

January 25, 1963

Hungarian Embassy, Havana (Beck), Report on 'The Visible signs of the Cuban-Soviet Conflict'

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Summary:

Hungarian Ambassador to Cuba János Beck reports on post-Cuban-Missile-Crisis conflict between Cuba and the Soviet Union. Beck uses cases—poor reception on official visits, official speeches, lack of press coverage of the Soviet Union, etc.—to exemplify the conflict.

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Through some conspicuous cases, I would like to show how the Cuban leading personalities, the Cuban press, radio, and television reflect the change in the Cuban-Soviet relations.

President of the Republic [Osvaldo] Dorticós's behavior at the national cultural congress was the same as at the celebrations of 7 November.

Carlos Rafael Rodríguez continued the theoretical part of Cuban-Soviet economic talks in Moscow. During his stay in Moscow, he carried on talks with the Soviet Union's highest leaders and with Comrade Khrushchev himself, he participated at the Supreme Soviet session, where he had a seat in the presidium together with Comrades Khrushchev and Brezhnev and the Yugoslavian President Tito. The Soviet Information Bureau gave only one photo to the Cuban press of the session of the Supreme Council, so in the Cuban papers was published the picture of the presidium of the mentioned composition. When Carlos Rafael Rodríguez returned from Moscow /I happened to be at the airport at that time/ from Cuban side he was only met by his family and from his office by a few colleagues and by no one from the government or the leadership of the ORI. On the whole, his trip was little discussed in the papers.

Comrade [Soviet deputy foreign minister Vasili] Kuznetsov came to Cuba formally at the invitation of the regular Cuban UN-representative, Carlos Lechuga. No official welcoming ceremony was organized at the airport. Foreign Minister [Raúl] Roa gave a reception in the honor of Comrade Kuznetsov, where from the Cuban side only the following people were present: Members of the government: INRA President Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, Minister of Communal work Osmani Cienfuegos and JUCEPLAN President Reginaldo Boti, From the ORI leadership: Juan [Joaquín] Ordoqui, the doyen of the late communist party. There was little reaction to his stay in the press. The biggest photo and news item showed his visit to the HOY redaction [i.e., editorial headquarters—ed.] /He was together with Blas Roca in the picture/.

The delegations visiting Cuba on the occasion of 1 January were given dinner by the ICAP, where Blas Roca gave a speech. In his speech he did not even mention the Soviet Union and talked little about the socialist camp, although at the main table was sitting astronaut [Pavel] Popovich, so by the composition of the delegation, by sending non-political personalities, the Soviet Union offered the opportunity to be talked of suitably without mentioning the disputed questions or even hinting at them. The Soviet delegation, in which also participated high-ranking soldiers /e.g. the commander of the Moscow district/ as special guests, considering the local circumstances and customs, we must say, was little dealt with by the press.

At the congress of Latin-American women, the leaders of the Cuban delegation headed by the president of the alliance of Cuban women, Vilma Espín /Raul Castro's wife/, behaved in a scandalous way toward the non-member Soviet delegate, Comrade Fyodorova /they avoided shaking hands with her, did not talk to her, seated her in the wrong place, etc./. In a way shocking the majority, Vilma Espín and her associates delayed the telegram to be sent to Comrade Khrushchev about the solution of the Caribbean crisis, which had also been voted on according to the rules, and forced its rewording.

Instead of listing similar events, I would like to add that, at the various celebrations and meetings, they prevented the masses from singing the International as usual by transmitting e.g. the march of the 26th of July Movement on the loudspeakers. Once I was present when, after the march, someone from the crowd shouted to the tribune: "And what about the International?"

The leaders put up with the fact but do not seem to like that the masses often shout the slogan: "Fidel, Jrusciov, estamos con los dos!" Fidel, Khrushchev, we are with you!

In his speech of 1 November last year, Fidel Castro said that he relied on the leadership of the Soviet Union. Since then the Cuban leadership has taken a step backwards practically.

The press does not publish anything either from abroad or from inside that does not completely support the leaders' daily positions, even if it concerns a party or government statement, greeting or a declaration made in Cuba, or a decision of a congress, etc.

János Beck
ambassador
to Comrade Foreign Minister János Péter
Budapest