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Traitor, Spy, Revolutionary, or Adventurer? A Remarkable Czech-Cuban Life Story in the Midst of the Cold War

The paper deals with the fate of the Czechoslovak refugee Zdeněk Matoušek (1928-1982), who joined a group of anti-communist resistance at the turn of 1948/1949. After being exposed, he fled to the American occupation zone in Germany, and then continued to Latin America. There he came into contact with representatives of the Cuban opposition, who soon returned to Cuba as exponents of the new revolutionary regime. Matoušek followed them in February 1959 and took a prominent position among the bodyguards of the first revolutionary president Manuel Urrutia. After the victory of the Cuban Revolution, Prague and Havana established intensive relations and Matoušek's story developed in close connection with and interdependence on them. While in Czechoslovakia he was convicted in absentia for attempting an armed coup d'état, in Cuba he was regarded as a model revolutionary. The differing views of the secret services of the newly allied countries about him resulted in an interesting dispute. The paper is based on materials from Czech archival collections and on information from direct relatives who today live both in US and Cuba. From a global perspective, the story is an extremely interesting example of the relationship between the individual and power across the Atlantic space and suggests the possibility of rethinking the role of smaller actors and actions beyond the bipolar view.

Keywords: *Cold War, Communism, Cuban-Czechoslovak relations, Individual and power, Smaller actors*