

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

November 16, 1984

~~SECRET/SENSITIVE~~

R/R

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: George P. Shultz *GPS*

SUBJECT: Dobrynin's Call to Deliver A Letter From Chernenko
on Nicaragua

Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin called on me today to hand over a letter to you from Chairman Chernenko complaining about our policy in Nicaragua. In it Chernenko argues that tension is being whipped up around Nicaragua without justification and warns that it could affect US-Soviet relations. But the letter also includes an emphatic denial that Soviet combat jets have been shipped to Nicaragua. It is interesting that he seeks to apply linkage to us by using our desire for improved relations to moderate our Nicaragua policy, since this implies he thinks that desire is sincere. But his warning that our actions against Nicaragua could spoil prospects for better US-Soviet relations is also a reflection of the weakness of the Soviet position in the area.

In handing over the letter, Dobrynin said it was a private message which they did not intend to publish. He also pointed to Chernenko's statement that we should work towards straightening out our relations and his recognition that you are "having thoughts along similar lines". He noted that his deputy Sokolov had just been in to see Deputy Assistant Secretary Palmer to inform him that they are ready now to discuss dates and agenda for sessions of the joint US-Soviet commissions on cooperation on agriculture, the environment, and housing and to suggest (albeit in a tortured, roundabout way) that they may be ready to talk with us on southern Africa.

We do not believe it necessary to revise the letter from you to Chernenko which Art Hartman is scheduled to hand over to Gromyko on Tuesday morning. I will also give Dobrynin a copy of it here. We will shortly be forwarding to you our suggestions on how to respond to Chernenko on Nicaragua.

Attachment: Translation of Chernenko's Letter

799-051 #281
CAS *7/25/00*

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DECL. CLASS.

REF F99-051 #282

Unofficial translationBY amf, NARA, DATE 10/16/00

November 16, 1984

Dear Mr. President,

I deemed it necessary to write to you on a subject which is of growing concern to us and, as you evidently know, not to us alone. I have in mind the policy and practical actions of the USA with regard to Nicaragua.

I will say it right away: the dangerous tension being whipped up around that country has no justification whatsoever.

Indeed, can one seriously believe that Nicaragua is threatening anyone, especially the United States of America. On the contrary, the people of Nicaragua and its leadership by their concrete actions show their desire for peace and a willingness to have normal good relations with neighboring and other countries. The Nicaraguans are extending their good-neighborly hand to the United States as well.

All they want is to be left alone and be given the opportunity to live and work in the conditions of peace. It is a natural and inalienable right of every people and this right must be respected.

Any attempts to deprive the Nicaraguan people of this right, the policy of pressure and of military threats against Nicaragua are inadmissible, no matter how one may look at it.

The creation of a crisis situation around Nicaragua cannot serve anybody's interests. The way the further developments would go, and it depends above all on the USA, will undoubtedly have an impact not only on the situation in that region, but also on the international affairs in general. A further escalation of tensions there and its consequences cannot but also affect Soviet-American relations.

We are convinced that this cannot be allowed to happen if there is to be an intention to work towards straightening out the relations between us. We do have such an intention. And we made it known to you personally, did so again quite recently. Judging by some of your statements, you are also having thoughts along similar lines.

We urge you, Mr. President, to weigh all this up very carefully. It is necessary to give the countries of Central America a possibility to settle their affairs peacefully and not to impede the achievement of a just political settlement which is the focus of the efforts of Nicaragua and of the Contadore group countries enjoying a broad international support.

For its part the Soviet Union is strongly in favor of the above. We pursue no other goals. We categorically reject the attempts to cast aspersions on our policy, to ascribe to us some sort of malicious designs, as was the case, for example, with the far-fetched story about Soviet combat jets being shipped to Nicaragua. It is well known that there occurred nothing of that kind. The Nicaraguan government also made an official statement to that effect.

Mr. President, I trust you will understand correctly the motives for my writing to you. It is a serious issue. The further US behavior in this case will inevitably lead to a conclusion also with regard to its general intentions in international affairs.

Sincerely,

K. CHERIENKO