interests were successfully linked to complete plants and partial equipment with the help of directly object-bound export commitments of the GDR and characterized by the immediate start of the realization of the defined measures, the concretization of the individual items and the securing of a perspective until 1975-80.

d) This also addressed key economic development lines for the Cuban side for the same period, which is not only in the direct interest of the Cuban leadership, but also stimulates it towards a concrete, realistic, treaty-based approach to solving the problems in question and, by means of these clear definitions, helps it to a certain extent to dismantle still identifiable illusory plans and unfounded promises.

e) In this way, the GDR is continuing its efforts to develop bilateral relations, which have been severely hampered for several years by the Cuban counter-reactions, and is making a concrete contribution to strengthening the viability and prestige of the Cuban revolution and to finding a profound solution to the complex problems of socialist construction in Cuba.

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III. From this assessment and the further requirements of the development of the bilateral relations between the GDR and Cuba, the following tasks arise in the complex with key areas:

1. Strengthening and, in accordance with the concrete results of the delegation's work, reorientation of the economic and political forecasting work for the period up to 1970, 1975 and beyond, oriented towards

- the main features of Cuba's overall economic and political development,
- the defined priorities of the economic and political cooperation between the GDR and Cuba

and

- Development trends with new starting points.

2. In parallel and directly linked to this, the analytical and prognostic work initiated on the overall social development of Cuba must be intensified in approximate time periods, oriented towards the fundamental questions

- domestic political developments,
- Cuba's foreign policy and
- national defense (including defense against aggressive plans of the class enemy).

3. Concentration of forces on the practical realization of the tasks arising from the negotiations and the final protocol through a well-coordinated system of division of labor and the closest coordination of all areas of the Embassy, including the non-economic areas (for example, the direct integration and rational coordination of science, research,

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Public education, among other areas with economic requirements as an important focus).

4. Purposeful continuation of measures to bring about a new quality in management activities in order to meet these higher requirements and to adjust the entire collective to the new quality in the uninterrupted process of realizing these tasks. Bringing about a direct, parallel coordination of this process with the leading bodies in Berlin responsible for relations between the GDR and Cuba in order to guarantee continuous information and guidance of a correspondingly new quality to other bodies for practical relations between the GDR and Cuba in Berlin and to the embassy.

It is clear that these extraordinarily demanding, far-reaching requirements (which of course also include the latest information with constantly increasing quality) are a whole, ongoing development process. It cannot be accomplished in one fell swoop or in the short term.

In making these assessments and drawing conclusions, I would like to add for the sake of better mutual understanding, we were and are fundamentally based on the speech given by Comrade W. Ulbricht at the scientific session of the Central Committee of the SED on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Karl Marx's birth. I am referring here in particular to those passages which aim at an all-round development of Marxist social prognosis and a long-term strategic program, including in the decisive international questions.

We have already made relatively good progress in points 1 and 2 of the task, which were introduced earlier. Partial deliveries are now being discussed, on June 24th/25th we will discuss some key theses and in July individual sections of the overall work are to be formulated.

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Taking holiday and other problems into account, we believe we will have the overall result for the first stage in September/October. That would be a good starting point.

IV. Now something about the so-called differentiation aspects in the Cuban behavior during the presence of our delegation in Cuba (actually already based on the conversation between CRR [Carlos Rafael Rodríguez] and Comrade North):

As you can see from my memo dated June 18, 1968 (VVS B 7/27 - 13/68) sent in the same post, there were indeed some starting points for such phenomena. This was not only the high public appreciation of the GDR's measures by (Fidel Castro personally), but also the repeatedly put forward thesis of "solidarity of the blocked". However, it must also be noted that obvious political consequences (e.g. with regard to West German imperialism) were initially still being avoided and, moreover, no real change in the known views of Cuban sentiment on fundamental issues was noticeable.

Essentially, everything boiled down to this narrow Cuban approach to our problem, the political direction of which was still largely unclear. Now, this "ideology of the blocked" could have been brought to a quick end by establishing that every imperialist blockade, no matter on which continent and against which liberated country, is doomed to failure thanks to the brotherly help of the USSR and the other socialist countries. The GDR and Cuba are excellent examples of this. With this step, however, the delegation would have clearly exceeded its directive, because - who knows what - political discussions would then have become unavoidable.

The attitude towards the USSR, its aid to Cuba and fundamental questions of its international policy remains a crucial critical point in the local leadership policy.

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This is exactly what the Soviet comrades confirmed to us (see our FS 165/68 of June 14th) and in my opinion this is their understandable main concern, not in the direction of any "dubious actions" of the GDR with Cuba. However, the Soviet comrades obviously wanted to know from us, the GDR, exactly what was behind it on the Cuban side, how we saw things and what we intended to do. Comrade Ambassador Soldatov also seemed to attach great importance to telling me very clearly how the Cuban leadership was behaving towards the USSR. In my opinion it

would be appropriate for the responsible authorities in the GDR to make further decisions on this and not have major discussions in Havana.

For the same reason, I did not inform the Hungarian Chargé d'Affaires about the criticism expressed by F. Castro at our luncheon of Hungary's attitude towards Cuba. Such a thing must be decided in Berlin.

The other representatives of the socialist diplomatic corps have behaved quite normally so far, apart from the occasional sharp remarks (Czech Embassy Counsellor: - now you have become torchbearers of the socialist countries; Yugoslav First Secretary: - now you are very present). The Polish and Bulgarian comrades behave very calmly and understandingly. The Romanian First Secretary tries to offer himself as an ally of the GDR with the 30 million credits for oil drilling rigs previously approved by F. Castro. It is thanks to his clumsiness that he is targeted by the others for this.

Overall, this is the current situation, which is undoubtedly not yet fully developed. Anything else remains to be assessed.

Finally, I would like to add that the Soviet Ambassador asked me about the reality of the agreements we have made with Cuba as regards Cuban repayment and delivery obligations.

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It was not clear whether he saw our steps as exaggerated optimism or whether he was simply judging under the impression of the USSR's actually very bad experiences with Cuba. My answer corresponded to about point 1/3 of our assessment, omitting the exemplary effect of the GDR's step.

With socialist greetings

Kulitzka

Chargé d'Affaires a. i

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