

May 25, 1980

**Transcript of Conversation between Cuban Premier
Fidel Castro and East German leader Erich
Honecker, Havana, (excerpt)**

Citation:

"Transcript of Conversation between Cuban Premier Fidel Castro and East German leader Erich Honecker, Havana, (excerpt)", May 25, 1980, Wilson Center Digital Archive, TsKhSD, f. 5, op. 77, d. 642, ll. 18-21; translation by Svetlana Savranskaya
<https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/111220>

Summary:

Memorandum of conversation between Castro and Honecker regarding the bilateral relations, US-Cuban relations, and Soviet-Cuban relations

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

(uncorrected) Minutes of the official talks between the Secretary General of the SED Central Committee and chairman of the State Council, Comrade Erich Honecker and the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party, the chairman of the State Council and the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Cuba, Fidel Castro Ruz at the Palace of Revolution in Havana Wednesday, 28 May 1980 (Beginning: 9:45 a.m.) Fidel Castro: Dear Comrade Erich Honecker! Dear German comrades! Your visit, dear Comrade Honecker, has long been on our agenda, long before it came to the problems of the recent past, long before the military maneuvers [scheduled by the U.S. at its Guantanamo Bay naval base for May, but cancelled--ed.]. But now it has a special meaning that your visit is taking place right now, at a time of increased activity of the USA and the other enemies of our revolution. Hostility and aggression, of course, did not come all of a sudden, but there are reasons for this: the liberty of Ethiopia, events in Nicaragua, the situation in Central America; then there was the conference of the nonaligned countries [in Havana in September 1979], and aggression gradually increases in this whole situation. During the conference of the nonaligned countries, they were very angry and started a malicious campaign. At that time, they discussed the issue of the Soviet brigade, exactly at the time of the conference of the nonaligned countries. We corresponded with the Soviet comrades regarding this issue. We took the view that this should be called a brigade. But when we explained all that to the Soviet Union, it was called a study center. Of course, the Soviet comrades did not want to aggravate the international situation any further, and since SALT II still had to be discussed in the Senate, there was no other option than calling it a "study center." Thus, the brigade was called study center no. 12. Once this had been said, we had to stick to that term. I have expressed this in a special way on the USA-TV and in the USA-press: what you call a brigade and we call a study center is something that we have had for 17 years now. This unit came here after the October [1962] Crisis. Actually, we strongly resisted a total withdrawal of troops. Finally, we managed to have one brigade stay with us, and for 17 years, this brigade has been here. These troops were not included in the agreements following the October Crisis. The October Crisis affected the missiles, the bombers, and the nuclear weapons, but not the troops. When the brigade stayed with us, no agreements were concluded. In any event, we always would have liked to see these troops called a brigade for one reason: we must not relinquish our right to have Soviet brigades here. We did not relinquish that right. If we call this a study center for moral reasons, then we relinquish the right to have a brigade. At the May 1 demonstrations, I said that we have got study center no. 12, but that we would like to have numbers 13, 14, 15. But the malicious campaign started with that brigade. All USA presidents knew that we have a brigade here. One can hide a pen, but not an entire brigade with tanks, guns, with 2,000 to 3,000 men. Everyone knows this. The CIA tries to find out whether the soldiers have a bride or not. They want to know everything. They knew about the presence of this brigade, and for 15 years, they treated this as a secret, the issue has never been discussed. When the October Crisis started they were not bothered by the fact that we had a brigade here. No president has raised this issue, neither Kennedy nor Johnson, neither Nixon nor Ford. But now, the current president does. The Americans themselves believe that the president has made a mistake to discuss this question just at the same time when the Senate was supposed to discuss SALT II and the conference of the nonaligned countries was taking place, with the intention, of course, of bringing Cuba into a difficult legal situation, to portray it as a country with a Soviet military base, because they took up the issue and produced a big scandal, a very big scandal. This caused damage to SALT II and led to a tense climate, the pretext to create an operational military command near Cuba. In reality, it is an intervention force that they have created just after this problem. It is also possible that Carter thought that, under such strong pressure, the Soviet comrades would be forced to withdraw these troops. That's what they thought. Perhaps Carter hoped to achieve a political success. The Soviet comrades made it clear right from the beginning that they are not willing to discuss the issue, that these troops would not be withdrawn. In the end, it was a disaster for Carter. But this was part of the escalation of threats. Then, there were the spy planes over Cuban territory. The most recent event was the organization of a naval exercise, including a landing in Guantanamo military base. Actually, they have taken a step back because of the great mobilization of the masses. We announced to organize mass rallies all over the country. The issue of Mariel existed before. We already had organized the April 19

mass rallies and after that, they took a step back. They canceled the landing exercise in the military base, and even signaled that they were ready to negotiate a suspension of the Mariel exercise. That was on April 29, about 48 hours before May 1. Once they had said that, I thought they were ready to suspend the exercise. I told my comrades they might explain that we were going to respond on May 1 or 2. Yet on April 30, at night, during the first hours of May 1, before the mass rally we organized against the military exercise, at this point they proclaimed the suspension of the exercise. The very same day! This is the first time that they set up something like this on such a big scale, and they have suspended it without any conditions. The planes haven't been flying over our country for several weeks. Mariel and the issue of the USA interests section here is giving them a big headache now. There are 380 counterrevolutionaries. This is the situation. They want to negotiate. But what they are interested in is to resolve these two issues. We are saying that this has to be discussed globally. And just at that time Comrade Honecker's visit takes place, and therefore it is of great importance for us. The Mexican government, too, has adopted a friendly attitude towards us. Recently, the Mexican president announced that he would visit Cuba, too. [Jose] Lopez-Portillo is going to visit our country on July 28. He announced the visit almost three months in advance, in the midst of this tense situation. Clearly, this has political implications. The Mexican press also behaved well. And Mexico's attitude in general was a positive one. When Lopez-Portillo visits us, we will give him a great reception. We will choose roughly the same route that you have taken. Usually, we don't take choose a long route but a much shorter one. It is an exception that we chose such a long route. I think the last visit for which we organized such a big trip was [Algerian leader Houari] Boumediene's; we also did it for Brezhnev. Moreover, the state security is very worried during such big visits. Lots of people have to be deployed because there is always a potential risk. I suppose this is the same in the GDR as it is here in Cuba. We are located in immediate proximity to the USA, and it is always possible that someone will infiltrate. Hence, such a trip is always potentially dangerous. This is the time at which you have arrived, Comrade Honecker, this is why this visit is of special importance for us, and we feel very honored. I am convinced that this visit will contribute to the future development of the relations of the two countries. The people are very excited about this visit and there is great satisfaction with it. Erich Honecker: Comrade Fidel, please let me convey the warmest salutes [die herzlichen Kampfesgruesse] from the CC of the German Socialist Unity Party, the State Council, the Council of Ministers, and the people of the German Democratic Republic to you, the members of your delegation, and the party and state leadership. We are very pleased to have the opportunity to visit revolutionary Cuba, the American island of liberty, at the present time because we know - as you have already pointed out - that this visit has special importance. First, this visit takes place at a time when the USA apparently is trying to increase tensions at the international level. In this context, it goes without saying that the measures the USA has taken against Cuba in the Caribbean are of particular importance. It is obvious that this USA exercise has been drawn up according to a long-term plan. It has become clear that detente, which has its primary basis in Europe, does the imperialist circles no good. In the meantime, the Americans not only have been kicked out of Vietnam, but the Vietnamese also managed to counter China's aggression. In addition, the Americans had to leave Iran because of the Iranian people's revolution. Of course, this an uncomfortable matter for the USA's political elites; since the stake is not only the oil, which does not belong to the American imperialists, but also an outpost at the southern border of the Soviet Union. Moreover, there were the events we could witness on our trips through Africa, such as Angola, Zambia, Mozambique, Ethiopia, South Yemen. We had meetings with the South African national liberation movement, with SWAPO [the Southwest African People's Organization], with the ANC [African National Congress], and also with the Organization for African Unity in Addis Ababa. The OAU Secretary General, [Edem] Kodjo - in presence of all African ambassadors - presented me a copy of the OAU charter and gave a speech of anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist, and anti-racist character. He expressed strong solidarity with the socialist German Democratic Republic and thanked us. It became clear that Africa - and not only the socialist countries - is heading off for new shores, which are not those of imperialism. The scheme of Camp David, which basically did not solve any problem concerning the

Middle East, was declared doomed to failure. Except for Egypt, all countries - including Saudi Arabia - are against the Camp David agreement. The resolution of the Near East conflict is dashed by Israel's imperialist stance, which is strongly backed by USA monopolies. The situation in the Caribbean has to be seen in this context. The USA, albeit very reluctantly, would have tolerated Cuba, since they understand that because of the then-concluded agreement, the Soviet Union stands behind Cuba. They know that the whole socialist community stands behind Cuba, that behind the slogan "Hands off Cuba!" stands the power of socialism. Through the powerful manifestation of revolutionary Cuba within the last couple of weeks, the mobilization of the Cuban people, they felt that the revolutionary regime and the government of Cuba led by Fidel Castro are very solid. I completely agree with Fidel Castro: they feel that Cuba is not alone, that it is virtually the lighthouse of socialism in America, that it provides a stimulus for the anti-imperialist revolution in Latin America. They had to swallow the fact that Cuba is revolutionary, but Nicaragua came as a great surprise to them. As we all know, events in Nicaragua did not fall out of the blue, and they felt that the Nicaraguan revolutionaries had the moral and material support of Cuba. Add to this the events in El Salvador. The USA imperialists have a strong interest that all is quiet in their "backyard." But there is a new revolutionary wave in Latin America. As Comrade Fidel rightly pointed out: Kennedy kept quiet about the so-called Soviet brigade, as did Johnson, Nixon, and Ford. In the beginning, Carter did not feel like broadcasting it. However, we have seen that there are powerful elements within USA imperialism that don't like detente at all. They reached the conclusion that cooperation with the Soviet Union benefits the socialist movement in Europe and Asia and the national liberation movements in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. For a long time, they have been preparing a blow against the policy of detente, in order to go over to a policy of confrontation. It is not yet clear whether they will take the crucial step, that is, the step from confrontation to war; because a military attack on Cuba means world war, as does a military attack on the GDR. They know that the Soviet Union, after the forced American withdrawal from Iran, did not permit them to compensate through the occupation of Afghanistan or the strengthening of USA influence there. Thus a situation was created that is reflected by various actions and in the development that Comrade Fidel Castro has pointed out. The US-Americans aim at increasing tensions on the international level. Certain elements have an interest to dramatize the situation, to make it seem as if the outbreak of World War III is imminent. We have seen that they can't ignore the power of the Soviet Union and its allies. For the first time ever, war would be carried to directly to the USA. In the past, the USA has always sent merely an expeditionary corps across the Ocean when the war was almost over. Now they must reckon that a war with nuclear weapons also affects the USA. The big fuss they make about Afghanistan is of the same nature as the invention of the Soviet brigade in Cuba just at the time of the conference of the nonaligned countries [and] the ratification of SALT II. For a long time, the most aggressive circles within the USA have been preparing their strike against the policy of detente, against peace, because they want to tip the global balance of power in their favor. They want to counteract the further strengthening of Real Socialism, the development of national liberation movements in Africa and Latin America, the development of communist and workers' parties within the capitalist countries, and their mass impact in the struggle against the attempts of the bourgeoisie to pass on the burden of crisis to the working people. In fact, this can be discerned directly from recent political events. They are known to Comrade Fidel and the other comrades. Recently, at the session of the Political Advisory Committee of the Warsaw Pact countries in the Polish capital, we have examined this situation. On the basis of Comrade Brezhnev's fundamental speech, his assessment of the present and future international situation, the declaration drew concrete conclusions. You know that declaration. In my speech in Warsaw, I have pointed out that the current attempt to further heighten international tensions results from the mounting crisis within the capitalist countries, which leads some imperialist elements to regard war as their last resort. Whether the countries of Real Socialism and the masses all over the world are going to allow for this, however, is a different question. We have to note the fact that the Vladivostok agreements [of December 1974 between Brezhnev and Ford regarding a framework for SALT II] were not kept by Carter. Comrade Fidel already mentioned that despite prolonged negotiations and the

signatures of Vienna, SALT II has not been ratified by the U.S. Congress and Senate.

Furthermore, we must note that, against the will of world public opinion and that of many NATO member states, the 1978 NATO Council Meeting in Washington has adopted the NATO long-term program, which envisions yearly increases in military expenditures until 1990. At a time when what matters is adding a military dimension, i.e. disarmament, to detente, they have adopted the long-term defense program, in spite of opposing resolutions passed by the UN. NATO's [December] 1979 Brussels missile deployment decisions [to deploy medium and intermediate range missiles in West Germany and elsewhere in Western Europe] are a provocative step. At the same time when disarmament is on the global agenda and Carter, at the signing of SALT II in Vienna, talks about the existence of a rough balance of military power on the global level, they raise an outcry over an alleged Soviet threat and pass this defense program in Brussels. Basically, the production of new American intermediate nuclear forces and their deployment in Western Europe is an attempt to undermine the results of SALT II. They want to offset the fact that Soviet missiles can reach the USA. This is supposed to be achieved through the deployment of American intermediate-range (nuclear) missiles having a range beyond Moscow up to the Urals. While it takes 20 to 30 minutes for the missiles that are deployed in the USA to reach the Soviet Union, they only need 5 minutes when deployed in the Federal Republic, Belgium, and Great Britain, except for the so-called wing missiles [Fluegelraketen], which would also violate the neutrality of such states as Sweden. Hence, this a large scale, long-term attempt to tip in favor of American imperialism the rough balance of military power that currently exists in the world. This is supposed to put pressure on the Soviet Union and the socialist countries, including Cuba, on countries like Nicaragua, and others, and on the national liberation movement. They want to foster anything that leads to an alliance of the USA, Japan, China, and, if possible, the FRG, too, against Real Socialism and the national liberation movement. For us, a very interesting aspect is that China supports the so-called reunification of Germany, i.e. the elimination of the GDR. It is necessary to recognize this situation. On the other hand, the situation certainly is not like the reactionary imperialist circles would have it. Of course, Real Socialism is strong enough to defy the USA. It is perfectly possible to shatter the USA imperialism's attempt to conduct a large-scale offensive against the socialist countries and the national liberation movement. In this context, we regard socialist Cuba, the American island of liberty, as playing a very important role. Our country's citizens, the citizens of the Soviet Union, and those of all socialist countries, see it as a banner that is waved by the Cuban people under the leadership of its communist party and that of Fidel Castro. Likewise, our struggle, too, the GDR's and the CSFR's [Czechoslovak Socialist Federal Republic's] struggle, is a banner for all peace-loving people in the world, since we don't allow imperialism to take any step against our borders. I am mentioning the CSFR because, together with us, it is fighting in the front line. In the aftermath of [the 1975 East-West accords at] Helsinki, the West German imperialists have attempted to build up a fifth column in the German Democratic Republic. To this end, they addressed not only counterrevolutionary elements, which, of course, still exist in our country, too, but also the reactionary, the unsteady, and the uncertain. All this took place under the slogan of human rights. They placed their hopes in the Protestant and the Catholic Church, which have 8.5 and 2.5 million members, respectively. These churches and their bishops were supposed to act in our country as guerillas of the West. With the help of the 6,000 Western citizens, who, as a result of the international recognition of the GDR and the ensuing establishment of Western embassies, came to our country, they undertook subversive activities. The American, the Federal German, and other embassies established contacts with our artistic intelligentsia in particular. One million copies of a so-called manifesto against the GDR party and state leadership have been published, allegedly written by leading SED functionaries. Under the slogan of human rights, it has been tried to set up committees for the "protection of human rights" and the "protection of workers' rights." Various elements have been given the opportunity to use the FRG's TV and radio to influence the GDR. All around the clock, 24 hours a day, 35 FRG radio stations are broadcasting political commentaries. The three Western TV channels were also used for interviews with certain authors and other GDR people, which were conducted "on behalf of the SED against the SED leadership." On behalf of socialism

in the GDR, they spoke out against the SED's alleged dogmatism. They disguised themselves as socialists, but all their efforts were in vain. In May of last year, our republic held municipal elections. There were mass rallies all over the country, where all issues were discussed. More than 99 percent of the citizens voted for the candidates of the national front, despite the fact that the Western media had asked the people either not to vote at all or to vote against these candidates. In Berlin, we organized a big rally of the GDR's youth. 700,000 FDJ [Free German Youth] members marched up. This left even the Western correspondents flabbergasted. After all, there are only 1.2 million people living in the capital. 700,000 FDJ members marched into Berlin and dominated the city at the time. (Fidel Castro: From all over the country?) Yes, from all over the country. (Fidel Castro: How were they accommodated?) In tents, in schools, in apartments, or in other peoples' homes. This was a big campaign. They didn't have much time to sleep, but they all had a place to stay. Some families hosted up to 7 teenagers. The family slept in the kitchen, so that the FDJ members could sleep in the bed and living-rooms. There was huge attendance. We never had had something like this before. During these four days, the Western journalists were not subjected to any restrictions in their interviews. Moreover, some 200,000 people from the Federal Republic and West Berlin came to the capital to discuss with the FDJ members. In any case, none of them managed to report something negative. They were surprised that this youth is different from what they thought. Along a wide front, we prepared for the 30th anniversary of the GDR [in October 1979]. 250,000 young people marched in Berlin. Comrades Brezhnev, [Polish leader Edward] Gierek, [Czechoslovak leader Gustav] Husak, [Bulgarian leader Todor] Zhivkov, [Hungarian leader Janos Kadar], [Mongolian leader J.] Zedenbal, and others were there. In any case, we gave our adversary such a thrashing that he lost all his interest in continuing his shameless propaganda against the GDR with the same ferocity as before. At this time, the Chancellor of the FRG, Helmut Schmidt, requested a meeting. This means that while adhering to their revanchist attitude towards the GDR, they were forced to accept that socialism has a solid basis in our country. Then, at the transition from 1979 to 1980, there was the heightening of international tensions. (Fidel Castro: One question before we continue. In which month did this marching up of the 700,000 young people take place?) This was in May 1979, and in October, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary, there were 250,000. The demonstration in May, at Whitsun, was the big response to our adversary's campaign which claimed that the GDR youth does not support the regime. Since then, they keep quiet or say that it has to be admitted that the enthusiasm was not organized. Then, dear Comrade Fidel Castro and dear Cuban Comrades, there was the apparent heightening of international tensions in late 1979 / early 1980. We have reacted with great level-headedness to this situation. On January 9 we had a reception for the diplomatic corps. There, I expressed the GDR's hope that it would be possible to reduce international tensions because there is no alternative to the policy of peaceful coexistence. Only the American ambassador did not attend the reception since our politburo and the Council of Ministers had made a statement in support of the entry of a limited contingent of Soviet troops into Afghanistan following the Afghan government's request. A couple of days later we had a hare-hunt for the diplomats. We have continued our policy of socialist buildup with great popular support, and I expressed to Chancellor Helmut Schmidt my readiness to meet him for a talk in 1980. They all were surprised that the GDR, together with the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries, reacted so calmly to Carter's confrontational course. Indeed, the citizens of our republic stand firmly behind the policy of the party and the government, which is directed against Carter's confrontational course and stands up for peaceful coexistence and international cooperation. We have activated our ministerial exchange with the FRG, but also with Belgium, the Netherlands, France, and Austria. While one has to proceed from the assumption that the Western governments, particularly with respect to the boycott of the Olympic Games [in Moscow in summer 1980], will show a certain class solidarity with the USA, they still hesitate to identify entirely with the hardened policy of the USA administration. Thus, it came to the meeting [on May 19 in Warsaw] between Leonid Brezhnev and Giscard d'Estaing, about which you are probably informed. Finally, there was the long delayed meeting [on May 16 in Vienna] between the new Secretary of State in the Carter

administration, [Edward S.] Muskie, and [Soviet Foreign Minister] Comrade [Andrei] Gromyko. Today, the GDR newspapers report that on June 30 and July 1 the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Helmut Schmidt, is going to meet with Comrade Brezhnev in Moscow. During my stay in Belgrade, on the occasion of Tito's funeral [8 May 1980], I had talks with several statesmen. Many expressed the desire to talk to me. Of course, the first meeting I had was with Comrade Brezhnev, who, after his health cure is back on the world stage in full health. Old comrades-in-arms and friends sat together the night and talked about current issues. I had meetings with [Indian leader] Indira Gandhi and various other personalities, which I don't want to go into at this moment, and with Helmut Schmidt, too.

Two issues were central. The first issue was that, because of our commitment to never again let a war start from German soil, one has to resist the Carter course of confrontation. We thus discussed the necessity to supplement the political dimension of detente with detente in the military field, not to support, but to counteract the unpredictable policy of Carter. The second issue was the boycott of the Olympics. I said that it is an insult to the Soviet Union and to Comrade Brezhnev personally, if the athletes of the Federal Republic are prevented from participating at the Olympic Games in Moscow. Schmidt told me that he is under heavy pressure from the USA. Moreover, he said that this was the "mildest reaction" to the "invasion," the "intervention" of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan as he put it.

I said: Mr. Schmidt, what you call an "intervention" in Afghanistan is no intervention at all. On this issue, we apparently have differing points of view. You used to be defense minister and you know exactly that after the Americans got kicked out of Iran, they now try to gain a foothold in Afghanistan--through external aggression, as a compensation for the weakening of their position in Iran, so to speak. Hence, the Soviet Union simply had to respond to the requests that Afghanistan already had voiced several times before by sending a limited contingent of troops to that country. As soon as Afghanistan's neighbors ensure non-interference in Afghan domestic affairs and the stopping of the external aggression, guaranteed by the USA, the Soviet Union, perhaps France as well, as soon as the Afghan government declares that the Soviet troop contingents can be withdrawn or reduced, the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan will begin. I pointed out that Fidel Castro, as chairman of the nonaligned movement, has made a similar proposal. Schmidt did not want to see it this way. He told me: Mr. Honecker, have you seen the maps of the Soviet invasion? I said: I also have maps, but this is irrelevant; stopping the external aggression is the crucial issue. Then I had to go to the meeting with Comrade [Zambian President Kenneth] Kaunda, and Schmidt asked me: When are we going to meet in the GDR? I answered: First, go to Moscow to Comrade Brezhnev, then we can meet in the GDR.

That's how we parted, and we both found that this was a useful meeting. Certainly, this meeting has a certain impact on the situation in Europe, because the Federal Republic has some influence on its western, northern, and southern allies. Of course, we don't believe that we are the center of the world, the normalization of GDR-FRG relations, however, certainly is of great importance for detente in Europe. It helps to restrain the belligerence of the USA. After all, the Federal Republic of Germany is the second strongest power within NATO. The events in the Caribbean, and especially the anti-Cuban campaign of the USA and the Western media are related to the heightening of international tensions. In this context, our visit, which had been planned for a long time, indeed carries great international importance. This view has been expressed yesterday by the "Pravda" and this morning by the "Neues Deutschland." They wrote that, especially in the present situation, the solidarity with revolutionary Cuba shown by the Soviet Union and its allies, including the GDR, is of great importance. In the GDR, we have started a big solidarity campaign under the slogan: "Hands off Cuba! - Stop the American economic embargo against Cuba! - Stop the espionage flights! - Give up the USA military base in Guantanamo!" I was pleased to hear that the espionage flights are currently being suspended. Under these conditions, Comrade Fidel Castro, we renew the fraternal solidarity and our comradeship in arms between the GDR and revolutionary Cuba. We are aware that we are fighting in the front line, but we know there are strong reserves in behind. On this basis, we look with optimism into the future and will develop our bilateral relationship further.

I apologize for having talked so extensively about the international situation, but I was prompted by your statements on these issues. Fidel

Castro: What Comrade Honecker has told us is very interesting. We have listened with great attention. The international situation is of vital importance for us; because its aggravation means increasing dangers for Cuba. As I have already pointed before, the Yankees have been very angry with us for some time and they toy with the idea of how to get back at us, especially after events in Angola and Ethiopia. In our contacts, they insisted on a troop withdrawal from Angola and Ethiopia. We always replied that we are not on any account going to discuss this issue with them. We refused to talk about it. This was one of their most pressing demands. Another demand relates to our solidarity with Puerto Rico's independence; and it is virtually a tradition of the revolution to show solidarity, to give support, if there is a struggle for the liberation and independence of Puerto Rico. This was before the revolution in Grenada, a small country. This has important implications in the Caribbean, where there is instability after the success of revolution in Nicaragua [words unintelligible-ed.] the difficulties in Central America. For some time they have been hoping that we would make a mistake, so that they can teach us a lesson, as they put it. Thus we must act with great caution on all these issues. It is not our fault that there are revolutions. We are [not] responsible for what happens in El Salvador. This is a phenomenon that has developed over time. Except for the example that Cuba gives, and to give an example is always best, because solidarity, too, plays a big role. These political phenomena, however, arise virtually as natural events, because the people no longer accept such a situation. When such a revolutionary situation emerges in these countries, then inevitably this leads to tensions. Thus, with the revolution, of course, there are tensions. In Afghanistan, too, with the revolution, there were tensions, and the new situation in Iran, the revolution, has produced tensions in that region. We take an interest in what happens in the Caribbean, but also what happens in all other areas of the globe, what happens in Afghanistan. Some Yankees, some groups of forces within the intelligentsia, are developing the argument, the strategy, that, when a crisis unfolds in one part of the globe, in Iran or Afghanistan, in the Indian Ocean or anywhere else in the world, then the USA has to respond [against] Cuba. They have said that quite frankly. If they have some clash with the Soviet Union in a part of the globe where the balance of power is unfavorable for the USA, then they should respond in a place where the balance of power is favorable for the USA. Because one should not think that only a global conflict is possible. A world conflict is the most severe. The decisions are of tremendous importance and they are dramatic ones. However, the real prospects for a conflict, not a general conflict, but a local one, are much greater. In this sense, it doesn't matter to us in which part of the globe it happens. It will affect us. This is why the failure of detente is of special importance to us, of very special importance. First, because detente eliminates the possibility of a global conflict, but at the same time eliminates the possibility of local conflicts and also the opportunities for repression and attacks on the liberation movement. Of course, detente has numerous advantages, particularly if it involves disarmament and a lowering of military spending. This is virtually the only way to give the Third World more resources for their development. This is why the policy of the Cold War, of arms races, is a catastrophe for all countries, but particularly for our country, given its geographic position. However [it is a catastrophe for Cuba], not only because of this position, but also as a developing country, and it is not only political and military effects, but also economic ones in Latin America. The Cold War can trigger a special effect. This allows the USA to better control certain wavering governments and to conduct a policy towards the whole liberation movement that suits them. This hurts the revolutionary movement all over the world, but especially in Latin America; because the Yankees believe that Latin America is their back yard. The USA has an interest in what happens in Asia, what happens in Europe, in Portugal, and so on, but they have a much stronger interest in what happens in Latin America, in the revolutionary changes in Latin America. Particularly in a Cold War situation, an intervention becomes more likely. This is why, for us, the issue of changing the current course and of finding the way back to detente, if possible, is of tremendous importance.

Erich Honecker: There are some new aspects. We got information about the meeting between Comrade Brezhnev and Giscard d'Estaing. This meeting came as a complete surprise to the USA. Even if one takes into account the existence of a certain class solidarity between France and USA imperialism, this talk

between Comrade Brezhnev and Giscard d'Estaing still suggests that France intends to pursue a policy independent from the USA and is not willing to support the hardened, Cold War, course of the USA. Giscard d'Estaing explained that France will not support the USA's economic sanctions against the Soviet Union, that its athletes will go to Moscow, and that France does not want the FRG to become the leading power in Western Europe. France, Giscard d'Estaing said, has an interest in the further existence of a divided Germany as an important element of the European balance of power. With respect to the issue of Afghanistan, France wants a political, but not a military solution, and this goes for Afghanistan as well as for Iran. By and large, this is a useful element, since it limits the chances of the USA to revive the Cold War with all its ferocity. In this context, the conversation that the new American Secretary of State, Muskie, had with Comrade Gromyko is interesting, too. Muskie presented himself as the man who wants to be the number one in U.S. foreign policy. He did not mention Brzezinski's name, but he said: I am independent from the President's entourage. Mr. Gromyko, let us discuss the issue of Afghanistan and sort it out. Comrade Gromyko replied: We sent our limited contingent of troops to Afghanistan only after there was interference in Afghanistan's domestic affairs, when there was the danger that you would get a foothold in Afghanistan after you got kicked out of Iran. Comrade Gromyko added, as discussed in Moscow, that Afghanistan is nothing but a pretext for the USA to heighten international tensions. This means, this was a result of long-planned steps taken by the USA. Comrade Gromyko went on saying: Give up the boycott, so that your athletes can come to the Olympic Games. It is a symbol of your attempts to stir up the Cold War. Also, this contradicts your statement, Mr. Muskie, that you want a healthy international climate. Muskie said this could not be changed, the President has taken his decision. Thereupon, Comrade Gromyko explained that the President already has changed his mind so many times, perhaps he could do it again in this case. Muskie replied that this would not be possible. In concluding, Muskie said that he would inform his President. Comrade Gromyko could proceed from the assumption that he, Muskie, has been Secretary of State for 20 days while Gromyko has been in office for 20 years. However, he would like to say that the USA wants a normalization of the situation between the USA and the Soviet Union. No one knows whether this was only diplomatic maneuvering or not. The ratification of SALT II played an important role in the conversation. According to Muskie, it is not impossible that, after the elections, the situation might change. The conversation has demonstrated that the USA does well understand the implications of the aggravation of the international situation. Fidel Castro has pointed out that the international situation leads to Cold War, also leads to an increased danger of local conflicts, including the Caribbean. On the other hand, the peoples' revolutionary movements have examples in the form of other countries, as Cuba here in Latin America; but they are objectively determined. If a subjective factor is added to that, then such welcome events as in Nicaragua take place. Of course, the USA now endeavors to prevent a second Nicaragua in El Salvador, and their actions in South Korea also demonstrate their determination to defend the status quo. On the other hand, there are such events as those mentioned by Comrade Fidel Castro, e.g. Grenada in the Caribbean. As far as the African region is concerned, you are under heavy pressure of the USA because of your military operations in Angola and Ethiopia. But we are sitting in the same boat, even though we don't have any troops there. We only have technical experts there. The USA is very curious about what the GDR does in Africa, be it in Angola or Ethiopia, in Zambia or Mozambique, Namibia or South Africa. We have a lot of cadres there who are active in various fields, and we train cadres for them. This is why the USA is currently tightening its policy towards the GDR. Above all, they bring their influence to bear on the banks in order to hurt us, in order to create economic problems in the GDR. However, our economy is sound, we have enough allies. In addition to the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries, there are also imperialist monopolies that want to trade with us. For example, we are expanding our economic relations with France, Italy, Scandinavia, and Belgium. After this visit, Comrade Mittag will go to Mexico. This year or next, President Portillo plans to visit the GDR. We have met the Cuban comrades in Angola and Ethiopia. I would like to thank you, Comrade Castro and the other comrades for the extensive security measures that you have provided; a whole Cuban batallion in Luanda. Fidel

Castro: Yes, I remember. We asked our comrades there to provide comprehensive support for Comrade Honecker's trip. Erich Honecker: We felt this support everywhere, and I would like to thank you on behalf of our delegation and of our republic as a whole. Fidel Castro: I believe it was a very good initiative of the GDR's party and government to send such a delegation to Africa. It supports the liberation movement and is very beneficial for us. It is very important to develop the GDR's cooperation with these countries, and we are very happy about that. Among the socialist countries in Eastern Europe the GDR is the country that pays greatest attention to Africa. When I talk about the socialist countries in Eastern Europe, I would like to exclude the Soviet Union. Because for a long time it has made a lot of efforts in this area. I am convinced that the African countries greatly appreciate the cooperation of the Soviet Union and the GDR. This is important; because if the GDR does not go there, others will go, who have different intentions, who want to cultivate relations in order to moderate developments. I am thinking of the Yugoslavs. They want to exert influence in a sense which is not the most positive. This is why the GDR's presence helps us a lot to maintain the most radical positions. Erich Honecker: The speech you gave before our State Council [in April 1977] is still ringing in our ears. This was after your trip to Africa. Since then we have increased our engagement there. Fidel Castro: This is very important for all of us, for the whole revolutionary movement. The Ethiopian comrades are very happy that you want to supply a cement factory. We have promised to help them to put up the cement factory. But the contribution to sustaining the radical spirit in these countries, in Ethiopia, in Angola and Zambia, in Madagascar has to be added to that, and is very beneficial for us within the framework of the nonaligned movement. The great success of the VIth summit conference [of nonaligned countries in Havana in September 1979] notwithstanding, the radical countries are in the minority, but we were able to win them over on the most important issues, and thereby to isolate the countries with reactionary positions; because there actually were very significant disagreements at the nonaligned conference. The situation in Afghanistan has caused a lot of problems for us, particularly with regard to the Third World. We remained in the absolute minority. The imperialists exploited this issue. At that time, we were fighting for the Security Council, and we gained some 90 votes. Colombia was a major obstacle for us, they got 50 votes then. We would not have backed off but would have continued the elections, however, because of the events in Afghanistan, we had to talk to the Mexicans and to give up the idea. It would have been nonsense, many votes would have been lost, and this did a lot of harm to the nonaligned movement, because the number of progressive, radical countries still is very limited. There is a middle group, though, which can be won over on some issues. Of course, the situation has aggravated, for several months already, and also already before events in Afghanistan. The events in Afghanistan basically are a pretext for carrying through the boycott and all these measures. This started after the confirmation of SALT. You mentioned Carter's words in Vienna; however, when Carter came back to the USA, he gave a speech before Congress and used quite sharp words with respect to Cuba. In this speech he explained to the public that he had told Brezhnev that Cuban adventurism in the Caribbean constituted an obstacle to detente and peace. He expressed fairly wicked intentions toward us, and basically accused us of constituting an obstacle to detente, an obstacle for the relations between the USA and the Soviet Union. He basically asked the Soviet Union to control us. Just at this time, we wanted to have some contact, because the revolution in Nicaragua had reached its final phase, and they wanted to talk to us. We refused to talk to them and, after Carter's speech before Congress, we cancelled a meeting they had scheduled. The worst in all of this was the policy of preparing certain armaments. The decision to deploy 570 missiles is a very serious issue. I agree with you that this deployment upsets the balance of power. If Europe deploys an additional number of missiles against the Soviet Union, then this is a change in the correlation of forces. There are no missiles close to the USA. We can understand this situation very well, because we experienced the October Crisis. When the missiles were deployed here, the Yankees disagreed, and they almost provoked a world war precisely because the missiles that were deployed in Cuba could have reached the USA within a couple of minutes. This would have annulled the entire warning system and all time calculations. The Yankees didn't agree at all with the installation of such

missiles. We had 52 missiles here, but they are talking about 570 intermediate range missiles against the Soviet Union, and the Soviet Union's long range missiles do not have that range, the USA's intermediate range missiles in Europe, however, can reach the Soviet Union; this is a traumatic situation. Erich Honecker: Helmut Schmidt told me at our meeting: Mr. Honecker, we are afraid, this is why we agreed with that missile decision; because the Soviet Union got these SS-20 missiles, as you call them, and they are aimed at us, the Federal Republic. I replied: Mr. Schmidt, if you are afraid of the missiles, then you should have been afraid before the decision, because the missiles that can reach you in the Federal Republic are not at issue here at all. The group of the Soviet armed forces has got them, and the NPA [National People's Army of East Germany] has got them, too. We can destroy Bonn with missiles at any time, or even the whole Federal Republic. The missiles, however, that you want to deploy, they are supposed to reach up to the Urals. The USA thereby achieves superiority over the Soviet Union in terms of missiles. These are the issues at stake and not the Federal Republic. The USA wants to turn Western Europe into an anti-Soviet missile carrier, and they want to shift the risk to Western Europe. Thereby, they shift the military balance, and we will not allow that to happen. This means that now we must have defense systems against missiles that can reach us within 5 minutes. This necessitates great armaments efforts. At the VIth conference of the nonaligned countries, you said that armaments should be reduced and that a \$500 million fund should be created. However, if now, following the Brussels decision, these missiles are built, there will be no detente in the military field. Then we have to muster all means in order to increase our defense efforts. We will not allow a military imbalance to the disadvantage of the socialist countries. Your comparison is a very good one. The USA has made a big fuss about 50 missiles at the time of the October crisis. Now they want to want to deploy 570 missiles right on the Soviet Union's doorstep. After the elimination of their Iranian bases and facilities, they now try the same in Afghanistan. Moreover, there are their activities in Turkey.

The aggravation of the international situation thus is intertwined with the heightened crisis in the Caribbean, the USA's backyard, so to speak. But the USA is not going to succeed. Fidel Castro: I would like to add the following story. In the resolution of the October crisis, the USA has pledged to withdraw the missiles from Turkey and Italy. They have done that. In a certain sense, their plans [to deploy missiles in Western Europe] are illegitimate and violate the October crisis agreements. This has not been publicized, but [former Soviet leader Nikita S.] Khrushchev has shown me the letters, the letters related to the agreements. This was a tacit pledge to withdraw the missiles there. They were of a different kind than today's; however, they, too, could reach the Soviet Union. Erich Honecker: Then they relocated the missiles to submarines, to ships. It is known that exactly at the peak, if you can say so, of the USA's plans against Cuba, the Soviet Union has pointed to this agreement. Comrade Gromyko did the same when talked to Muskie. This is how all this is intertwined with each other. Fidel Castro: I believe Brussels is the most serious step they have taken. What you said with regard to Muskie, we think that he has certain ideas. Some political circles in the USA take the view that to chose Muskie for that function was a smart move; because what one got to know about Muskie was that he is a liberal, not an aggressive man. He has no bad reputation. There is no doubt that he has been appointed Secretary of State just at a point when Carter feels weak. I think he has made some demands. Among other things, he said that he is independent, and that he will not be Brzezinski's tool but a true Secretary of State. There have always been disagreements between Vance and Brzezinski. Every time they sent a contact group to us or to Panama, or to Costa Rica, this group consisted of two men. The first belonged to the State Department, the other to the National Security Council. At any rate, I am of the opinion that Muskie will pursue a policy of defending his positions against Brzezinski, and he will claim authority. Erich Honecker: This is why he said he is responsible for foreign policy.

Fidel Castro: He can exert a positive influence. Vance has exerted a positive influence. The policy of missile buildup is Brzezinski's. The policy of allying with China against the Soviet Union is Brzezinski's. He traveled to China, he had pictures taken of himself at the border. Erich Honecker: He had a picture taken of himself at the [Pakistani] border with Afghanistan, with a machine gun in his hand. Fidel Castro: Yes, he is a cunning devil. Erich Honecker: This policy is dangerous, but he won't

succeed. However, it can cost us a lot. One has to say that resistance against this policy is beginning to show in Western Europe. It's true, they bow before the USA and they have seriously supported the missile decision, e.g. the FRG. However, we had conversations in the Netherlands, in Belgium, Luxembourg, Italy, and France. The leading politicians of these countries don't want a Third World war. We are in contact with the folks of big FRG companies, the chemical industry, Mannesmann, and others. They all oppose the boycott, too. It is very interesting that even the Federal Republic's protestant church, together with and on suggestion of the GDR's church, has issued a statement against the Carter policy. Fidel Castro; Is it correct, that you have so many Protestants in your country? Are they indeed religious? Erich Honecker: They are church members, and of course they are religious, otherwise they were not members. I had conversations with the bishops. This was the first time ever in the history of the GDR. They said: We don't want to be partisans of the West. We are GDR citizens. The members of our congregation work for socialism. We conceive of ourselves as a church within socialism. I couldn't say anything against that. The vast majority of the people feel attached to their state, to socialism, and the leaders of the church are smart, they take that fact into account. They exert an influence on the churches in the Federal Republic and in the USA. At the World Council of Churches, they have introduced a resolution calling for the continuation of detente and disarmament. It has been presented to the governments of all countries. The Protestant churches of the GDR and the USA have issued a common statement calling for the continuation of detente. Hence, certain changes become apparent here. Of course, the church does not want to join together with us completely. This is evident, they can't do that. However, it is still better to have a church that is loyal to the socialist state than one that works against it. In the USA, too, there are quite a lot of people who oppose the policy of confrontation, otherwise Vance would not have had to go. He was against the military adventure in Iran. What you said about Muskie confirms our information that Muskie indeed wants to act more independently. We have to exploit that. Fidel Castro: I believe that a lot of people understand that the third world war would also be the last. Concerning the boycott of the Olympic Games, a many people believe that the USA's non-participation increases the others' chances at the Games a lot. Erich Honecker: With respect to the chances of preventing a third world war, we are optimistic, even though you never know what some lunatics will get up to. Regarding the Olympic Games, there are some people in our country who think that the USA does not send its athletes to Moscow because it is afraid that they would again lose against the GDR's athletes as was the case in Montreal [in 1976]. (12:25 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.: Lunch Break) Erich Honecker: As for the movie we've just seen, I have already asked if we can get it for our TV. Fidel Castro: In less than four weeks we have organized three big rallies, the last of them being the one for your arrival yesterday. Erich Honecker: This huge manifestation has already been covered by our TV yesterday, as will be today's negotiations; everything in color. Millions of GDR citizens are watching this. 80 percent of the people have a TV-set. Fidel Castro: Hence, there are much more viewers than there are Catholics and Protestants. Erich Honecker: These are loyal citizens as well. Fidel Castro: If we said that we have Catholics, then we could talk about millions of Catholics who are baptized. Yet actually, nobody becomes involved with the church. Our relations with the church are not that bad. In the early days of the revolution it was necessary to make