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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

January 11, 1975

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY

Subject: Meeting in New York with Cuban Representatives

Frank Mankiewicz and I met today at LaGuardia airport with Mr. Nestor Garcia, First Secretary of the Cuban Mission to the United Nations and Mankiewicz' basic contact, and Mr. Ramon Sanchez Parodi, who had been sent from Havana to New York for this meeting.

After Mankiewicz made the necessary introductions, the four of us had coffee together in a LaGuardia restaurant. Our conversation lasted for approximately one hour.

I began by saying that you and I had met several times on this issue, most recently for about an hour last night, and that the document I was about to hand over to them (attached) was yours in both thought and language, that it had been typed by my secretary, and that no one else had seen it. I invited the two Cubans to read the document and make any comments they might wish.

After reading the document, Sanchez Parodi said that neither he nor Nestor Garcia had any authority to negotiate; their task was to listen and report back to their authorities in Havana. However, he did want to make a number of personal comments:

- Cuba considered that "US ending of the blockade of Cuba was the necessary condition for beginning the process of normalization." It was, he said, "the sine qua non. It would be impossible for Cuba to begin discussions with the United States on other than equal terms, and this required that the blockade be brought to an end. He said that while the blockade was not necessarily harmful, it did prevent Cuba from access to the American market, despite the fact that Cuba did not count on that market in the development of its five-year plan."

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- Public or official action to end the blockade was not necessary, but cases such as that of Litton Industries in Canada and the US decision to abstain in Quito were demonstrations that the United States intended to maintain the blockade and was taking positive actions toward that end.
  
- The blockade is the "only obstacle" standing in the way of a beginning of the process of normalizing relations. "Other issues can be discussed later, but it is necessary to end the blockade in order to begin the process of normalization."
  
- Cuba has already taken steps to create the right atmosphere for an improvement in the relations between the two countries. Cuba has, for example, made an agreement with the United States on hijacking despite the fact that hijacking itself was no particular problem for Cuba. The step was taken as a "good will gesture" and in recognition of international public opinion." The US, however, has not acted reciprocally in application of this agreement. Cuba would apply the agreement more rigorously if they received reciprocity from the United States in terms of Cuban exiles in Florida.

When Sanchez Parodi had completed his remarks, I pointed out that his emphasis on the blockade was less than precise, and that it was not clear to me -- given his statement that "official and public" actions need not be taken -- whether Cuba was insisting on a complete elimination of the blockade or something less than that.

Sanchez Parodi replied that a "relaxation of the blockade was an essential condition to the beginning of normalization of relations between us."

I pointed out that the blockade was a combination of both legal and administrative requirements, some of which could only be changed by

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an act of Congress. I asked whether in his personal opinion Cuba would require that we change our laws before the process of normalization could begin. Sanchez Parodi replied, "I do not think so."

Sanchez Parodi then said that we had probably seen reports of Castro's statements against the United States during the visit of Senators Javits and Pell. He said that these statements were "unavoidable" at the time but that we were not to take them as evidence that Cuba was not interested in improved relations with the US. He said that statements like that of Castro during the Javits-Pell visit were "not our style" and that it was not Cuban practice to attack publicly while negotiating privately at the same time.

Sanchez Parodi then asked, with reference to the attached statement, when the US would move to permit the travel of Cuban diplomats accredited to the United Nations from New York to Washington. I replied that we intended to take that step now, although it might take some time to make the necessary administrative arrangements. I said that the Cuban Mission to the United Nations would be notified when the change had been accomplished.

Sanchez Parodi said that the Cubans wanted to have a second man available to participate in the talks in the event that he (Sanchez Parodi) might not be available when we or the Cubans wanted another meeting. He asked that we authorize the issuance of a multiple entry visa for Jose Viera, Director of International Organizations in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I promised to look into the matter and get a reply to the Cubans as soon as possible either through Frank Maniowicz or Nestor Garcia. The Cubans indicated that they would prefer it if the Swiss Embassy in Havana could issue the visa rather than requiring Viera to go to Mexico City to obtain the visa from our Embassy there. Again I agreed to look into the possibility and notify them as soon as possible.

Sanchez Parodi then returned once again to the question of the blockade to say that "something" must be done about it. "It is

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important," he said, "to establish a way or get an agreement whereby the blockade is no longer an issue. Perhaps a change in the way in which the United States reacts on trade and economic relations would be sufficient; perhaps moves to change our legislation would be necessary. I do not know precisely, but I do know that the situation has to be changed in some way. I understand that the issue is complicated, but the US must take active steps in that sense. As long as there is no arrangement with respect to the blockade and its removal, there can be no advance in our relationship." Sanchez Parodi went on to say that in Cuba's view time is running against the United States, which is running the "risk of isolating itself from the rest of the Hemisphere."

Sanchez Parodi indicated that this was the extent of his personal remarks. I then said that I had some additional oral points to make that had been authorized by you. Those points were as follows:

- The United States is prepared to improve relations with Cuba.
- We are not asking that Cuba give up its domestic structure or method of government. We do believe, however, that Cuba should pursue an independent foreign policy. Thus this means that Cuba should not be a Soviet satellite and that we recognize as well that independence means that Cuba will probably continue to disagree with the United States in the majority of cases.
- The process of normalization of relations means that we must give attention to each other's problems.
- There are issues on both sides which we here today or someone else at a later time could catalogue and discuss in whatever order was mutually agreed.
- Cuba must understand that while we are, of course, interested in improving relations between our two

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countries, this was not a particularly "big deal" for the United States. It was not, for example, so significant for us as the process of normalizing relations with the PRC which we are now engaged in.

- Cuba must also understand that any normalization of relationships between our two countries must involve a quid pro quo. Under no circumstances would the United States be prepared to view the normalization of relations as a one way street in which we gave and Cuba took.

After going through these "instructed" comments, I said that I had several personal comments to make. I emphasized that these were totally my own reaction to the discussion so far and that they in no way represented the views of anyone other than myself. I said that in my opinion if Cuba required a complete elimination of the blockade before any efforts toward normalization of relations could take place, the United States would be unprepared to proceed further. This would hardly be a "balanced" way of proceeding. If on the other hand, what Cuba expected was some perhaps modest steps, that might or might not be possible. I could make no commitment under those circumstances.

At this point Monkiowicz interrupted to say that Cuba must understand that the conduct of our foreign relations today is far more a public problem than ever before. The Congress has deeply involved itself in issues of foreign relations and the "process of changing the direction of policy is now more difficult than it has ever been."

Sanchez Parodi replied that he understood this but perhaps some things could be done. For example, he said, perhaps the sale of sugar to the United States could begin. Castro, he pointed out, had spoken about this at the Second Congress of Women recently and it was a serious proposal. What is needed, he said, is "things to change the atmosphere."

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I replied that I understood his point but I must emphasize again that it was absolutely necessary that Cuba understand my earlier reference to a quid pro quo relationship and that the United States would be unprepared to proceed to normalizing relations in the absence of a balanced arrangement.

Sanchez Parodi replied that he understood the difficulties facing the United States. The US is a world power and a sudden change of position is difficult, as would be any steps which would imply a loss of prestige. It is "not" he said, "our intention to be able to claim victory over the United States. That is not our way of conducting serious business. But a change of attitude or atmosphere is necessary."

Mankiewicz then interceded to say that perhaps there were some things Cuba could do such as permit visits of Cuban exiles in the United States to their families in Cuba. I interrupted to say that I thought that while it might be possible for us to catalogue now the possible issues between us, that today was not the time to do that. In light of Sanchez Parodi's emphasis on the need to remove the blockade, I thought both sides should return to their betters for consideration of the matter as it now stood without making any attempt to list other possible issues between us.

(Note: I thought it unwise to get into the cataloguing of issues today because I feared that if we discussed things Cuba might expect of us it would imply an acceptance on my part of the concept of the elimination of the blockade as a first step toward normalization. I wanted to leave both Cubans with the clear understanding that while I had received their message, I was in no way prepared -- even unofficially -- to accept it as a pre-condition to further talks).

Sanchez Parodi agreed that a cataloguing of issues now was neither necessary nor wise and said that while Cuba may not be as large as China, it could be as patient. I replied that while the United States, as clearly indicated by the message Secretary Kissinger was sending Premier Castro, was interested in moving toward an accommodation with Cuba, we felt no time urgency or compulsion to do so quickly. This issue was, I reiterated, of relatively modest import to the United States as I had indicated earlier.

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I closed by saying I had appreciated the opportunity to meet with the two Cubans and that, as they knew, Frank Mankiewicz would soon be traveling to Cuba once again. While I could not guarantee it, I thought it probable that he would be carrying a message from Secretary Kissinger to Premier Castro. I also said that if he did, in fact, carry a message, it would almost certainly take into account the message passed by the Cubans to us today.

We then spent a few minutes discussing arrangements for future meetings, including code words in telephone calls should either side desire a meeting quickly and feel that telephone communication might be insecure. I also agreed that should we ever have meetings in Washington, they would take place in my home which is some five minutes from National airport.

Comment:

Despite the seemingly difficult tone of some of the above, the atmosphere of the meeting was extremely friendly. Neither of the Cubans was either pugnacious or difficult. My own responses were, I hope, equally low key in tone. Nevertheless I went to some lengths to make it clear that I was not accepting the "precondition" of a removal of the blockade. Equally I referred to quid pro quo on several occasions in order to make it clear that we were not prepared to move in the absence of Cuban concessions. I deliberately left vague the time frame in which such Cuban concessions might be expected, both because I have no sense of when you may want to force that hand and because I wanted to avoid putting us in the position that the Cubans came close to putting themselves in at the beginning of our conversation.

I think Frank and I both agree that Sanchez Parodi's message is not that we must totally eliminate the blockade before further steps can be taken but rather that moves which seem to imply the unrestrained "maintenance" of the blockade (e. g., the Litton case) should not take place. There is, of course, no guarantee at this stage that if we were to take a few steps which might appear to be a moderation of the blockade, that these would not be accepted as faits accomplis and more demanded before Cuba would be willing to proceed toward normalization.

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I will take steps on Monday to see that we change the travel restrictions on Cuban UN diplomats, permitting them to travel to and from Washington. As to Mankiewicz' upcoming trip to Havana, you will want to consider with Bill Rogers what additional message Frank might carry with him.

  
Lawrence S. Eagleburger

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