

**November 23, 1981**

**Transcript of Meeting between US Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig, Jr., and Cuban Vice Premier Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, Mexico City**

**Citation:**

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**Summary:**

Memorandum of conversation taken during the secret meeting between Alexander Haig and Cuban Vice Premier arranged by Carlos R. Rodriguez, Mexican Foreign Minister, in Mexico City

**Original Language:**

Russian

**Contents:**

Translation - English

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Attached please find a stenographic record received by the Soviet Ambassador from C. R. Rodriguez of his conference with U.S. Secretary of State Alexander A. Haig which took place in Mexico City on 23 November of this year.

Attachment: original in Spanish, 38 pages, and translation consisting of 26 pages; this address only.

AMBASSADOR OF THE USSR  
TO THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA /s/ V. VOROTNIKOV

[attachment]

Translated from Spanish

CONFERENCE OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE STATE COUNCIL OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA CARLOS RAFAEL RODRIGUEZ WITH U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE ALEXANDER HAIG, IN MEXICO,  
23 NOVEMBER 1981  
"YEAR OF THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF VICTORY AT PLAYA GIRON"  
(Stenographic record, State Council)

Carlos R. Rodriguez. [Mexican Foreign Minister] Jorge [Castaneda], why don't you stay with us a while? I'd like to make some introductory remarks.

Jorge Castaneda. Okay.

Carlos R. Rodriguez. Just one more minute (spoken in English). Can you sit with us for a little while?

Jorge Castaneda. Of course.

Carlos R. Rodriguez. Just a second (spoken in English).

It seems to me necessary and fitting that we express the thanks of the Cuban government to the government of Mexico for the kind intentions it has displayed in making the conduct of this meeting possible.

When the government of Mexico communicated this suggestion to us, we immediately expressed our agreement. Indeed, this was a difficult moment, inasmuch as, in the entire period of our revolution, we have never encountered such a torrent of accusations and threats against our country, and besides that we knew that our counterpart would be the Secretary of State, one of the very most active exponents of this trend, Mr. Haig himself. Notwithstanding, we consider that this meeting comports with the principles to which we have adhered since the moment of victory of the Cuban Revolution and its ascendance to power.

We have never refused to engage in dialogue. We have always considered that dialogue must take place in conditions of equality and mutual respect, and, for our part, we approach dialogue in the light of respect for principles which, from our point of view, are not subject to debate.

We have had contacts with the American government over the course of these years: contact with the Ford administration, and the Carter administration, on parallel levels. There were moments of rapprochement. And then circumstances arose which cut short that rapprochement.

In our message to the government of Mexico, we wanted to say that, from our side, we are in complete accord with the ideas expressed yesterday by President Lopez-Portillo, who called for an end to the verbal terrorism which has been widely utilized by both sides in the recent past, and for a beginning to the process of detente.

From our standpoint, within the framework of these principles to which we adhere, we consider that this is possible, and with these intentions we have come to this meeting, which has not been easy, at which discussion will take place over the resolution of problems that have deteriorated to the brink of confrontation, but which, in our opinion, can find a solution that is acceptable not only for bilateral relations, but for relations in all of this region, provided that both sides will demonstrate respect for each other and the rights of each.

Alexander Haig. I applaud you for your outstanding introduction. For the past some time I have been following your preeminent career.

I also am very grateful to President Lopez Portillo for the invitation, which he made several months ago to President Reagan, to function as a party assisting in these negotiations.

Jorge Castaneda. As a messenger.

Alexander Haig. We don't have an adequate expression for "assisting party" and therefore, if you prefer, one may say "messenger" or "bridge."

(Jorge Castaneda leaves the room).

In Washington, we consider that this is a very fitting occasion for our meeting, because, indeed, we are going through a critical moment in the history of these twenty-odd difficult years. The only course open to us leads to the requirement that we make a choice. In any event, we believe that it is essential to conduct negotiations between the two governments prior to proceeding further.

Prior to the commencement of this meeting, I already expressed to Jorge our appreciation for this constructive initiative, which has made it possible to discuss our circumstances and, beginning with this, our first meeting, to forge ahead in an examination of the questions which are a cause of concern to both countries.

I'm very grateful that you have come from a long distance to this unofficial, secret meeting. From our side, we intend to hold it secret.

Carlos R. Rodriguez. That is consistent with our wishes. We have decided to do the same.

Alexander Haig. I have been involved with these problems for a greater portion of my time that you might suppose. In the beginning, I started working in Washington under President John Kennedy. After the so-called missile crisis I was an assistant to Cyrus Vance and well remember those difficult days which followed upon that crisis, and the actions taken by each side against the other which, in the final analysis, brought to you, instead of potentially dangerous consequences, a period of relative tranquility. Then, beginning in 1975-76, for various reasons, matters began to go very poorly and have continued to deteriorate. And now we have come to a crossroads which, by all indications, even by a most modest appraisal, may be described as dangerous.

Looking at our relations in all of their manifestations during the course of the past twenty years makes it evident to me that the difficulties, the beginning to which occurred in 1975 under my former colleagues Ford and Kissinger, and also the domestic situation in the United States created under the influence of Vietnam and the Watergate scandal - that it was these, and not only ordinary geopolitical reasons, that formed the basis for a process of continual worsening in relations and growing repercussions, which I regard as very dangerous factors in the cause of international peace.

At that time, I was located abroad, but nevertheless discussed the question in detail with Kissinger and Ford. At that time they were not in a position to achieve a general consensus in the United States with regard to support of a policy that they considered correct at that moment. Subsequently, the Ford presidency dialectically reflected the spiritual condition of the American people after the Vietnam War and Watergate.

All that has changed now. Now any disposition of forces gives rise to a countermeasure. That is what has happened in this case. These days our national spirit has significantly strengthened, allowing the attainment of unprecedented levels of military expenditures, and simultaneously creating a readiness to come to terms with limitations in the social and economic sphere. That spirit is developing into an ever greater growth of the desire to come to a solution of international conflicts which the American people regard as a threat to peace.

In that which concerns the United States and Cuba, it seems to me, in essence, that we never had any tensions as a result of ethnic or spiritual conflicts. To the contrary. Historically, Americans and Cubans were very close and had good relations, relations based on mutual respect. However, due to objective reality - founded or unfounded - the people of the United States regard the chain of events as a challenge to their vital national interests, as intervention. This situation has come about during an extended course of time, beginning in 1975 and continuing right up to this day. First Angola, then Ethiopia, South Yemen, the threat to North Yemen, and in all of this Cuba has played a role.

Beginning in 1978, we have seen a renewal in our hemisphere of actions characteristic of the beginning of the 1960s. These have been regarded by the people as an unacceptable intervention from the point of view of the interests of the United States. That is what it was like in the 1960s. In the beginning of the 1970s there came a period of calm. Then an increase in tensions began anew. In our subjective assessment, all this does not differ so significantly from relations with the Soviet Union and Soviet actions.

After the missile crisis, we went through a long period of tensions. The situation improved at the end of 1969, even in spite of the conflict in Vietnam and the role of the Soviet Union in that conflict, which was major, candidly speaking, major. I was located there at that time and believe that Americans came to the conclusion that matters in that situation were handled improperly. That was an attempt to resolve a problem arising exclusively out of conceptions of a struggle for so-called social justice between two parts of Vietnam, at the same time as it was necessary to approach the

problem from the point of view of relations between the superpowers who, in essence, made the war possible. Americans drew from this the conclusion that domestic [internal? indigenous?--ed.] forces should create the conditions - either by peaceful means or through the shedding of blood - to provide for their future. Just operating exclusively on their own resources - well-founded or otherwise - they can express their concerns and the state of mutual relations among the people. I can say that the United States adheres to exactly this position in relation to Central America.

I do not believe that President Reagan has some kind of preconceived notion regarding the social system in Cuba. This must be determined by the people of Cuba.

Our capability for coexistence, notwithstanding ideological conflicts, is manifested most graphically in relations with other Communist regimes: China, Yugoslavia and the growing number of countries in Eastern Europe. Notwithstanding all of the Soviet rhetoric to the contrary, the problem is not here. In other words, in their judgment about everything, they ascribe our difficulties with you to ideological dissatisfaction on the part of the United States in relation to the political system in Cuba.

Carlos R. Rodriguez. It is good that we are here together (spoken in English).

Alexander Haig. I was saying that we are looking at the relationship between the global activity of the Soviet Union and the local activity of Cuba.

We are capable of arithmetic and know that one third of your resources are provided by the Soviet Union: everything that relates to transportation, equipment, materials, all of the assets and means necessary for sustenance of the Cuban economy.

On the other hand, in 1975 we were witnesses to a situation which subjectively led us to conclude that the Soviet leadership assessed the changes which took place in our country as changes of a geopolitical character - I am talking about Watergate and the war in Vietnam. This was abundantly clear in the widening of activity in Africa, Southeast Asia, and in Northwest and Western Asia. In this manner, there exists a tendency - correct or mistaken - to believe that an agreement exists between Moscow and Havana in connection with various international activities, at least a tacit one, if not explicit. All this has created a mood in the United States which brought Mr. Reagan to power.

We are closely following public opinion polls, and I can assure you that the mood of the people in the United States is definitely militating toward a change in our relations with Cuba, a change that is not positive for Cuba, but which regards Cuba as a threat. I assume that there is room here for some subjective misstatement, but this is the fact of the matter.

I suppose that any leader comes to power having certain fixed opinions about things, and President Reagan is no exception. Maybe he will turn out to be an exception, if you consider the recent past, and his understanding of how to fulfill his mission. But I can assure you, that he is a man of peace, a man who wants to relieve the people from the burden of armaments, a man who does not oppose social transformations. His approach to the conflicts at the Cancun Conference, and his initiative in connection with the basic direction of developments in the Caribbean Basin, should serve as a reference point. Pursuant to his instructions, I have met with the leaders of Eastern Europe and representatives of the Angolan regime. In my opinion, all of this attests to the fact that we are talking not about ideology, but about a geopolitical problem. And specifically, due to this understanding, he is ready to pursue matters to the most dangerous line. In recent months he has been occupied with an examination of this problem. We are thoroughly familiar with the reality of Cuba in the area of security, economics and defense. We understand well the vulnerability of Cuba. We

have discussed this problem with the Soviet Union for a long time. They understand perfectly well the meaning of these discussions and are aware of the limitations on activities, transgression of which could lead to confrontation between the superpowers, for which we are prepared.

At the same time, we have analyzed with great care the needs of Cuba, in the sense of its hopes for the future. It seems to us that the Cuban people have suffered a great deal from sacrifices imposed from abroad. We believe that the possibility still exists for a normalization of its relations not only with the United States, but with all of this hemisphere.

You are aware, Mr. Minister, that in the developing countries of the so-called "Third World," there are many leaders who today are turning away from the Soviet Union's arms, its technical assistance, and trade with it, from participation in economic relations, where the reward is measured on a scale of sacrifice. You yourselves suffer from this reality and have a right to participate in international trade, including trade with the United States. I know that President Reagan considers trade with Cuba a possibility. We must discuss this in the atmosphere of mutual respect to which you referred, which must be the goal of an independent peace, and to do this it is necessary to account for geopolitical reality.

Carlos R. Rodriguez. Thank you very much.

I have listened with great interest to the exposition of principles laid forth by the esteemed Secretary of State. At the outset I will speak to two points. First of all, to your words about the position of Reagan on the question of bilateral relations with Cuba and its common position on the problem of peace and problems confronting humanity today.

We have keenly felt the danger of the approach to this problem by Reagan and his group of leaders from an ideological point of view. Speaking candidly, in the public pronouncements, first and foremost of Reagan, we perceive a great ideological content. And we have been greatly surprised by its manifestation in the declarations of the Secretary of State as well. And we have been surprised more than once because, judging from information received from prominent European leaders, we had gained a different impression about the positions of Mr. Haig on international questions, which we had considered to be more pragmatic. That does not mean that they are not based on principle, only that they are more pragmatic, not so much determined by the influence of ideology.

What we have heard gives us cause for reflection.

The second element that I consider to be important inheres in the treatment of the mutual feelings of the people of the United States and Cuba. I am fully in accord with that.

Despite 22 years of continuous sharp exchanges, there is no anti-American sentiment in Cuba. It does not exist among the people, and we, the leaders, similarly do not rule with anti-American sentiments. We can say this absolutely categorically. This is seen in the course of any meetings of Americans with our people, irrespective of their posts and positions.

I am satisfied with the opportunity - after the words just spoken by the Secretary of State - to attribute the current intensification of our conflicts to geopolitical reasons. And I would hope to possess all of the necessary eloquence, within the short time available to us, in order to attempt to prove that the geopolitical reality is not what it is made out to be in this case.

I am aware that the Secretary of State is a great lover of philosophy. Thus, even in the seventeenth century, since the time of Hume, it has been considered proven that the factual appearance of "B" following the appearance of "A" does not signify that "A" necessarily is the cause of the appearance of "B." I will attempt, in the briefest of fashion, in order to avoid tiring you, to describe our interpretation of events, beginning in 1975.

We became involved in Angola without the slightest wish to establish our military presence there. Speaking of military presence, I have in mind the presence of regular troops. In sending the first 150 people to Angola, we had absolutely no conception of what would become of the events in that country. This I can state to you unequivocally.

We had long maintained our ties with the MPLA [Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola] in its struggle against Portuguese colonialism. President [Agostinho] Neto requested our assistance in the preparation of groups which led to organization of the Angolan army. With this aim we dispatched 150 persons in three schools: one located in the south, the other in the northeast, and the third around Luanda. The subsequent development of events ensued as follows: suddenly we received news from Neto that they had been attacked by forces from Zaire and troops of Holden Roberto from the north, and by South Africa from the south.

I can assure you unequivocally, inasmuch as I played a direct role in this matter, that when the decision to dispatch Cuban forces into Angola was made, we communicated nothing about it to the Soviet Union. We were not even aware of its point of view on that account. And we had absolutely no idea of the number of troops that it would be necessary to send. In this manner, the first group was dispatched when the forces in the southern theater advanced more than 400, almost 500 kilometers from the Namibian border, approaching Lobito and Benguela, and the forces of Zaire were located 30 kilometers from Luanda. In this situation we sent at first not regular troops, but rather groups of commandos.

It is true that subsequently an agreement was reached between Cuba and the Soviet Union regarding the activity of the forces, inasmuch as the Soviet Union already had an obligation to Angola to supply arms and it became necessary to speed up its implementation. As a result, we reached an agreement, and we don't deny this, under which the Soviet Union proceeded to dispatch certain types of weapons, and we sent people who were capable of using them.

And thus it was. When we became involved in the events in Angola, we had absolutely no concept of the geopolitical conceptions about the importance of Angola in light of the interests of the Soviet Union. We saw in Angola a friendly country, a group of revolutionaries struggling against colonialism, against South Africa, and embarked on all of this.

And then Ethiopia stepped to the front of the line. How did all of this happen there?

We established relations with Ethiopia at the request of Somalia. We had maintained no diplomatic ties with Ethiopia, and we harbored serious doubts in relation to the process that was taking place in that country. At the time, the leader of the revolution was not Mengistu. Power was in the hands of Teferi Bante. And I was personally assigned to establish contact in Colombo [Sri Lanka], where I headed the Cuban delegation at a conference of the heads of state and governments of the non-aligned countries [in August 1976], to establish contact with Teferi Bante and Ali Bukarom, at that time Vice President of Somalia, for the purpose of attempting to reconcile them among themselves, which turned out to be impossible because of the refusal of Teferi Bante.

Subsequently, Vice President [of Somalia Gen. Mohamed Ali] Samantar, simultaneously occupying the post of Minister of Defense of Somalia, came to Cuba. I was in charge of the preliminary negotiations with him. In their course he addressed himself with a request for military assistance from Cuba for an attack on Ethiopia, claiming that that country represented the greatest danger to socialism in North Africa. At that moment we had no idea that our troops would ever end up in Ethiopia. We had a group in Somalia, which was rendering assistance in the creation of a militia, and the Soviet Union had armed forces in Somalia and was utilizing the Somali port of Berbera as a base for its navy. This is how the close cooperation with Somalia came about.

Samantar had a discussion with Fidel and Raul Castro, who counseled in favor of restraint and the conduct of negotiations.

During his visit to Africa [in March 1977], Fidel Castro met first with Siad Barre and then in Ethiopia with Mengistu, and agreed with them to conduct a historic meeting in Aden. That meeting was attended by Mengistu and his assistants, Siad Barre and his assistants, Ali Rubayi, who at that time was the president of [South] Yemen, Fattah Ismail and Ali Nasir, who is now the president of South Yemen, and Cuba was represented by Fidel Castro and myself. Fidel worked - and when I say Fidel, it is because he was at the center of that meeting - from 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 in the morning, trying to achieve a consensus among the parties. However, this proved impossible to attain, because Siad Barre unequivocally rejected all of the suggestions presented at the meeting. While the meeting did not lead to an agreement, nevertheless Siad Barre promised not to attack Ethiopia. And then, when Siad Barre attacked Ethiopia, we considered ourselves obligated to Mengistu, whom we had persuaded to attend the peace conference which had taken place in Aden.

One fine day, all of this will come to light. You can believe me or not, but some day this will be common knowledge.

The outward geopolitical character of these events is completely at odds with the essence of the true facts. I had the privilege to accompany Fidel Castro at the time of his meetings with the leadership of the Soviet Union. These were attended by Brezhnev, Kosygin, Podgorny, who had just returned from Africa, Gromyko, and Rusakov. And it was we who insistently urged the need to render military assistance to Ethiopia. This was the situation, to be distinguished from that in Angola, because in this case preliminary negotiations were taking place. But in these negotiations it was Fidel Castro himself who first advocated military assistance. History will bring all of this to light.

I did not understand what was said about Yemen, because our forces have never been there. Subsequently we spoke about Nicaragua, where the same is occurring.

In [South] Yemen, with the assistance of a small number of specialists, we helped to organize the militia. In this connection I can assure you that if the war, which Yemen began, did not turn into an extended war between the North and the South, this was mainly owing to the position of Cuba, which not only played no role in it, but which categorically and completely opposed the war, and the current position of the commanding army of Yemen, which surrendered all of its positions . . . was in large part connected with these events. [ellipsis in original--ed.]

In this fashion, it would be desirable, that in connection with this everything should be entirely clear - I am interested first and foremost in the logic of the development of events, namely, the logic.

Let us turn now to Latin America, where, as you say, beginning in 1975, there has



been a return to events characteristic of the 1960's.

As you indicate, there was a tranquil period in relations between the United States and Cuba. I would say, as you did, that this tranquil period was interrupted by the events in Angola. I believe that this was connected to the pride of Secretary of State Kissinger, who had his own plan for a solution for Angola, which did not include the government of Agostinho Neto[:] this is aptly described by [ex-CIA officer John] Stockwell in his book [In Search of Enemies], which nobody could deny and Kissinger, having maintained ties with us, from that moment became our most sworn enemy.

The administration of Carter came to power and brought to life a prolonged and difficult process. We believe that the principal actors in the Carter administration understood the gist of events in Angola, but that, unfortunately, the information of the CIA about Shaba was completely mistaken.

On the very day [25 May 1978] when I was to meet, and did meet with Cyrus Vance in New York, one hour beforehand President Carter delivered a speech in Chicago, in which he laid on us the responsibility for the events in Shaba, in relation to which we had not the slightest connection and in respect to which we even conducted serious discussions with our Angolan friends, warning them about the danger of placing the forces of the Shaba gendarme at the border. That ruined everything.

And then came Nicaragua.

I suggest to you, Mr. Secretary of State, that you would be committing a serious error in allowing a geopolitical mirage to impel you toward a mistaken interpretation. I wanted to note, for example, that the mistake in Shaba had a most negative result. Beginning in 1976, quietly, saying nothing to anybody, and without any pressure on us, we began to pull our people out of Angola, inasmuch as we considered that more of them were located there than was necessary to ensure minimal security for that country during the period in which we were organizing their armed forces. The events in Shaba forced Neto to address us with a desperate request, not only to refrain from removing personnel, but to return a portion of those personnel that we had already removed. For this reason, we now have more people in Angola than were there in 1976.

As for Central America. It is not only we who say that it would be a mistake to conceive of that which has happening now in Central America as a result of external subversive activity; even such moderate government leaders as Lopez-Portillo are completely open in their adherence to this view. I believe that he knows [Venezuelan President] Carlos Andres Perez. I believe that Carlos Andres Perez is a right-wing Social Democrat and holds to the same assessment. All who, during the course of many years, have engaged in analysis of the circumstances in Central America, all who, during the course of many years have studied it, have come to the opinion that this situation is inflammable, naturally inflammable.

The circumstances of the struggle against Somoza gave rise to these events. We helped the Sandinista front in every way that we could, with all of the means that we were able to deploy. But we were not the only ones who helped them. You know that there were several governments in Latin America who helped them substantially more than we did. Thus, this was a situation, which was regarded by Latin America as a fatal tumor which it was necessary to remove.

We are close friends with the Sandinistas. [But] It would be a serious mistake to believe that the Sandinistas rely on the advice that we give them. On the contrary, they have a very clear concept of that which they are required to do.

We believe that the Sandinistas are inclined to preserve in Nicaragua a pluralistic system. It is known that several of the Sandinistas want to carry out a revolution that is deeper than that which exists at the moment. This is a fact. And we always speak the truth as we understand it. I believe that they understand perfectly well that it will be difficult and undesirable to hasten the process of intensifying the revolution. I believe it is correct what you said yesterday before your departure from Washington, to the effect that the possibility of negotiations with the Sandinistas is not to be excluded, although I am disturbed by your pronouncement, which bore the resemblance of a threat directed at Nicaragua, that time is running short. I distinctly regret your making that statement, and we can exchange our opinions on that score.

We are rendering and will continue to render to Nicaragua our solidarity and support, inasmuch as we consider this our obligation and our right. We have no intention, regardless of the consequences, to refuse the solidarity which we consider to be right. I believe that Cuba is not in the slightest degree interfering in Nicaragua. We have there 2,759 people, of which 2,045 are teachers, 240 are technicians, 159 are doctors, and 66 are nurses. We have no forces in Nicaragua. We have there several dozen military advisors of various categories, rendering assistance in the organization of the armed forces and training of the Nicaraguan army. That is all that we have there.

When we hear the repeated pronouncements of the esteemed Secretary of State about our dispatch of 500-600 soldiers to Nicaragua, and the statements of other leaders in the United States to the effect that we have there 3,000 military instructors, all of this seems truly absurd to us, inasmuch as, it seems to me, we are in a position to know what we have there. We are prepared to publish a list of those 500 persons, who went there on the day when [U.S. columnists Roland] Evans and [Robert] Novak wrote that in the course of two days, 500 Cubans arrived; we can state their names, the place where they lived in Cuba, and the place where they were teaching in Cuba. We can tell you the places, where they are teaching now. We can publish the names and places of employment of the 2,700 Cubans located in Nicaragua. And this will be easy to verify. It is true that we have there 2,759 persons. This is true. But it can be easily and universally verified, that there are no [Cuban] soldiers in Nicaragua.

It surprises us to hear talk that Cuba has sent arms, which Nicaragua has received for its defense, and that such arms are funneled through Cuba. I have even heard declarations from Mr. Haig himself on this score. If the intelligence services of the United States speak of this, then they speak of what they do not know, for it would be easy for them to verify whence these armaments came, how they were delivered, on what they arrived, in what manner they were followed, and not one of them came through Cuba.

Naturally, we are not inclined to disclose the source from which they came and how they arrived, but we know that the CIA knows how they arrived, in what manner, from where, and how many. So why do they say that it came from Cuba; why do they insist that Cuba is involved in this[?] Cuba is in agreement with the concept that Nicaragua should be armed. Nicaragua has made it completely clear to us, and we share their opinion, that they are arming themselves not because they are next to Honduras, not because they may suffer an attack from El Salvador, and not because Guatemala might participate in an attack against them, but for a combination of these factors, in addition to the threat from the United States. This much is clear. You tell me. I know, that [State Department official Thomas] Enders has stated to the Nicaraguans, that it is absurd for them to arm themselves, inasmuch as the United States can destroy all of it in the course of a very short period of time. This is true, this is true, it is for sure. However, not one self-respecting small country will reconcile to a demand that it admit to its own destruction without putting up a fight. I think it is necessary to understand this. I think that it should be understood.

El Salvador.

We do not have there, Mr. Haig, we do not have there any troops, nor any military advisors, and we say this to you with the same clarity with which we have spoken to other leaders from different parts of the world. We have declared this and are ready to prove it. We would request to be shown even one instance of an appearance there of these fabled Cuban troops. In those places where Cuban troops are located, they are universally recognized, and in El Salvador they are nowhere to be found, inasmuch as there are no Cuban troops, and no Cuban military advisors there.

We are explaining all of this out of a desire to prevent a dramatic confrontation under circumstances in which it is possible to attain a mutual understanding by means of negotiations. When we say that we are not supplying armed forces to this or another part of the world, we say this not because it would be a violation of the moral principles of Cuba or somehow unlawful. There is one confirmed fact: the United States has troops in various parts of the world. President Reagan has admitted that the USA is rendering support to Afghan counter-revolutionaries located in Pakistan. He has publicly declared this.

Not long ago the administration forced Congress to repeal the "Clark Amendment" on the grounds that it wanted a free hand for the purpose of rendering assistance to [UNITA leader Jonas] Savimbi and other forces operating against the government of Angola. Frankly speaking, we do not understand why the United States, merely because it happens to be, at the present time, one of the most powerful states, can have a right which we, being a small country, do not have. I believe that it is irrational to hold such a position. That is our principal point [iskhodnaia tochka], to which we will adhere.

Thus, I have attempted with considerable specificity to prove the absence of geopolitical reasons. We could say the following: What does the "White Book" say? The "White Book" contains certain truths, and certain lies, as well as certain data about the supposed ties between the revolutionaries who are struggling in El Salvador against the right-wing junta, and the Soviet Union. And what is evident from this: the fact that the Soviet Union has absolutely no desire to involve itself. I am acquainted with colleagues who are noted there. These colleagues exist and are carrying out their obligations. But these colleagues have no power, they are not authorized to bestow the name of the Soviet Union, not one iota. It is clearly visible, that the Soviet Union in no way wants to be entangled in anything which is seen to be a revolutionary process in which it does not desire to participate.

I would like to tell you something in addition to this. Certain American leaders are always expressing the opinion that the Soviet Union acted as a hostile influence between the United States and Cuba, that it fermented in Cuba hostile feelings towards the United States. I could tell you that the opposite is true. Many of the conflicts that we have had with the Soviet Union were occasioned by the acts, words, and positions of Cuba, which did not correspond with the intentions of the Soviet Union in this portion of the world. I believe that nothing worries the Soviet Union more than the course of developments in the situation in Central America and the Caribbean Basin, which could become a new element in the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union. I believe that when Mr. Haig and Mr. Reagan have the opportunity to consult with Fidel Castro, he will tell them about this in greater detail than I can, because, although I have attended many meetings, nevertheless, no one could speak about this problem more than he.

Such are the facts.

And what about our position in relation to the events in El Salvador? At the present time we are in favor of a political solution. A political solution which, naturally, we

understand to be more or less encompassed in the plan which was announced yesterday by President Lopez-Portillo: the possibility of convening a Founding Assembly, but with the participation of all the forces involved in the conflict, including the Revolutionary-Democratic Front and the Front for the National Liberation of Farabundo Marti. Such is the position of Cuba.

We are prepared for any compromise in this direction, a compromise in which, as we understand it, the other parties will also be committed, including the United States. We must all take these obligations upon ourselves. We can discuss the extent of our participation in all of this. In this connection our intentions were communicated by Comrade Fidel Castro to President Lopez Portillo, to the Deputy Chairman of the Socialist International Vishnevsky, to the chairman of the Liberal Democratic Party of Canada [Edward] Broadbent, communicated in a letter to [Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Elliot] Trudeau during the course of an exchange of correspondence with him. In this I repeat that for which we are prepared.

You touched upon our difficulties and our vulnerability. This is true. We are vulnerable, and our people has suffered a great deal from the American blockade. You call this an embargo. We consider ourselves to be blockaded by the United States. We have suffered physically. Our hospitals at times have been without medicine. We have suffered economically. Three days ago I received a communication from London, in which it was indicated that several companies, due to pressure from the Americans, had difficulty obtaining nickel. The Japanese have repeatedly stated to us, that owing to American pressure, they cannot develop economic relations with us to the extent that they would like to achieve.

We well understand, and Fidel Castro has spoken about this, that if we could improve relations with the United States, then our conditions would be better. The very fact of having the United States as a potential market, located several miles from us, would ease our problems. We would have access to technology that is currently inaccessible to us, we would have access to financing which we do not have, and we believe that this is desirable and possible. But I would like for you to understand our point of view, that we do not intend, for the purpose of achieving that, to sacrifice that which we consider to be our primary principles. Of course, you have not told me, that we must sacrifice them. But I would like to discuss this question as it arises from the concepts of the current administration of the United States. As we understand this matter, we are not being requested to be an ally of the United States or to conform with the social system that exists there. We do not like the social system in the United States. But, naturally, that is the social system of the United States, and the American people are entitled to decide what they must do. In view of all these realities, it follows that we should examine the following principles:

First, the sovereignty of Cuba - the inalienable right, being understood to include territorial sovereignty, including the base at Guantanamo; we have the right to trade with the entire world, including the United States.

Second: we have a right to solidarity with the countries of the "Third World," and in particular, with the countries of Latin America.

Third: our friendship with the Soviet Union. We are friends of the Soviet Union, close friends. We reject any suggestion that we are an agent of the Soviet Union in any part of the world. I have explained to you the nature of our position on this issue. We not only have real feelings for the Soviet Union, cemented in a common ideology, but also we have received significant assistance from the Soviet Union for our own economic development. Naturally, with that assistance alone we cannot develop our country as quickly as necessary and as we would like to. However, we do not believe that such assistance is incompatible with the establishment of normalized relations between the United States and Cuba.

Alexander Haig. Mr. Rodriguez, I believe this has been a very fruitful exchange. I am certain that you will forgive me, if I do not agree with all of this logic. Several months ago our intervention prevented a serious clash between your forces located in Angola and the South Africans. But the next time it is possible that we will not have such success in stopping their movement with the assistance of our influence.

Carlos R. Rodriguez. But I would say that our forces are located far away from them, and that it was not merely your intervention, but our restraint.

Alexander Haig. I know that. I am aware of that. But they would have advanced further to your bases, and we stopped it. We knew nothing about their operations or about when they would commence. But the fact that they appeared served as a source of information for them concerning the operations of SWAPO [the Southwest African People's Organization]. They even captured a Soviet prisoner, who has not stopped talking to this moment about how he was captured, about the scale of activity and coordination of activities in Angola. He did not exclude anything from his observations.

Carlos R. Rodriguez. But that was not a Cuban prisoner. Correct?

Alexander Haig. Correct. We knew where the Cuban armed forces were located, and we also know, that it would be highly desirable, if Cuba would pull out of Angola. This would help Angola, it would help Cuba, and it would assist in the resolution of the issue over the independence of Namibia and normalization of conditions. This is something that I have discussed with the Soviets, the Angolans, and the governments of the "Front Line," and there is an ever growing opinion, that this is the very thing which you must do.

And moreover, as concerns the events which you described, and the activity of the CIA, I can assure you, that they are in possession of information about military aircraft which has been supplied by you to other countries. I could furnish you with information about these things which, perhaps, are taking place without the knowledge of some members of the government. That can happen. It has happened at times even in our country, not very often, but in certain instances.

We believe that the presence of Cuba in Nicaragua constitutes a threat to the continent, and in addition, we believe that the activity of Nicaragua in El Salvador likewise constitutes a serious threat. I can assure you categorically that we are in possession of comprehensive proof of such involvement. There isn't the slightest bit of doubt about it. It's a fact. We have photographs, documents, minutes of interrogations and "confirmations" by those interrogated. For this reason, I cannot agree with that which you are telling me. I am not saying that you have no right to say it. You have every right to say what you want to, but we also have a right to draw our own conclusions from the events as we see them. We have proof, and we are telling you about it.

Unfortunately, the time has come, when the rhetorical debate between the United States and Cuba will not solve the problem, and, on the contrary, there is an array of areas in which the sovereignty of Cuba is not in the slightest bit implicated. However, Cuba is exporting revolution and bloodshed on the continent.

We know what you write, we know what you defend, we know what you are talking about, and we believe that it constitutes a threat to peace and stability, and we cannot see it in any other light, inasmuch as we are talking about objective reality.

You complained about the embargo. We have not had an effective embargo, but we can impose one on sugar, on the production of all the products which you use to

obtain hard currency. However, we don't want to do that, we don't want to have any other complications. I must inform you of this. You speak of solidarity with the Sandinistas. I believe that you would render to them the greatest form of solidarity, if you would bring the Cubans home, and say to the Sandinistas that they should establish an order that does not violate the rights...

Carlos R. Rodriguez. Return doctors? Teachers? Return three thousand Cubans who...

Alexander Haig. We have a very good account of the doctors, teachers, Angolan veterans and military advisers, their titles, names and past activity.

Carlos R. Rodriguez. It would be interesting to take a look at it.

Alexander Haig. I can assure you that the benign picture that you have painted does not conform to reality. I'm not saying that you don't have a significant number of teachers there, but they are teaching your philosophy to Nicaraguan children, just as they tried to do in Chile. However, we do not agree that you have the right to do that. The Nicaraguans have the right to teach their people what they believe in. You are deeply involved in the Sandinista revolutionary movement, and we suggest that this creates a great risk for us all: for the Cubans, for the hemisphere, and for Nicaragua. We believe that Cuba should reexamine this. Nobody is asking Cuba to humiliate itself; we are not talking about that. We are talking about the conditions of ever increasing bloodshed in Central America.

We believe that the only solution for El Salvador is to allow the Salvadoran people themselves to decide their own fate, that is, by means of the electoral process, in which all sides should participate. A Legislative Assembly would be created, in which the political process would conform completely with the will of the people. But we cannot consent to Nicaragua's intervening in El Salvador under the mask of solidarity or any other revolutionary ruse, as it has been doing for quite some time. And your presence there, your assistance, facilitates this. Just as day follows night, this is the objective reality.

I have no doubts about the facts which you have marshalled with respect to Shaba or the situation in Ethiopia. However, the question arises, on what basis do Cuban forces continue to be located in Angola, performing various functions, and in Ethiopia[?] Why do the regimes want this? I am addressing a serious question to you, not in respect to Ethiopia, but about the situation in Angola.

You say that you are not involved in South Yemen, but I can tell you, that we have counted large and small aircraft, which have flown from Ethiopia to South Yemen, and we have heard radio broadcasts...

Carlos R. Rodriguez. And did you see Cubans as well?

Alexander Haig. We have intercepted radio broadcasts in the Spanish language. I have read them every day. And if it wasn't you, then it was Ethiopians that speak Spanish remarkably well. And for this reason, I am telling you, that all of this activity, be it within the framework of geopolitics or otherwise, has convinced the Americans that it has a geopolitical connection.

Consequently, we must find a solution, if we are interested in peace and stability in the immediate future, we must find a solution to these problems. Otherwise, we will be required to pursue a different course, which, I believe, after my discussions with you here, would not be desirable for you. I know that the United States also does not want this, but it is prepared, after many years of not being in a position to take any

measures, is ready to take them very quickly. Therefore, I am speaking to you of the need to immediately find a solution. I can assure you, that these solutions would not impinge the honor, sovereignty, or integrity of Cuba or the Cuban people. Nobody wants that. That would be foolish. And it is an objective fact, that it would be much easier to achieve this by force, but that is not our intention. However, frankly speaking, we believe that time is slipping away.

We have not disclosed to the American public our data or the information that is available to us. You have seen the "White Book," but we have another fifty of them. We have volumes, records of radio broadcasts, data from technical reconnaissance, we have photographs.

Carlos R. Rodriguez. A good factory for "White Books."

Alexander Haig. It's just the first chapter.

Carlos R. Rodriguez. But I understand that you have a good factory for "White Books."

Alexander Haig. Notwithstanding, the President does not want to do this, although he is prepared to do it and very soon. This would incite great enmity, and would stir up emotions even more. I insist that you take seriously what I have told you, and on an assessment that any sound-minded American will be compelled to make in the face of the events I have described. This does not mean that your involvement has not been exactly as you have described it; however, we regard this as a serious threat to our vital interests and the interests of peace and stability in the hemisphere.

If you share my opinion that stability and peace are desirable in the hemisphere, then you can work out a solution that does not compromise your dignity. How could this be accomplished so that nobody even asked you about that? I have already said that it would be necessary to extol the firmness of Cuba and its spirit of self-sacrifice. However, the basic problem in this matter remains the same, about which we are engaged today in the whole world: peaceful changes in the framework of acceptable legality, and not through bloodshed, arms, and not by the means of instigating terrorism and revolution.

And so, if the Cuban Revolution has matured to this point, then that is fine. If that is not the case, then we are on a path toward confrontation, and soon. I know that this sounds like rhetoric, but believe me, I have examined and reexamined many documents, detailed reconnaissance data, the content of negotiations conducted in all parts of the world; much of may be inexact, and I am certain that there is inexactness in the "White Book," and it could not be otherwise. It has to do with reconnaissance and intercepted documents which, for the most part, we have examined in Colombia, where the involvement of the Cubans was significant, and we did not raise the question about Colombia...

Carlos R. Rodriguez. Let's talk about that as well...

Alexander Haig. Your involvement was significant...

Carlos R. Rodriguez. Not as significant as it was said to be.

Alexander Haig. ...but significant enough to raise problems. And this is occurring also in Guatemala...

Carlos R. Rodriguez. If you will permit me, I will address that later.

Alexander Haig. ...fine, what I am saying is, that we must find a solution and quickly.

Carlos R. Rodriguez. What solution?

Alexander Haig. There must be a solution, because nobody gave Cuba the divine right to interfere in the internal affairs of the countries in this hemisphere, regardless of what arguments may be advanced to justify it. You know that today we have 34 military advisors in El Salvador. And how many does Cuba have in Nicaragua?

Carlos R. Rodriguez. We have there not many more advisors, not many more.

Alexander Haig. We are in possession of intelligence, and you are correct when you say that there are many independent forces in Nicaragua. And they tell us every day what is happening there every day. And what is happening is unacceptable. Regardless of the manner in which you describe it, regardless of what seems to you subjectively as moderation, it cannot be accepted. Anxiety exists in the countries of this hemisphere. There was a time when Cuba held very sound positions in the non-aligned world. However, issues have now arisen concerning its involvement. It is essential that we come to a mutual understanding, otherwise the results may be very serious. And we are not talking about the intervention of American forces against Nicaragua, we are not going to do that. However, we can find no explanation for an army of 50,000 men and a militia of 200,000 men. There is no justification for that.

Carlos R. Rodriguez. Why not?

Alexander Haig. Fine, as countries they have the right to do this, but if they choose this course, then they must pay the price for that choice. And this gives rise to anxiety in all of the countries in the region, and they are bound to oppose it. This constitutes a danger. Wherein lies the necessity for this? I have no information to suggest that any country wants to invade Nicaragua. If you have in mind a handful of Somoza supporters, who are engaged in smuggling in Honduras and who do not even have arms, the government of Honduras has announced that it is attempting to relocate them to another place in order to avoid any pretext for an invasion. And that effort has already been underway for a period of several months. I say to you in complete candor, that time is slipping away from us.

For this very reason, as you are aware, the Mexicans proposed this approach. I have studied all of the negotiations that took place during the time of the Carter administration, and they were nothing but a series of delaying tactics, in order to prevent any progress. And nothing was achieved by that, not a thing. We do not want to establish that kind of a dialogue, you don't want that, and we don't want it. If you are prepared to speak seriously, we are also prepared. But we are in need of a prepared context for discussions and some kind of sign from your side that results will be achieved.

Carlos R. Rodriguez. Inasmuch as we have little time, I will try to be brief, laconic, and objective.

First, you have insisted upon the need for a solution and have expressed the interest of the United States in a solution in which there would be no humiliation of Cuba or threat to the sovereignty of Cuba. We are prepared to search for a solution, and we must come to an agreement at another time about what steps to take, because this involves not only the United States and Cuba, but also the other countries of the region, and the revolutionary forces with their own criteria and points of view. We believe that Mexico could be a uniting link in this matter. We could conduct an even more direct exchange of opinions.



Alexander Haig. Let's maintain contact directly, without intermediaries, as we have done in the past. We could send our ambassador with special authority, General [Vernon] Walters, to Havana. We can meet, in turn, in Havana and New York, because, in my view, we must commence a dialogue immediately.

Carlos R. Rodriguez. I believe that this is important, and we are ready to do it. In addition to this I would like to introduce several clarifications, because certain misunderstandings can arise.

I do not want at this time to commence a discussion about the facts, although at some point we can also discuss whether there or not there is falsification. When General Walters comes to Cuba, I think that it is important for him to bring with him as much data as possible in order to examine it for the purpose of interpreting these facts.

I remember that the "Bay of Pigs" was brought about by information from people located in Cuba that led the CIA to a mistaken conclusion. As regards your reference to aircraft, I can tell you, that everybody knows what is taking place in Cuba. We have no factions in the government. We have a division of labor. However, the members of the Politburo know everything that the military is doing. And I can assure you that you are telling me things with which I cannot in the slightest bit agree, frankly speaking, not in the slightest degree. About Angola, about Ethiopia. They ask, why are we still located there[?] Because they want us there, and the same in Angola. If, as a result of what is happening there now (we already know about the results of the meeting of the contact group, about the decision of the foreign ministers of Africa, we see that there is an opportunity to achieve a consensus on Namibia, and that there are visible signs of progress), if as a result of a solution to the Namibia issue the Angolans allow us to withdraw our forces, then we are ready to leave there. There is no doubt about this whatsoever. But I am concerned by the fact that we have in Angola not only several thousand soldiers, several tens of thousands of soldiers, but also several thousand construction workers and civilians.

And the information that you are spreading about Nicaragua is a complete falsification. We can discuss all of this with General Walters in detail in the course of several days. We can discuss this, and we can give you all of the details that are of interest to you, because we do not want a confrontation to arise because of a mistake.

We are also prepared for a confrontation. We know that such a confrontation will be traumatic for our people. We have no doubt about this. But neither are we afraid of a confrontation. What we fear is an unnecessary confrontation, in which, as a result of errors by both sides, as a result of an absence of contacts, thousands of Americans and hundreds of thousands of Cubans will perish. This worries us. And I am worried by other elements of interpretation which, I believe, we must discuss. If necessary, I can on any day leave for New York and organize a different, more detailed meeting. But several of your personal interpretations which, as you say, are also consistent with the interpretations of the President of the United States, cause me great anxiety. For example, I do not believe that the United States has any right to interfere in matters related to the presence of Cuban teachers in Nicaragua. This, and what they are teaching, is a question for the Nicaraguan government to decide. I can assure you, that these are elementary school teachers who can hardly teach Marxist-Leninism. I don't know whether you have ever attempted to read any books about Marxist-Leninism, but it would be very difficult for our 2,700 teachers to teach Marxist-Leninism to little Indians. However, we believe that only the government of Nicaragua, and no other, must decide whether or not they need our teachers. I am convinced of this, because I have had enough discussions with the Nicaraguan leadership and I have also spoken with Fidel, and I know from other discussions, at which I have been present, that the Nicaraguans do not have the slightest desire or interest to intrude in Honduras. They understand perfectly well that this would lead

them into a confrontation with the United States, and there would be nothing worse for Nicaragua, than to be pulled into a confrontation with the United States.

We can and must continue our discussion about all these things. You say that time is slipping away from us. Let us use it to the maximum extent. I want to say one thing: Cuba never lies, and Fidel never lies. That which we say, we can prove. I have stated to you what we are prepared to do, where we can achieve a consensus, and where we cannot achieve a consensus. When we say "We are obligated to do it," we are obligated.

You spoke of Colombia. You do not know how these members of M-19 ended up in Cuba. [Colombian] President [Julio-Cesar] Turbay [Ayala] had a telephone conversation with me in which he requested me - requested me! - that we accept in Cuba members of M-19, inasmuch as they had seized a group of ambassadors in the embassy of the Dominican Republic. As a result, they came to Cuba. They were in Cuba, they underwent preparation, just as thousands of others who come to Cuba. Any Latin American who comes to Cuba - member of the intelligentsia, poet, military person - wants us to teach him to use firearms. And we have taught thousands. That is true. And we never conceal the truth, but we have had nothing in common with the training of the group that infiltrated Colombia, and had nothing to do with its arming. The countries who have spoken about this are fully aware of who trained them, who gave them weapons, and who organized them. I can assure you that Fidel Castro exerted efforts to prevent this adventurism, not for the sake of the government of Turbay, but for the sake of the fate of those young people that we knew would be killed. This was an ill-conceived adventure.

However, as to why Cuba trained the men of M-19. At our initiative, an agreement was reached with [Colombian] President Alfonso Lopez Michelsen, when he came to power, when he again recognized Cuba: we agreed not to help, in any way, any one partisan group, and we fulfilled that agreement. You can ask Alfonso Lopez about this. And we adhered to this under the government of Turbay. And only after the government of Turbay assumed a hostile position in the United Nations, which we, in a geopolitical sense, interpreted as a provocation directed by the United States, only then did we consider ourselves discharged from that agreement.

There is no obligation that we have taken upon ourselves with any country, group or government, that we have failed to honor. This should be clear to the United States.

[Source: TsKhSD, f. 5, op. 84, d. 584, ll. 1-27; translation by Bruce McDonald; document obtained by Carter-Brezhnev Project and on file at National Security Archive.]"