The United States and Cuba:
A Propitious Moment

The purpose of this report is to summarize our views on the issue of normalizing relations with Cuba based on our recent trip to Havana. A complete itinerary of the trip is contained in the appendix of this report, as well as the text of our news conference on Tuesday, October 1.

It is our considered opinion, after some ten hours of discussions with Cuban leaders -- including a 3½-hour dinner meeting with Prime Minister Fidel Castro -- that a propitious moment has arrived in United States-Cuban relations.
From these discussions we believe the following conclusions are in order:

-- The Castro Government interpreted our trip as a friendly gesture -- a positive step on the long road back to a normalization of relations;

-- the Cuban leaders with whom we spoke wished to leave with us the strong impression that their Government has decided to work toward normalized relations; and

-- the Cuban Government is giving serious considerations to gestures it might make to indicate its interest in improving relations with the United States.
If these conclusions are correct, and we believe they are, then indeed the time is ripe for beginning the process of normalization.

Here are our suggestions with respect to how the United States should approach this process.

-- During this session of the General Assembly, the Executive Branch should consider removing the travel restrictions on Cuba's representatives to the United Nations. The irritation which the restriction produces is equal to the pettiness of it.

-- As a follow-on measure, we should remove restrictions on the travel of American citizens to Cuba.
At the OAS Foreign Ministers' Meeting to be held next month in Quito, the United States delegation should indicate that it has no objection to a modification of the OAS sanctions imposed on Cuba in 1964. If, as now seems likely, two-thirds of the members of the OAS approve such modification, the United States should, at a minimum, assume a neutral stance.

As a follow-on to our legislative efforts (S.2802, introduced by Senator Pell, and the amendment relating to Cuba, sponsored by Senator Javits and contained in S.3473), Congressional action should be taken on
S.3880, sponsored by Senator Fulbright.

This would repeal the Cuban Resolution of 1962 and the provisions of the Foreign Assistance Act and P.L. 480, prohibiting foreign aid and Title I, P.L. 480 sales to countries trading with Cuba.

-- Consideration should also be given to lifting the restrictions which prevent a ship or aircraft which has called at a Cuban port from calling at a United States port.

Favorable action on these matters would probably generate sufficient momentum to face the boycott issue.

Once this is done, it may be desirable to lift the boycott in stages rather than in one fell swoop -- to begin, for
example, by allowing trade in food and drugs, or by putting trade with Cuba on the same basis as the Eastern European members of COMECON (to which Cuba belongs). Though there appears to be an exaggerated idea of how much trade there would be with Cuba in the absence of a boycott, there would certainly be some.

When we finally get around to discussing the re-establishment of diplomatic relations, we believe consideration should be given a joint United States-Cuban statement reaffirming mutual policies of non-intervention. This is as far as the Cubans probably will be willing to go, at least publicly, in disavowing the export of revolution.

Positive developments along the lines of the above (which would take several months), would serve to lay the
groundwork for tackling the remaining knotty problems:

American political prisoners being held in Cuba, human rights and the reunification of families, expropriation claims, and the United States base at Guantanamo.

If and when we do re-establish diplomatic relations, it ought to be done with the lowest possible profile. The next American Embassy in Havana ought to be a small, traditional diplomatic establishment. Our representation there should consist of nothing more than an Ambassador; DCM; a couple of political officers, economic officer, commercial officer and consular officer. PERIOD. No CIA. No USIA, except maybe a librarian. No Defense Attache unless the Cubans take the initiative and request one here. And certainly no AID mission.

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How the leaders of the Cuban Government would respond to the above scenario is, of course, impossible to predict with precision. There is no doubt in our mind, however, that on balance their response would be favorable. So long as that prospect exists, it should be pursued -- actively and responsibly.

We are firmly convinced that neither the United States nor Cuba has anything to gain from a continuation of the current status of our relations or the lack of them. At the same time, we recognize that the two countries can survive without each other; they have proven this during the last fourteen years. Nothing more is to be gained from this policy; it's a dead horse and it must give way to a new era of normalized relations between our two countries.
We believe this goal is in the national interest and we think our trip to Cuba has made a contribution to it.