

March 24, 1962
Telegram from Polish Embassy in Havana (Jeleń), 24
March 1962

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Summary:

Jelen relays information presented by Blas Roca and Emilio Aragonés Navarro on the ORI's decision to exclude Anibal Escalante from the leadership of the ORI.

Credits:

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To: [Director General Jerzy] MICHALOWSKI, EYES ONLY

From: [Ambassador Boleslaw] JELEN1

I. I am relaying the information presented today by Blas Roca² and Emilio Aragonés [Navarro]³ (secretary of the ORI [Organizaciones Revolucionarias Intergradadas⁴] to the heads of the diplomatic posts of the countries of the socialist camp. They asked that we relay this information to the central committees of [our] parties.

On the 22nd of this month, the national leadership of the ORI made a decision to exclude Anibal Escalante from the leadership of the ORI. A. E. remains a member of the ORI, but he's been removed from all the leadership positions.

[They said that the] motives [for the removal of Anibal Escalante were as follows]: as an organizational secretary of the ORI, A. E. used brutal and arbitrary methods of management, as well as intrigues aimed at concentrating control in his hands over the party and national apparatus. He used these methods towards other comrades regardless of their previous organizational membership [that is, whether they belonged to the former Popular Socialist Party or the "26th of July Movement"]. He managed to [take] control of a series of ministries, among others, the Ministry of Internal Affairs; he undertook the steps in order to control the military cadres. A. E.'s arbitrary behavior could be already be detected in the 1940s, when he served in the leadership of the Popular Socialist Party, and later [when he was active in] the underground and [finally] after the collapse of the [Fulgencio Batista]⁵ dictatorship. Various circumstances did not allow for putting an end to [Escalante's behavior] during these different periods.

The discussion related to the activities of A. E. began in February of this year under the older leadership. The resolution from the 22nd of this month was adopted without the participation of the new members of the current leadership (which was approved on the 8th of this month - see our Claris⁶ 54), all of who did not participate in the previous phase of the discussion. [The resolution] will be presented to the public by Fidel [Castro]. The discussion focused only on [issues such as Escalante's] work methods and organizational matters, and not on the ideological issues.

The [Cuban] leadership will, unconditionally, adopt methods of collective leadership. They will hold meetings once a week under the current composition (24 members). The secretariat meets daily regarding [making] current decisions. They accelerated the process of creating the Revolutionary Party Cells (the equivalent of our POP [Basic Party Organizations]). They have not openly carried out their activities everywhere until now; the[se] activities were predominant in workplaces, especially among the management and administration. The membership selection to the Revolutionary Party Cells will be carried out strictly by taking political and moral aspects into consideration. The party will be composed of the cadres and it should count no more than 10 thousand members. The [party] congress will take place no earlier than at the end of the year.

There will be changes in the positions of provincial committee secretaries in four provinces (there are six provinces overall [in Cuba]). [These changes] are not connected with the activities of A. E., and they are a result of the weaknesses [exhibited by] some of the current secretaries.

In order to streamline [the work of] some departments, there will be some changes in the leadership. The most significant change pertains to the position of the minister of internal trade, because the poor organizational situation in the area of distribution. These changes do not have any political background (see our Claris 69 - [Manuel] Luzardo - from the former Popular Socialist Party, Celia Sanchez - Fidel's secretary until now).

There is going to be a change regarding the position of the head of the Security Department in the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Brahantes is the one who is holding this position; he is a secretary and Fidel's aide.

II. In our Claris 67, we have already reported that the members of the "26th of July Movement"⁷ are numerically predominant in the secretariat and the commission. The only one from the former Popular Socialist Party⁸ who is currently a member of the secretariat is Blas Roca (the function of the organizational secretary is fully held by [Emilio] Aragonés). As far as the organizational commission, only Luzardo remains [as the member of the former Popular Socialist Party]), and L. Pena holds a position in the syndical commission.

III. The information, which I presented in the first point of this cable, was relayed separately and individually to the ambassadors from the USSR, the PRC, and Albania, all of whom were not invited to the general meeting [of socialist countries]. [The North] Korean [ambassador] sent his secretary even though he attended a party soon before the meeting. The charge d'affaires represented the [North] Vietnamese embassy.

IV. Anibal Escalante - an old member of the leadership of the Popular Socialist Party and its long-time organizational secretary. He worked for the Comintern and represented the Popular Socialist Party at the conference of 81 [communist and workers'] parties.⁹ After the formation of the ORI, he served as the organizational secretary. He joined the new leadership of the ORI that was approved on the 8th of this month.

[1] Poland's Ambassador to Cuba (1961-1965).

[2] Blas Roca (1908 - 1987), a leading theoretician of the Cuban Revolution and the leader of the former Popular Socialist Party.

[3] Emilio Aragonés Navarro (1928 - 2007), one of the original members of the 26th of July Movement; friends with Ernesto "Che" Guevara.

[4] Organizaciones Revolucionarias Integradas was formed in July 1961 following the Cuban Revolution and the fall of the Fulgencio Batista regime. The ORI was comprised of the members of the revolutionary organization called the "26th of July Movement" of Fidel Castro, the Popular Socialist Party of Blas Roca, and the Revolutionary Directorate of March 13th of Faure Chomón Mediavilla. On March 26, 1962, the ORI was transformed into Partido Unido de la Revolución Socialista de Cuba (PURSC). In 1965, the PURSC was transformed into the Partido Comunista de Cuba (PCC) which exists to this day.

[5] Fulgencio Batista y Zaldívar (1901-1973) served as Cuba's president twice: 1940 - 1944 and 1952 - 1959.

[6] Claris is an embassy/consular letter reporting on information included in the press.

[7] "The 26th of July Movement" - movement led by Fidel Castro that overthrew the regime of Fulgencio Batista in Cuba in 1959. After Castro's victory, the movement was integrated into the Organizaciones Revolucionarias Integradas (ORI) in 1961.

[8] The Popular Socialist Party (Partido Socialista Popular) was formed in 1925 by a group including Blas Roca, Anibal Escalante, Fabio Grobart, and Julion Antonio Mella. It was later merged into the Integrated Revolutionary Organizations (ORI), the precursor of the current Communist Party of Cuba.

[9] The November 1960 Conference of the Representatives of the Communist and

Workers' Parties was attended by delegations from 81 countries and took place in Moscow.