



Patriarch Kirill meets with President of the Council of State and Council of Ministers of Cuba Raul Castro Rus



On May 8, 2015, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church met with the President of the Council of State and the Council of Ministers of Cuba Raul Castro Rus, at the Patriarchate Chambers in the Moscow Kremlin.

The high guest was accompanied by Mr. Ricardo Cabrisas Ruiz, Vice-President of the Council of Ministers of Cuba and chairman of the Cuban part of the Inter-governmental Russian-Cuban Commission for Commercial, Economic, Scientific and Technological Cooperation, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Bruno Rodriguez Parilla, and the Cuban Ambassador to Russia Mr. Lozada Garcia.

Participating in the meeting were also Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations (DECR), Bishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk, head

of the Moscow Patriarchate administrative secretariat, Archpriest Sergiy Zvonarev, DECR secretary for the far abroad, and M. Palacio, DECR staff member.

Welcoming the guests, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill said, 'I am wholeheartedly delighted to see you in Moscow. I very much value an opportunity for meeting you again. With a special feeling I remember my visit to Cuba and remember that you were the first head of a foreign country who I met with as Patriarch here in Moscow. It is a special pleasure to welcome you and your delegation as participants in the remarkable event – the celebration devoted to the 70th anniversary of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War'.

His Holiness noted that it was a special day for each Russian and for all the people of the former Soviet Union. 'Our people won a historic victory that determined in many ways the consequent course of the world history and the world policy. The terrible and very mighty enemy who was supported by many nations in Europe was defeated. It certainly happened also because our people had many allies, including in Cuba. The Cubans were on the side of the Soviet Union. They set up committees in support of our country. And we know that several thousand Cubans fought in battlefields of the Second World War. 'That cooperation had such an impact on the mentality of both our people and the Cubans that it is impossible to forget that experience or renounce it. Years are passing by, and we still see the Cubans as our brothers and give a high value to the fact that relations between our country and Cuba have begun to develop again. I can foresee a very good future of these relations because there is everything for it and the most important thing for it is our people's sympathy for each other. It is a very important factor, which is also a forming one in political dialogue between countries'.

It was noted during the talk that there are several thousands of Russians and Russian-speaking people living in Cuba, and most of them profess Orthodoxy. 'I would like to thank once again the Comandante Fidel and you for the decision you made some time ago to build an Orthodox church in Havana. Today this church promotes the Russian-Cuban relations, thus strengthening our nations' mutual sympathy', His Holiness said.

Mr. Raul Castro, on his part, expressed great joy over the new meeting with Patriarch Kirill, saying, 'We always remember your first visit to Cuba with great pleasure and hope that it will not be the last. Now we hope to see you in Cuba as Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church'.

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