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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

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Participants:

U.S.: Deputy Under Secretary for Management  
Lawrence S. Eagleburger

Reviewed by W. D. [unclear]  
Date 3-8-1977

Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs  
William D. Rogers

Wesley W. Egan (notetaker)

Cuba: First Secretary of the Cuban Mission to the  
United Nations, Nestor Garcia

Mr. Sanchez Parodi

Date, Time, Place: July 9, 1975, 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.  
Pierre Hotel, New York City.

Prior to the official discussions Mr. Eagleburger mentioned that if Cuba thought it was appropriate, the Secretary would consider meeting with a senior official in New York during the upcoming UNGA session. The Cubans responded that they would take the suggestion back and both sides were clear that such a meeting did not preclude further discussions at the working level. They were close to enchanted that the Secretary would consider coming into the picture.

Assistant Secretary Rogers began the substantive discussion with a presentation based on the talking points prepared beforehand. He noted that the process of discussion must be reciprocal, that we recognized the recent gestures made by Cuba, and that we were prepared to allow the baseball visit and to support movement at San Jose. He noted that hostility is not a permanent feature of our nature and that these talks should examine a number of issues. He then touched on the nine points (talking points attached) as follows:

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(a) Claims against Cuba: These are important. We are prepared to discuss compensation for expropriated private U.S. property realistically and with flexibility. We do not insist on an immediate cash settlement. Further discussions should also consider compensation for our interests in the Nicaro Nickel Mine, the return of outstanding ransom payments, the Cuban postal debt and the issue of defaulted bonds.

(b) Cuban Claims to Blocked Assets in the U.S.: These also should be discussed.

(c) Third Country Subsidiaries: We are prepared to support a resolution at San Jose which would leave each state free to determine its own diplomatic and trade relations with Cuba. If such a resolution should pass, we will eliminate current U.S. prohibitions which apply to export sales to Cuba of goods manufactured by U.S. corporations in third countries.

(d) Third Country Shipping: If the OAS sanctions are lifted, we will consider a general waiver of the ban on foreign assistance to countries whose vessels serve Cuba.

(e) U.S. Prisoners: We would hope that the eight U.S. citizens now held in Cuba on charges of political offenses would be released.

(f) AmCits: We would hope that Cuba could consider requests from the approximately 800 U.S. citizens in Cuba (many considered by the Cuban authorities to be Cuban citizens) to return to the United States.

(g) Family Visits: We should consider steps to ease the strain on divided families. For example, the two sides might arrange 100 visits per week in each direction. We will begin to permit the travel of U.S. artists and scholars to Cuba.

(h) Mutual Respect: We do not deny Cuba the right to defend its own sovereignty but will assume during our

discussions, and will verify, that Cuba will not be a base for offensive military operations or threats against the United States. Puerto Rico is also important. And there must be an appropriate way for Cuba to show that it will abide by the principle of mutual respect toward other nations in the hemisphere.

(i) Press: We suggest it would be appropriate to consider press accreditation in Washington for "Prensa Libre" and in Havana for U.S. wire services and news media.

Following Assistant Secretary Rogers' initial presentation, the following discussions took place:

Rogers:

I have covered a number of issues which illustrate the complexity of the problem we face, but I do not mean to imply that this is the extent of the issues between us. It is, however, an outline of a number of problems and it might be appropriate that we consider them during this meeting. We are at your service regarding the possibility of another meeting and would hope that we might pursue these discussions as informally as possible.

Eagleburger:

(to Parodi) When we last talked, we did not miss the point that before relations between the United States and Cuba can be normalized the U.S. embargo had to be removed. I said at the time that that could be part of the process of normalizing relations between our two countries but that you could not expect us to simply wipe it away. As Mr. Rogers has indicated, we are prepared to take steps as part of that process of mutual accommodation. I also said that in all honesty this was not our most important foreign policy issue and that we must keep in mind our own domestic problems. The process of normalization must be a balanced one. In a domestic sense the process will not be easy for us. However, a balanced approach of mutual accommodation will make the process easier.

Parodi:

We also have some things to say. You have taken into account our previous talks. As you will recall

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from our last note, we see the United States attitude towards this process as positive and we welcome the opportunity to discuss bilateral relations and specific issues. We agree that something can be done and that there is no virtue in maintaining the status quo. But we believe that the process of normalization will be difficult. There are many issues involved and your embargo against us does not permit us to negotiate pending issues. Even so, we believe your attitude regarding the OAS and the upcoming meeting in San Jose is positive and will contribute to the process of normalizing relations between our two countries, but that it is only a partial solution and is not essential to the blockade. We cannot negotiate under the blockade. We are willing to discuss issues related to easing the blockade but until the embargo is lifted, Cuba and the United States cannot deal with each other as equals and consequently cannot negotiate.

Eagleburger: Do I understand you are making a distinction between discussions and negotiations?

Parodi: Yes. To negotiate is to come to agreements and to make compromises. Before that can be done, we must be in a position to deal with each other as equals. The blockade is a punitive act and we are the victims. It is in a way similar to the Arab blockade of the United States on oil. But we are blockaded on all items, which makes negotiations impossible. We believe that something should be done about it. We are willing to hold discussions in the future but discussions do not constitute an essential solution to the blockade. Things have advanced but it is difficult for us to reciprocate. We do not have a political policy that can be undone. There are few things in which we can reciprocate. We have reached a hijacking agreement but there are no laws or regulations which we could eliminate in a reciprocal way. Maybe there are too many things. It is very difficult for us in terms of our own internal politics. We have noted what you have said and we recognize your own difficulties in

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dealing with Congress, the President, and the Treasury and Commerce Departments. We know it will be difficult. We believe you must eliminate your trade restrictions with Cuba and not just those restrictions relating to third country trade with Cuba. But even if that is done, many bilateral issues will remain.

We do not fully understand the relationship between the OAS sanctions and the U.S. embargo. The OAS sanctions date from 1964, but the U.S. embargo precedes that date. Even more, there is the Presidential proclamation of February 1962 which is the basis for your embargo. As a result of the OAS resolution in the 8th meeting, Cuba was expelled. But later the OAS passed a resolution which recognized the "plurality of ideologies" which essentially meant that there should be no incompatibility between differing ideologies in the American system. From that point on, the rationale behind the Presidential embargo was no longer relative. Consequently we do not understand the linkage between the OAS sanctions of 1964 and the U.S. embargo. We know that the policy of isolating Cuba was established by President Kennedy in 1960. The OAS sanctions followed that. There is no juridical linkage between the OAS sanctions and your own embargo. Why is a San Jose resolution necessary? The blockade does not benefit Cuba or the United States. There are many areas in which we cannot make progress because of the blockade. No one gains. Also, we see a contradiction in your efforts to find a formula for lifting the OAS sanction while maintaining your embargo. I think we understand each other's internal problems. We are willing to try to find a way to understand each other on the embargo issue but must repeat that something must be done to essentially ease the blockade. We do not insist that all the measures be dropped. We are willing to contribute to the process of

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normalization. We are not intransigent. That is, after all, why we are here. But as long as a basic inequality exists between the United States and Cuba as a result of the blockade, it is very difficult to negotiate. We want to make this very clear. Furthermore, we have some doubts about San Jose. It is not, after all, a meeting of the Permanent Council. So how can they deal with sanctions?

Rogers: We contemplate that if enough states at San Jose are prepared to vote for a resolution which would allow each state to determine its own diplomatic and trade negotiations with Cuba, we will convoke the Organ of Conciliation.

Parodi: Ah, but it will take some time for this to happen.

Rogers: But we can convene the Organ of Conciliation and enact the resolution to leave each state free to act as it will.

Eagleburger: (to Rogers) Did you think that up?

Rogers: No (laughter). But the basic question is will there be enough votes at San Jose. (to Parodi) Fidel must not spill this to Congress.

Parodi: Is a two-thirds vote required?

Eagleburger: Yes.

Rogers: When the TIAR is ratified the Organ of Conciliation will in effect repeal the 1964 resolution.

Parodi: Will it repeal what the 8th OAS meeting said but leave it in effect legally?

Rogers: No. It will be repealed in fact. All are very clear that it will overrule the 1964 resolution. On another aspect, however, you talked of linkage. Our view is that although we did not need the OAS resolution to enact the embargo since -- it is within our sovereign power to start or stop trade -- the 1964 OAS resolution in fact required, in our view, that each country eliminate their trade

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relations with Cuba. Therefore, we are not in a position to start them up again unilaterally.

Eagleburger: To add another point, I have worked with Secretary Kissinger closely on the Middle East and am impressed by the fact that in terms of the Arab-Israeli conflict there is after 25 years of extreme hostility no way to solve the entire problem all at once. It must be a step by step approach. Over time relations begin to change. The Secretary has had some success in this regard. I have also been impressed by what I feel to be Israel's excessively legalistic approach to the problems at hand which makes progress towards the resolution of those issues all the more difficult. Given the range of issues between us and our intention to change the status of our relations, a step by step approach would help do that. If too much attention is paid to specific legal problems, the entire process of normalization will be disrupted. I could have used U.S. claims on Cuba as such an issue and could have insisted that that issue be resolved between us first before any other progress was possible. All this is a very personal view. If our two sides are intent on changing the nature of our relationship, we can learn a great deal from the Middle East. The difficulties in the Middle East are immense but if you look at the status of the relationship between the Arabs and the Israelis in October 1973 you will see there has been a remarkable change. They were prepared to talk issues.

Parodi: But that is more or less what we think. We are going this very way. But one of the steps in the process is to lift the embargo. But maybe your steps and the pace at which they can be taken are different from ours.

Rogers: We're not saying that we must each take each step at the same time. The point is that discussions are helpful as to how to arrange these steps

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sequentially. We have already taken some and may take some more.

Parodi:

We agree the problem is very complex. It is difficult even when you have the same point of view. We cannot solve all of these problems in two hours. Maybe we talk a bit more. We are willing to talk and as an expression of that we will exchange our points of view. What are our claims, our issues, our outstanding issues. etc. In other words, we agree to discuss.

Rogers:

The effort is to work out a sequence which will take both our points of view into consideration.

Eagleburger:

We would prefer that these discussions proceed in forums like this today and not through U.S. Congressmen.

Parodi:

We will let you know all. We have something to say on each of the nine points you raised and on some others.

We agree that the issue of compensation must be discussed and that a formula be worked out but not only from one side because we, too, have claims against the United States so let's discuss claims in general.

With respect to Commerce, we view that as part of the embargo problem. How can we discuss trade in light of the embargo? It is academic. There are also bilateral issues on trade. But before this, is the issue of the blockade. So it is academic. There is the problem of shipping. This is part of what we call the essential lifting of the blockade. We agree that the question of U.S. political prisoners in Cuba can be discussed and that something can be done. This is not a very difficult issue.

There are different legal points of view on the question of Americans in Cuba. We cannot accept

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the concept of dual citizenship. Maybe some do have a real right to United States citizenship. We of course have the same problem with other countries. We arranged this issue with Spain through discussions and the issue was much more complex in that case. On the question of visits to Cuba, this is mainly related to our own internal policy. But we could work out a common immigration policy on family visits in both directions. There are many regulations which apply to U.S. trips to Cuba and vice versa but something could be worked out. Maybe 100 per week, but I don't know.

The question of the mutuality of respect has to be discussed from both perspectives. We do not have and are not a military power and are no threat to the United States by ourselves. I assume that some of the issues you have raised are related to our arrangement with the Soviet Union. These are decisions relating to our own internal defense and we will always reserve our right to take those measures we find convenient. Our policy has never been to promote aggression abroad. All of our defense measures are based on the needs of our own national security and we will take measures to defend our national security. During the Cuban missile crisis our actions were related to the assumption that U.S. aggression against Cuba was imminent. If, now, U.S. aggression is not imminent, we have no need to do what we did then.

We have stated often that we are willing to have reciprocal respect for the principle of non-intervention. We will abide by that principle as we have with those that respect it toward us. Reciprocity is growing steadily. These are relations of mutual benefit. We have held talks with all of those that voted at Quito to lift the OAS sanctions against Cuba as part of a process of normalizing our relations. But in this context we must discuss U.S. attitudes toward other countries in the hemisphere. For example, Chile and the Dominican Republic. We must have assurances that what has happened in the past will not happen again.

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Eagleburger: You mean that this issue should be discussed between us?

Parodi: Yes. There is also the question of Puerto Rico. Our position on this issue is not designed to cause problems for the United States. The history and the struggles of Cuba and Puerto Rico are very closely related. The essential difference is that we won our struggle for independence and the Puerto Ricans did not. It must be recognized that we believe Puerto Rico is a distinct and independent nationality. Puerto Rico is in fact a colonial matter. This explains our attitude in the UN. We believe that Puerto Rico has a need for independence and self-determination. But, again, our position is not designed to create disturbance with the United States. Our attitude would be the same toward any such case. We do not believe that the current situation in Puerto Rico is a reflection of the will of the people of Puerto Rico. The Puerto Rican problem is a colonial problem.

There is also the question of CIA activities against Cuba launched from Miami, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica.

Eagleburger: Is this to be an agenda item?

Parodi: Yes. And it must be considered under the heading of the "mutuality of respect." The same applies to the Guantanamo issue.

With respect to the points you made regarding press accreditation, this would be convenient to discuss.

We would also at this point like to go back to the question of Congressmen. We do not believe that our discussions with American Congressmen are a substitute for discussions with the executive. But many of your representatives want to go to Cuba, write us letters, ask questions and we feel constrained to respond. But clearly it is no substitute.

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Rogers: Did we mislead you in our discussion of Congressional contacts? Did you think we were disturbed?

Parodi: We needed some clarification.

Eagleburger: We have no objection to Congressional visits to Cuba. Our only purpose is to make it clear that it is our belief that the process of normalization be developed in this forum.

Garcia: I think we understand the problems on this issue.

Parodi: Sometimes your Congressmen give us a lot of trouble too.

Eagleburger: I know. But we have to live with it every day.

Rogers: To negotiate with Congress is an impossible task.

Parodi: It is extremely useful to have clarified this point. There is no use in taking side roads. I would like to sum up our principal points. (1) The blockade must be essentially lifted. The provisions which prohibit trade with Cuba must be lifted and this includes the trade of third countries with Cuba. The embargo must be removed so that Cuba and the United States may deal with each other as equals. (2) Meantime we are willing to continue discussions like this. (3) If a resolution is passed at San Jose which permits each state to determine its own trade and diplomatic relations with Cuba, what follows that will be very important. But that resolution will not solve the essential blockade issue. The step by step process toward normalizing relations between the United States is not, in our opinion, the best way to proceed but we will not object to it. (4) We are willing to discuss other things and exchange our points of view. We will have a discreet attitude regarding the results of the San Jose meeting and would not use the resolution as a pretext to attack the United States since there is some good in that move (5) When Cuba and the United States can deal with each other as

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equals, we can exchange views and try to find a way of improving relations, but again we must insist on the necessity of lifting the blockade and I repeat that the events which follow the San Jose meeting are very important. (6) We are willing to meet again whenever or wherever it is possible. We can do it anywhere. Would you like to fix a date for our next meeting now or would you prefer to wait?

Eagleburger: I don't think we should fix a date today. Let's think about our discussions and then come to a decision.

Rogers: Let's talk about a future date sometime next week.

Parodi: This has been a very good exercise.

Rogers: I think it allows us to discuss what we can discuss.

Parodi: It is an extremely complex issue, but isolation is never useful. There are many difficulties that remain before official relations between our two countries but we are willing to discuss our differences.

Rogers: I agree. We feel the same way. We understand your position regarding the blockade.

Eagleburger: A total lifting of the blockade is not necessary?

Parodi: That is correct but the essential elements must go. For our part, we can define that as the lifting or removal of all the regulations such as those of the Department of the Treasury and of Commerce that prohibit trade.

Eagleburger: Including those that apply to third countries?

Parodi: Yes.

Eagleburger: Are you drawing a distinction between actions by Congress and actions by the executive branch?

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Parodi: Yes.

Rogers: The executive branch can do almost all of it regarding Treasury and Commerce. The waiver is by statute but the executive branch cannot move on the issue of third country trade with Cuba of manufactured goods. We must go to Congress on that one. Last year we got the waiver on shipping and now have that authority in the executive branch and virtually everything else.

Parodi: We do not want to get into minor details.

Eagleburger: That explains the importance you attach to the word essential.

Parodi: We wanted to define what we mean by blockade.

Rogers: There are some special technical problems that we need not get into. We took to heart what the Prime Minister said on food and medicine and we have noted the statement on the blockade.

Parodi: The Prime Minister has said that he considers your attitude very positive and helpful. It does not, however, solve all the problems.

Rogers: We also understand that our steps after San Jose don't necessarily solve the whole problem.

Eagleburger: Exchanges are very useful.

Parodi: Is it possible to get a two-thirds vote at San Jose?

Rogers: Yes. It think there is a good chance.

Eagleburger: Who will oppose?

Rogers: Paraguay, Uruguay, and Chile. Bolivia, Brazil - they're marginal. They abstained the last time. (to Parodi) I realize it is difficult for Havana to understand that we don't control all the votes in the OAS.

Eagleburger: Is there anything else we need to go over?

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Rogers: Let's be in touch within the next week. If we do not have a reaction from Secretary Kissinger to these discussions before he returns, it will be later in the week before we talk with you.

Parodi: That's fine. In fact, it doesn't matter that much because we've lost all of our communications with Havana.

Rogers: All of them? You mean you have nothing?

Parodi: We've had nothing for the last three days.

Eagleburger: Would you like to use ours? (laughter)

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