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On Andropov's Death
Feb 11/84

dy *Cuba: On Andropov's Death*

WR 296

on

news desk time (urgent)

ex Lionel martin (havana) feb 11, 1984

svc msg; elaine cheney of miami bureau told me to file info on cuban reaction to andropov death direct to you. she asked that a copy of my telex be sent to her.

havana- cuba, with the closest ties with the soviet union of any country in the hemisphere met the death of andropov with four days of official mourning and numerous broadcasts on radio and television devoted to the life of the deceased soviet leader.

fidel castro was the first to sign a book of condolences at the soviet embassy in havana. huge lines formed in revolution square to sign another book of condolences that was placed in a room at the base of the jose marti monument, the same room in which only a few months ago the returned buan dead from grenada lay in state.

more than twelve hours after andropov's death was made known here, correspondent were given copies of a message which fidel castro sent to the soviet party and government.

castro emphasized andropov's close rapport with cuba and his international policy. the message said that "the interchanges that i had with comrade andropov reawakened the intimate and unbreakable friendship between cuba and the ussr."

It said that andropov "confirmed in an exceptional way his sentiments of friendship for cuba, his understanding of our country's requirements for soviet collaboration in matters of national defense and economic development." (read "and his understanding" above)

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castro's message also signalled andropov's policy vis a vis the united states and in regard to world peace +his irrefutable denunciation of the aggressive policy of the present administration of the united states and his clear proposals for facilitating the restoration of an international climate that favors the easing of tensions distinguished him as a decided continuer of the leninist policy of peace that has historically characterised the soviet union.+

castro is expect to attend the funeral in moscow although it is unlikely that his intentions to go to moscow will be announced before hand. in november 1982 his presence in moscow for the brezhnev funeral was only announced upon his arrival there. at that time he held conversations with the new soviet party leader, andropov.

the changing of the guard in the soviet hierarchy is not expected to change cuba's close ties with the soviet union which have become institutionalised over the years, according to several western diplomats in the cuban capital.

there is one dark horse in contention for the soviet party leadership, vitali vorotnikov, who has had special cuban connections. in april 1979 vorotnikov was appointed soviet ambassador in havana, a post he held for two years until his recall by andropov for an important post.

while in cuba he was characterised by his good rapport with cuban leaders while here he declared that +the central committee of the soviet party and the soviet government attribute an extraordinary importance to the constant development and deepening of ties with socialist cuba.+

vorotnikov, in a statement printed in the cuban party newspaper +granam+ said that +in relations with the united states, the soviet union, as always, independently of which administration is in power in washington, has applied and continues to apply an honorable policy aimed at achieving better mutual understanding by jointly examining bilateral questions and contributing to a positive solution of international problems.+

would like to repeat -- please send copy of this to elaine choney via telex (miami bureau) thanks.

--lem

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