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**USSR Embassy in Cuba, 'Informational Letter on  
Contemporary Cuban-American Relations'**

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**Summary:**

The Soviet Embassy in Havana gives an overview of the latest developments in US-Cuban relations. While steps towards a rapprochement have been undertaken, both sides are deadlocked on the issue of Cuba's military involvement in Africa.

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TO THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA

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INFORMATIONAL LETTER  
ON CONTEMPORARY CUBAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS  
Havana  
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The process of relaxation in Cuban-American relations, which was abruptly interrupted in 1976, commenced anew with the election of Jimmy Carter as president of the USA. The new American administration, by all appearances, is counting on the results of normalization in relations and expansion of trade with Cuba to restore certain positions in the economy and turn the country's difficulties to its own advantage. In this regard the question continues to surface regarding the possibilities inhering in a prospective "break" between Cuba and the USSR.

A large influence in the change of Carter's policies has been contributed by an influential group of individuals in his close circle ([U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations] A. Young, [Democratic Senator from South Dakota] G. McGovern and others), who believe that the normalization of relations represents greater opportunities for the United States to neutralize the policies of Cuba toward Africa and Latin America.

As part of the new approach, the Americans have come out with official pronouncements about their readiness to commence discussions with Cuba on the problems existing between the two countries "without preliminary conditions." The Carter administration has also taken practical steps to reduce tensions in relations. Flights over Cuban territory by reconnaissance aircraft have been terminated; several measures have been undertaken to bring a halt to terrorist activity of Cuban revolutionaries on USA territory; and the prohibition of travel to Cuba has been relaxed. USA authorities have begun to warn the Cubans about hostile activities being planned by Cuban emigres, and a number of their participants have been arrested and prosecuted in the American courts.

The Cuban government has adopted a wait-and-see attitude, although in general it has reacted positively to these USA gestures. In a series of public statements, and also in the course of meetings with American senators and congressmen arriving in Havana during this period, Fidel Castro has indicated the readiness of Cuba in principle to improve relations with the United States, and as a mandatory condition has put forward the demand for an end to the economic blockade.

In early 1977, both countries undertook practical steps toward the goal of improving relations. In March, at the initiative of the Americans, the first direct negotiations at the level of deputy foreign ministers since the interruption of diplomatic relations took place in New York. In April, in Havana, agreements were signed concerning fishing rights within the 200-mile zone along with preliminary agreements on delimitation of the maritime economic zone. At the initiative of the Americans, interest sections have been opened in the embassy of Switzerland in Havana and the Republic of Czechoslovakia in Washington. American citizens with families living in Cuba have been granted the right for their families to visit the United States.

In late 1977, the policy of Cuba in Africa, in particular its international assistance to

Ethiopia, put the brakes on the process of normalizing relations with the USA. However, in spite of threatening pronouncements in the press and from an array of congressmen concerning the Cuban military presence in Ethiopia, the USA administration refrained from exerting serious pressure on Havana and attempted to preserve the conditions for dialogue. In December 1977, at the behest of Carter, Representatives F. Richmond and R. Nolan visited Cuba and expressed to Castro the president's concern in connection with the "growing Cuban intervention" in Ethiopia. In February 1978, the Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs S[antiago]. Roel Garcia, secretly visited here at the instructions of President L[opez]. Portillo and conveyed to Castro an oral message from [U.S.] Vice President [Walter] Mondale expressing the concern of the American government about the presence of Cuban troops in Ethiopia. Through the intercession of Portillo, the position of principle held by Cuba on this question was communicated to Carter. It was represented that, in the case of necessity, the Cuban military specialists located in Ethiopia would take part in military operations only on the territory of that country.

In May 1978, during the course of the well-known events in the Zairian province of Shaba, which the Americans attributed to the Cuban presence in Africa, Fidel Castro met with the head of the American Interests Section in Havana, L[yle]. Lane, and through him transmitted to Carter an oral message in which he emphasized that Cuba "has no ties whatsoever" to the events in Shaba.

The USA government attempted to diminish the tensions arising in relations between the two countries during late 1978 in connection with the propaganda campaign in the USA centering around the issue over the supply of Soviet MiG-23 fighters to Cuba. In Havana, during a closed meeting between Fidel Castro and representatives of the Carter administration, the latter attempted to justify the resumption of flights over Cuba by USA reconnaissance aircraft on the grounds that the appearance of the MiG-23's had provoked significant anxiety in the United States and that the president had been forced to adopt a "position which would permit him to assure the American people that everything was being done to ensure the security of the country." The Americans also declared that the training of naval forces taking place off the Cuban coast was being carried out in the traditional region and was not being directed against Cuba. The Cuban side took this explanation under advisement.

Notwithstanding the developments outlined above, a certain amount of progress continued in connection with several specific questions regarding bilateral relations. In late 1977, in connection with the expiration of the temporary agreement on the delimitation of the maritime economic zone, the Americans proposed to conduct new negotiations. In December an agreement was struck that conclusively strengthened the maritime boundaries between the two countries. In January 1978, an agreement was reached between the coast guards of the two countries calling for the rendering of assistance to vessels in distress in the Straits of Florida, common efforts against the trafficking of narcotics, and a halt to terrorist activity by Cuban counter-revolutionaries on USA territory.

The Cubans were permitted to open accounts in American banks, which was necessary, in part, for normal operation of the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, which was also granted the right to transmit consular payments to Havana. Cuban emigres, living on USA territory, were permitted to send their relatives in Cuba up to 500 dollars every three months. American tourists visiting Cuba received the right to bring back into the United States goods having a value of up to \$100 per person.

In response to these "gestures" from the Carter administration, the Cuban government freed three Americans who were serving sentences for espionage activity (out of eight). Readiness was declared to favorably examine the question concerning the remaining Americans being detained under the condition that the USA, for its part, would release the Puerto Rican freedom fighters Lolita Lebron and her three comrades [imprisoned for involvement in a November 1950 assassination

attempt against President Harry Truman]. American citizens with families located here were returning to the United States (in all about 250 individuals); and persons having dual citizenship were permitted to leave.

A policy of dialogue continued between the parties. Exchanges of opinions on a wide variety of issues concerning bilateral relations took place among contacts at various levels, including those during closed meetings in Atlanta (USA) in August and in Cuernavaca (Mexico) in October 1978. In this connection the Americans emphasized that the principal impediment to full normalization of relations was the Cuban military presence in Africa. From their part they undertook efforts to exert pressure on Cuba in this regard, and to obtain at least a partial withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola and Ethiopia. In this connection, official representatives of the American administration declared in closed meetings that if Cuba sincerely desired an improvement in relations, then it must make "positive steps" in the areas of "vital interest" to the USA located in Africa and Puerto Rico. For example, to begin with, the withdrawal of forces from Angola and Ethiopia would lead to a readiness by the USA to examine the question of lifting the ban on the sale of medicine and certain types of equipment for the nickel industry. They pointed out that the presence of Cuban forces in Africa and the possibility of their intervention in Zimbabwe and Namibia was causing anxiety in the USA and preventing the president from reaching a decision in respect to the economic blockade. The Americans attempted to attain assurances that Cuba would not intervene militarily in Zimbabwe and Namibia, and exhorted Cuba to support Western plans for a "peaceful settlement" of those problems.

In response to the Americans it was firmly declared that Cuba would not impose any preliminary conditions on the normalization of relations with the USA but would not back down on questions of principle relating to its foreign policy. It was further emphasized that the solidarity of Cuba with African and other countries, and the internationalist assistance rendered by it to Angola and Ethiopia, could not be the subject for negotiations with the USA. "We will withdraw our forces from there," Castro stated in discussions with the Americans, "when conditions of peace and security are achieved there. And this will be done on the basis of agreement with the governments of those countries, and not as the result of pressure exerted by the USA."

It was indicated further that Cuba did not oppose a peaceful political settlement to the problems of Zimbabwe and Namibia, but that it refused to bind itself in connection with its future policy in that region, considering that the racist regimes might undertake such provocations and aggressive actions against Angola as would "demand a response." At the same time it was emphasized that Cuba adhered to a constructive position and consistently therewith was in favor of a peaceful settlement to conflicts, including those arising among African countries. As an example, they pointed to the efforts previously undertaken by the Cubans to attain a peaceful resolution to the conflict between Somalia and Ethiopia, and the assistance rendered by them in support of an improvement in relations between Angola and Zaire.

In the course of meetings with official representatives of the Carter administration, Castro emphasized that the principal impediment to the normalization of relations was the economic blockade and the presence of the American base at Guantanamo. He stressed that Cuba regarded as highly immoral the policy of utilizing a blockade as an "instrument of pressure and imposition of demands." It was stated to the Americans that the problems of Africa and Puerto Rico were not related to the economic blockade and that Cuba would not conduct negotiations on those questions in exchange for its lifting. "Cuba," Castro emphasized, "is not China and is not Egypt. It has nothing in common with those countries which can be pressured or bought."

All the same, in the course of these contacts with the Cuban side an obvious degree of flexibility was demonstrated. A readiness was declared to include, in the general discussion of normalizing relations, as a condition to the lifting of the economic

blockade, the issue of compensation for the nationalized property of Americans, claims for which were calculated at 1.8 billion dollars (considering interest at 6% for 18 years, that sum will almost double). The Americans were apprised that Cuba, in turn, has counterclaims for losses resulting from the economic blockade, and that only on this basis could negotiations on that theme be conducted.

The Cuban leadership has stimulated interest on the part of certain business circles in the USA in studying the possibilities of future trade and economic ties. The organization "Business International" conducted a seminar in Havana with the participation of leaders of major corporations from the USA, Japan, and several West European countries. It was made particularly apparent that the participants wielded broad influence in USA political circles and were in a position to exert pressure on Congress necessary from Cuba's perspective.

In late 1977, Cuban Minister of Foreign Trade Manuel Fernandez visited the USA at the invitation of the Council on East-West Trade. He attended a conference in Washington in which the leaders of more than 80 USA trade and industrial firms and representatives of the Commerce Department and State Department participated. The minister announced that in the event the economic blockade were lifted, Cuban-American trade could reach several hundred million dollars per year. Cuba would be interested in acquiring USA grain, feedstock resources, medicines, chemical products, light and heavy metals, construction materials, turnkey factories, miscellaneous equipment and other goods.

Groups of American business leaders and businessmen from the states of New York, California, and elsewhere, have visited Havana. The Cubans believe that there are American companies who are seriously interested in the conduct of business in Cuba. These companies are even prepared to waive their claims for compensation of their nationalized property.

Notwithstanding, the economic blockade continues to be maintained essentially in its entirety. The prohibition on exports of American goods, imports of Cuban products, issuance of commercial and financial credits to Cuba by governments and private financial institutions, and activity by banks of the USA and other countries containing American capital, accounts and dollars, continues in force.

At the same time, the USA has been forced to implement modifications in those aspects of its policy which had related to trade with Cuba by foreign countries. The ministries of finance, trade and state department have been permitted to issue licenses for transactions concluded with Cuba by companies of those countries which are controlled by American monopolies. They are able to export nonstrategic materials and import Cuban products. Exports to Cuba of goods from third countries containing up to 20% in components of American manufacture are also permitted.

On the other hand, subsidiaries of American monopolies located in third countries are not permitted to maintain accounts with Cuba in American dollars, to issue it credit for a period of more than one year, or to transfer technology.

In sum, according to data of the USA Interests Section in Havana, from October 1975 through January 1979 the USA Commerce Department has issued licenses to subsidiaries of American firms in third countries for the export of nonstrategic materials in the amount of 450 million dollars, although not all applications for export licenses have been realized, and the share of goods directly produced in the USA is not greater than 5-6%.

Licenses have been granted for such products as electric motors, industrial scales, tractors, light and heavy automotive equipment, equipment for the paper industry,

pharmaceuticals, florescent lamps, herbicides, locomotives, textile machines, boilers, etc. Exports of navigational systems, computers, communications, electrical distribution equipment, construction machinery, electronic experimental equipment and so forth, are prohibited. Up to 50% of applications for the issuance of licenses have been granted to subsidiaries of American companies located in Canada and Argentina.

It should be borne in mind that a lifting of the economic blockade would not automatically result in the development of trade between the two countries. Cuba would first of all have to comply with the provisions of the USA Trade Act of 1974 requiring it to guarantee the right to emigrate from the country and to conclude bilateral trade agreements. Failing this it will not be granted most favored nation trading status, nor will it be eligible for credits from the Export-Import Bank or the USA Commercial Credit Corporation. Without such status, products for Cuban export will be subject to high customs tariffs (for example, cigars at \$4.50 per pound plus 25% of their value).

The USA has attempted to apply the provisions of the embargo to imports of Cuban nickel by Japan, Italy, and France. These governments have been informed that the USA will not permit the import of special steels using Cuban nickel. At the same time, in the course of Cuban-American contacts in 1977-78, according to data provided by "Business International Cooperation," five leading USA nickel companies announced their interest in cooperation with Cuba after the lifting of the economic blockade in the sphere of nickel production and trade.

A new and recent significant step in Cuban-American relations is the decision of the Cuban government to release more than three thousand political detainees (not less than 400 persons per month) on the condition that they go to the United States; and to permit the departure of Cubans wishing to reunite with their families abroad and visits by Cuban emigres to their relatives. This decision, adopted on the basis of a comprehensive analysis of the domestic situation regarding emigration, marks a fundamental reexamination of the previous policy on that question. At the negotiations which took place in Havana in November and December of 1978 with representatives of the Cuban emigre community, Castro confirmed this decision and emphasized that up to 500 political detainees will be released each month. However, implementation will depend in the final analysis on a decision by the USA to admit them into the country.

In a closed meeting with representatives of the American administration in late 1978, Castro stated that the "primary factor" making possible the adoption of these decisions was the policy of the Carter administration, which had "ceased to encourage terrorist and subversive activity and intervention in the internal affairs of Cuba." This, in his words, had created a new environment, making possible a new approach to the emigration issue.

The United States turned out to be totally unprepared for Cuba's proposal, which scored a serious moral and political victory - the American administration was deprived of its trump card consisting of the supposed violation of human rights. The USA was confronted by the need for a response to the Cuban initiative. Moreover, the American administration was subjected to strong pressure from representatives of the Cuban emigre community. Under the circumstances, the USA officially announced that it would accept all of the political detainees (up to 3,500 individuals), to be released at the rate of 400 persons per month, together with their families. In order to examine this problem, special commissions from the USA Justice Department came to Havana. In October 1978, the first group of political detainees and their families departed for the USA. This March, the Americans introduced a new simplified procedure for the issuance of visas to political detainees in order to facilitate the conditions for the admission into the USA of up to 400 persons every month.

In the beginning of this year, Cuban emigres began to arrive on visits to their relatives. According to accounts of friends, the number of such persons in 1979 will exceed 100,000 individuals. During the first three months of this year around 20,000 Cuban emigres have arrived.

The Cuban leadership understands the need to intensify its ideological work in the country relating to the new policy in connection with emigration. This question occupied an important role in presentations by Castro at the recent Seventh Plenum of the Central Committee of the party and at a national conference of party leaders last February. In accordance with conclusions reached by the Division of Revolutionary Orientation of the Central Committee of the party, measures have been worked out to neutralize the negative influence from a massive arrival of emigres for meetings with their relatives. Party organizations at all levels have been authorized to explain to the workers the basis for the present policy in relation to the Cuban emigre community.

Cuban-American contacts have achieved a definite development in the spheres of culture, science, and sport. The improvement of these contacts is serving as one of the methods for achieving a mutual understanding between the two countries, as well as an additional source for the receipt of hard currency. Thus, on the commercial front, the National Ballet of Cuba completed an extended tour of the USA in 1978. Its performances in Washington and New York were attended by around 100,000 spectators. The director of the ballet, A. Alonso, was elected as an honorary foreign member of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Her essay on Cuban ballet was published in the USA.

Last year and again this year, the musical groups "Iraqueres," "Moncada," "Manguardi," "Los Papines," and "Aragon" toured in the United States, along with the composer-performers A. Brouver, S. Rodriguez, P. Milyanez, and the singers T. Martinez, E. Burke and others.

American artists and choreographers participated in the Sixth International Ballet Festival in Havana. Last March, in the large concert hall here named after Karl Marx, three joint concerts by American and Cuban musicians and singers were held. They were attended by members of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba C. R. Rodriguez and A. Hart, and by member of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the party A. Peres Efferera.

Cuban Minister of Culture A. Hart had discussions in Havana with the vice president of the firm "Columbia Broadcasting Systems" about the possibility of releasing a recording of Cuban music in the USA.

In 1978, 35 film critics were invited from the USA. Based on their examination of Cuban films and meetings with colleagues, they published a series of positive materials in the American press about Cuban cinematography. This ensured the success of the Cuban Film Week, organized in Washington, New York, San Francisco, Chicago, and Los Angeles, which was attended by a delegation of cinematographers under the leadership of the director S. Alvarez. It met with leading representatives of the American cinema, as well as university students and professors.

An American rental company is now acquiring Cuban films for display in cinema houses and on television. The journal "Cuban Cinema" will be re-published in English in the United States. In 1978, 16 American films were purchased through an intermediary firm in Italy.

The first high school contacts have been established. Late last year, a delegation headed by Minister of Higher Education F. Vecino visited the United States. It visited

eight universities and met with their deans, the Assistant Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, and a number of senators. At the invitation of F. Vecino, teachers from the Universities of Pittsburgh, Massachusetts and Minnesota this year visited Havana University and Central University, as well as polytechnic and agricultural institutes. An exchange of small groups of students for training in agricultural specialties has been proposed. The son of Senator McGovern is currently enrolled at the University of Havana.

Several contacts between scientific institutions are being worked out. Thus, the National Center for Scientific Studies is now receiving informational materials. The American side is offering Cuba assistance in studying the application of solar energy for the cooling of industrial and residential buildings.

Last March, at the invitation of the Minister of Public Health H. G. Mundis, the USA Assistant Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, USA Surgeon General H. Richmond, was here. At a press conference he announced that he was favorably impressed by the development of public health in Cuba, especially the low rate of infant mortality and the degree of attention directed to health care among the adolescent population. During the course of negotiations, the Cuban side sounded out the possibility of purchasing pharmaceutical supplies in the USA. H. Richmond was received by Fidel Castro. Under the auspices of UNESCO, several Cuban medics are receiving on-the-job training in the USA.

An exchange of literature is taking place between Casa de las Americas in Havana and New York, nongovernmental organizations involved in cultural ties with Latin American countries. This year, the Vice President of the Cuban Institute of People's Friendship (ICAP) J. Gayardo visited the USA for negotiations with Casa de las Americas in New York over the organization of informational work at the local community level relating to real life circumstances in Cuba.

In April of this year, at the invitation of ICAP, for the eleventh time, 130 progressive young Americans visited Cuba as members of the "Venceremos" brigade, to become acquainted with the country and to participate in the sugar harvest.

Traditional annual Cuban-American boxing matches have been started up. This year American athletes participated in international meets in Havana in classical and free form competitions. It is expected that they will participate in the Brothers Barrientos international light athletic tournament.

An examination of the development in Cuban-American contacts permits the conclusion that the Cuban leadership is maintaining a firm position on the issue of normalizing relations with the USA, decisively rejecting attempts by the Americans to exert pressure on Cuba, and that Cuba will not yield on matters of principle relating to its domestic and foreign policy as a form of "payment" for the normalization of relations.

The Cuban leadership understands as well the negative consequences in the domestic ideological realm and the international arena that would be brought about by a full normalization of relations with the United States.

In this connection it may be assumed that contacts with the USA on a variety of levels, particularly in the spheres of cultural, scientific, and athletic ties, will continue and expand. Both sides are expressing interest in preserving the level of contacts already attained and in making further progress.

Considering the importance of the issue of Cuban-American relations in the context of the present and future interests of the Soviet Union and the countries of the



socialist bloc, and the desirability and necessity of receiving information about it from the Cubans, it would appear appropriate and fitting to continue an exchange of opinions with our Cuban friends on this problem, utilizing for this purpose joint visits and meetings of governmental and party leaders as well as responsible employees of the Foreign Ministries of the USSR and Cuba.

It is evident that special attention should be directed to an analysis of the conditions being put forward by the American administration for the normalization of relations with Cuba.

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