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IN THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA

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Attached please find a stenographic record received by the Soviet Ambassador from C. R. Rodriguez of his conference with U.S. Secretary of State A. Haig which took place in Mexico City on November 23 of this year.

Attachment: original in Spanish, 38 pages, and translation consisting of 26 pages; this address only

AMBASSADOR OF THE USSR.
IN THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA

[signature]

V. VOROTNIKOV

Sent a single copy., TIA

I. - the addressee

12.03.81

MP 631

Informational material.
In the General Department, CC CPSU
we have become familiar with it.

Head of sector [signature]
17.07 "24"XII 1981 Darusenkov]

**CONVERSATION OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE STATE COUNCIL OF THE
REPUBLIC OF CUBA DR. CARLOS RAFAEL RODRIGUEZ WITH U.S.
SECRETARY OF STATE ALEXANDER HAIG, IN MEXICO, NOVEMBER 23, 1981,
"THE YEAR OF THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF VICTORY AT PLAIA HIRON"**

(Stenographic record, State Council)

Excerpts relating to Africa

[...]

Carlos R. Rodriguez. Thank you very much...

I am aware that the Secretary of State is a great lover of philosophy. Thus, even in the seventeenth century, since the time of Hume, it has been considered proven that the factual appearance of "B" following the appearance of "A" does not signify that "A" necessarily is the cause of the appearance of "B." I will attempt, in the briefest of fashion, in order to avoid tiring you, to describe our interpretation of events, beginning in 1975.

We became involved in Angola without the slightest wish to establish our military presence there. Speaking of military presence, I have in mind the presence of regular troops. In sending the first 150 people to Angola, we had absolutely no conception of what would become of the events in that country. This I can state to you unequivocally.

We had long maintained our ties with the MPLA in its struggle against Portuguese colonialism. President Neto requested our assistance in the preparation of groups which led to organization of the Angolan army. With this aim we dispatched 150 persons in three schools: one located in the south, the other in the northeast, and the third around Luanda. The subsequent development of events ensued as follows: suddenly we received news from Neto that they had been attacked by forces from Zaire and troops of Holden Roberto from the north, and by South Africa from the south.

I can assure you unequivocally, inasmuch as I played a direct role in this matter, that when the decision to dispatch Cuban forces into Angola was made, we communicated nothing about it to the Soviet Union. We were not even aware of its point of view on that account. And we had absolutely no idea of the number of troops that it would be necessary to send. In this manner, the first group was dispatched when the forces in the southern theater advanced more than 400, almost 500 kilometers from the Namibian border, approaching Lobito and Bengeli, and the forces of Zaire were located 30 kilometers from Luanda. In this situation we sent at first not regular troops, but rather groups of commandos.

It is true that subsequently an agreement was reached between Cuba and the Soviet Union regarding the activity of the forces, inasmuch as the Soviet Union already had an obligation to Angola to supply arms and it became necessary to speed up its implementation. As a result, we reached an agreement, and we don't deny this, under which the Soviet Union proceeded to dispatch certain types of weapons, and we sent people who were capable of using them.

And thus it was. When we became involved in the events in Angola, we absolutely did not think about geopolitical conceptions of the importance of Angola in light of the interests of the Soviet Union. We saw in Angola a friendly country, a group of revolutionaries struggling against colonialism, against South Africa, and embarked on all of this.

And then Ethiopia's turn came. How did all of this happen there?

We established relations with Ethiopia at the request of Somalia. We had maintained no diplomatic ties with Ethiopia, and we harbored serious doubts in relation to the process that was taking place in that country.

[...]

During his visit to Africa, Fidel Castro met first with Siad Barre and then in Ethiopia with Mengistu, and agreed with them to conduct a historic meeting in Aden. That meeting was attended by Mengistu and his assistants, Siad Barre and his assistants, Ali Rubayi, who at that time was the president of Yemen, Fata Ismail and Ali Nassar, who is now the president of South Yemen, and Cuba was represented by Fidel Castro and myself. Fidel worked - and when I say Fidel, it is because he was at the center of that meeting - from 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 in the morning, trying to achieve a consensus among the parties. However, this proved impossible to attain, because Siad Barre unequivocally rejected all of the suggestions presented at the meeting. While the meeting did not lead to an agreement, nevertheless Siad Barre promised not to attack Ethiopia. And then, when Siad Barre attacked Ethiopia, we considered ourselves obligated to Mengistu, whom we had persuaded to attend the peace conference which had taken place in Aden.

One fine day, all of this will come to light. You can believe me or not, but someday this will be common knowledge.

The outward geopolitical character of these events is completely at odds with the essence of the true facts. I had the privilege to accompany Fidel Castro at the time of his meetings with the leadership of the Soviet Union. These were attended by Brezhnev, Kosygin, Podgorny, who had just returned from Africa, Gromyko, and Rusakov. And it was we who insistently urged the need to render military assistance to Ethiopia. This was the situation, to be distinguished from that in Angola, because in this case preliminary negotiations were taking place. But in these negotiations it was Fidel Castro himself who first advocated military assistance. History will bring all of this to light.