

VERBATIM MINUTES OF THE OFFICIAL CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN SED
GENERAL SECRETARY AND CHAIRMAN OF THE STATE COUNCIL, ERICH
HONECKER, AND THE FIRST SECRETARY OF THE CC CP CUBA AND CHAIRMAN
OF THE STATE COUNCIL AND OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, FIDEL CASTRO
RUZ IN THE PALACE OF THE REVOLUTION IN HAVANA, 28 MAY 1980

FIDEL CASTRO: Dear Comrade Erich Honecker! Dear German Comrades! Your visit, dear Comrade Honecker, had been planned for quite some time, before the recent problems, before the military maneuvers. Your visit at this time assumes special importance, now that the US activities and those of the enemies of our Revolution in general have heightened.

Of course, hostility and aggression have not developed suddenly. There are reasons: the freedom of Ethiopia, the events in Nicaragua, the situation in Central America, then the Conference of the Non-Alignment Movement, and in this context the aggression is slowly growing. They were very nasty during the Conference of the Non-Alignment Movement and initiated a propaganda campaign. They were occupied with the question of the Soviet brigade, just while the Conference of the Non-Alignment Movement was taking place. There was an exchange of letters between us and the Soviet comrades about this. We were of the opinion that it should be termed a brigade. But after explaining all of this in the Soviet Union, it was determined that it would be a study [training] center. Of course, the Soviet comrades did not want to heat up the international situation, and since SALT II was still pending before the Senate, we had no other choice than to call it a study center. This was now the name of this brigade, Study Center No. 2. Once this had been said we had to stick with this term. I have made a special point on USA TV and in the USA press: what you call a brigade and we call a study center has actually been here for 17 years. This unit came in not until after the [1962] October Crisis. In actuality, we had [at the time] been very opposed to the withdrawal of all troops. In the end we managed to keep this brigade with us, and it has been here for 17 years now. These troops were not included in the agreements following the October Crisis. The October Crisis agreements applied to missiles, bombers, and atomic weapons but not to troops. When the brigade stayed with us, no agreements concerning it were drawn up.

In any case, we had always favored calling it a brigade, particularly for one reason: We should not abandon our right to have Soviet brigades stationed here. We did not forgo it. If we now call it a study center, for moral reasons, we forego the right to have a brigade. On the occasion of the May 1 demonstration, I said that we have Study Center No. 12 but we would like to have Nos. 13, 14, 15. But the propaganda campaign begun with this brigade. Every USA President has known that we had this brigade. Perhaps one can hide a pen but not a full brigade of 2000-3000 men including tanks and artillery. This is known to everybody. The CIA is trying to find out if the soldiers have brides or not. It wants to know everything. They knew of the existence of this brigade, and for 15 years they have considered it a secret; never has this question been discussed. When the October Crisis started, they were not bothered by the fact that this brigade was here. Not one president has mentioned this question, neither Kennedy nor Johnson, neither Nixon nor Ford. But now the current president does. [...]

[Source: Stiftung "Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der ehemaligen DDR im Bundesarchiv"(Berlin), DY30 J IV 2/201/1365; document obtained and transl. by Christian F. Ostermann (The National Security Archive)]