

**March 10, 1980**

**Politburo Decision on Soviet Policy on Afghanistan,  
with report on Proposal by Fidel Castro to Mediate  
between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and approved  
letter from L.I. Brezhnev to Fidel Castro**

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**Summary:**

CPSU CC Politburo Decision on Soviet Policy on Afghanistan, with report on Proposal by Fidel Castro to Mediate between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and approved letter from L.I. Brezhnev to Fidel Castro

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TOP SECRET No. P187/33 To Comrades Brezhnev, Kosygin, Andropov, Gromyko, Kirilenko, Suslov, Ustinov, Ponomarev, Rusakov, Zamiatin. Extract from protocol No. 187 of the CC CPSU Politburo session of 10 March 1980 About our further foreign policy line in relation to Afghanistan and about a response to F. Castro's appeal

1. Approve the considerations contained in the note of Comrades Gromyko, Andropov, Ustinov, Ponomarev, Rakhmanin of 10 March 1980 (attached). 2. Affirm the draft instruction to the Soviet Ambassador in Havana (attachment 1). 3. Affirm the draft instruction to the Soviet Ambassador in Kabul (attachment 2). CC SECRETARY [attachment] Re: Point 33, Protocol No. 187 Top Secret To the CC CPSU In accord with the instruction of 28 February of this year (P185/I) and in connection with F. Castro to L.I. Brezhnev (telegram from Havana No. 167), we report the following considerations. Upon the determination of our further foreign policy steps on issues which concern Afghanistan, including taking account of F. Castro's proposal that Cuba provide its good offices to organize negotiations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, it seems to be necessary to take into account the following points. The situation in Afghanistan and around it continues to remain complicated. Although the new measures which have been undertaken by the Afghan leadership inside the country and in the international arena are facilitating the stabilization of the situation in the country and the consolidation of the international position of the DRA, this process is going slowly. The combat readiness of the Afghan forces for the time being remains low. The actions of the foreign and domestic counter-revolution are continuing, dependent on the material, military, and political support from the USA, China, Pakistan, and from a range of other Moslem countries with reactionary regimes as well. Judging by everything, a successful resolution of the internal problems and the consolidation of the new structure in Afghanistan will demand not a small amount of effort and time, for the length of which the Soviet forces there will remain the basic stabilizing factor standing in opposition to the further expansion of the activity of domestic and foreign counter-revolutionary forces.

Along with this, in the interests of creating more favorable conditions for the stabilization of the situation in Afghanistan, it might also make sense to use the apparent interest in efforts to find a political solution to that issue which has begun to appear in Western and in Non-Aligned countries under the influence of our firmness on the Afghan issue. It is important, however, to direct the conduct of those searches in an appropriate way, to fill it with contents that are advantageous to us, in counterweight to the efforts of the Western countries, disguised as [seeking] a political settlement, to achieve simply a rapid withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan so as to change the regime which exists there now. In this regard, the thought expressed by F. Castro, that Cuba, in its capacity as Chairman of the Non-Aligned movement, would propose an initiative to make its good offices available in the matter of organizing negotiations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, might turn out to be useful. Accordingly, in L.I. Brezhnev's response to F. Castro it will be expedient to express our favorable attitude to his idea about the provision by Cuba of its good offices in setting up negotiations between Afghanistan and its neighbors and in working out corresponding guarantees of non-interference in the internal affairs of the DRA. In this regard it is necessary, of course, to arrange with F. Castro that he from his side and we from our own should talk over this idea with B. Karmal. It is also necessary to explain to F. Castro our approach to a possible political settlement and in this regard the complexity of the Afghan events, so that Castro realistically evaluates the situation and does not feed on illusions of a simple and quick achievement of a settlement. Keeping in mind the task of providing favorable conditions for the stabilization of the situation inside Afghanistan and the necessity for the world to get used to the new situation in that country and the Soviet Union's role there, our approach to a political settlement of the Afghan situation could harmonize both the initial and more long-range tasks. In this regard, the transition to a final resolution of the more long-term tasks would depend on the resolution of the initial tasks, so it is possible to constantly bring influence to bear on that process. In its general appearance the outline of a political settlement could consist of a complex of bilateral agreements between Afghanistan and its neighbors, above all Pakistan, and systems of corresponding guarantees from the USSR, USA, and certain other states, each of which should be acceptable both to Afghanistan and to the opposing side. The first task should become the start of consultations between Afghanistan and its neighbors aimed at a normalization of their relations. In this regard, continue to try to ensure that the neighbor-countries of Afghanistan, and also

the United States and other countries involved in anti-Afghan activities, from the very beginning of the political settlement process, undertake practical measures which would bear witness to the cessation of their interference, including military, in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. Directly link this demand with a possibility of the positive development of the process of political settlement. As far as the concrete content of the agreements which could be worked out between Afghanistan and its neighbors is concerned, in them, besides the consolidation of the general principals concerning respect for the sovereignty and readiness to develop relations on the basis of principles of good neighborliness and non-interference in each others' internal affairs, obligations should be fixed about the cessation of armed and any other hostile activity from the territory of those countries against each other, and also about the problem of refugees from Afghanistan. In particular, a ban on the enlistment and the use of refugees in underground activity against the DRA and the liquidation of refugee camps located directly on the border with Afghanistan, the repatriation of refugees to Afghanistan, and the resettlement of those of them who do not wish to return in remote regions of Pakistan and Iran could be discussed. In the final stage of the realization of such measures on the territory of Pakistan and possibly of Iran too, it would be possible to envision some form of verification with the participation of Afghanistan. In the process of working out such bilateral agreements, evidently, there will arise the issue of mutual respect for the current borders between the participating states in the agreement, keeping in mind that Pakistan will strive to secure Afghanistan's recognition of the Durand Line. Historically, this issue is a complicated one for Iran. Its final settlement is directly connected to the development of the situation in Afghanistan itself and around it. Correspondingly, it would be inexpedient for the government of the DRA to prematurely--even before the true position of Pakistan will become clear--commit itself with a declaration about its readiness to recognize the Durand Line. According to tactical considerations, it is more advantageous for the Afghans to use this issue to receive from Pakistan maximal concessions on questions in which it holds an interest.

The negotiations aimed at the working out of concrete agreements should be conducted directly between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and also between Afghanistan and Iran. This, on the one hand, would strengthen the position of the government of the DRA, and on the other would exclude the "internationalization" of a political resolution of the Afghan issue, which is undesirable for us. The role of Cuba in its capacity as chairman of the Non-Aligned movement would consist of getting the bilateral negotiations started with the agreement of the participants and in a certain influence on their conduct through its provision of good offices, but not in the replacement of the direct negotiations between Afghanistan and its neighbors. Agreements which are achieved in the course of these negotiations would be backed by appropriate guarantees, in the first place from the USSR and the USA, but also from certain other countries from among those which would be acceptable both to Afghanistan and to the other side. Posing the issue in this way would allow Afghanistan to deflect, say, the candidacy of China. Now it would be premature to determine the detailed content of the guarantees and the exact make-up of the participants, insofar as this will depend both on the contents of the agreements themselves and on the development of the situation. The main point of the guarantees should be that the countries which provide the guarantees will respect them and by their own authority will fortify the bilateral agreements of Afghanistan with Pakistan and Iran. The USA must accept as well the obligation not to conduct any sort of underground activities, including those from the territory of third countries, against Afghanistan and its government. In the context of considering the guarantees it might be possible to pose as well the issue of the growth of the USA's military presence in the region of the Indian Ocean both in terms of the threat to the security of the Soviet Union which that would create, and also from the point of view of the incompatibility of such actions with the task of stabilizing the situation in the Middle East. During the consideration of both the guarantees and the overall problem of a political settlement, it makes sense to conduct the matter so that the governments of the participating states clearly understand that issues which touch on the system which exists in Afghanistan must not in any way be the subject of negotiations. In the same way it must be clear that issues which concern Afghanistan must not be considered and decided beyond the government of the DRA or without

its participation. Drafts of L.I. Brezhnev's response to F. Castro and our appeal in this regard to B. Karmal have been prepared taking into account the considerations which have been put forth above. We request consideration. A. Gromyko lu. Andropov D. Ustinov B. Ponomarev O. Rakhmanin 10 March 1980

[attachment 1] To the clause 33 of the Protocol No. 187 Top Secret Supplement I ABSOLUTE PRIORITY [Vne ocheredi] HAVANASOVIET AMBASSADOR Copy: KABUL - SOV[iet] AMBASSADOR (for orientation) Pay a visit to F. Castro and transmit him the following letter from L.I. Brezhnev: "TO FIRST SECRETARY OF THE CC OF THE COM[MUNIST] PARTY OF CUBA, TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE STATE COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA Comrade Fidel CASTRO RUZ Dear comrade Fidel, Regarding your letter, I would like to report that we agree in general with its estimate of the existing situation in the world and [with] your assessment that the Afghan issue is being artificially blown up by imperialist forces to cover their encroachments against detente, peace, sovereignty, and independent development of peoples. Events in Afghanistan, beyond any doubt, do not provide the real cause of the present-day aggravation of the international situation. Without these events, imperialism would find some other pretext to aggravate the situation in the world. To this testify the steps taken by the United States even before the recent events in Afghanistan and out of any relation to them. We are convinced, however, that a coordinated and firm policy of the Soviet Union, Cuba, and other fraternal countries is a guarantee that socialism, in the final analysis, will prevail in the interest of peace and of defusing the present situation, which was created by the actions of the most aggressive circles of imperialism. We and our Cuban friends hold a unanimous opinion on the present correlation of forces in the Non-Aligned Movement. With regret one has to state that many among the non-aligned countries have recently fallen under the influence of a campaign that is inimical to the cause of social progress. We fully understand the present predicament of Cuba in the Non-Aligned Movement in the status of its chairman and we value even higher [Cuban] efforts to prevent the misuse of this Movement's authority against the interests of socialism. I believe, Fidel, you should know in detail the situation inside Afghanistan. I must tell you straightforwardly that it remains complicated and tense. Domestic and external counterrevolution, supported by material, military, and political aid from the USA, China, Pakistan and a number of other Muslim countries ruled by reactionary regimes, have intensified their subversive activities. A realistic estimate of the situation tells that some time will pass before the Afghan revolution becomes irreversible and its political and social gains become firm. It is therefore not a coincidence that the imperialists and their fellow-travelers [pripeshniki] persist in attempting, one way or another, to compel the immediate and complete withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. However, when some people in the West became convinced of our firmness, they began to take an interest in the search for political solutions of the problem connected with Afghanistan. However, behind this lies visibly the same quest, achievement by political means of the same goals - a change of the existing regime in the DRA. Western countries blatantly ignore the government of B. Karmal and attempt to conduct affairs concerning Afghanistan behind the back of the government of the DRA and without its participation. This approach to political settlement, of course, should be categorically rejected. On our side, we stand for a political settlement, but for a real settlement, aimed first and foremost at the liquidation of the causes that brought about the existing situation, i.e. at effective and guaranteed termination of aggression and all other forms of interference into the affairs of Afghanistan; [we also stand] for a settlement that ensures the sovereignty [and] independence of Afghanistan and further a consolidation of the gains of the Afghan revolution. It is obvious that the questions related to the existing order in Afghanistan, [and to] the composition of its government, cannot by in any way a subject of negotiations. Equally must it be clear that the issues concerning Afghanistan cannot be discussed and decided on behalf of [i.e., without-trans.] the government of the DRA. We understand that there is a unity of opinions with you on this issue, and that precisely these motives dictated your initiative regarding Cuba's assistance in starting up talks between Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is known that the government of the DRA stated very clearly its intention to maintain relations of peace and friendship with its neighbors, particularly Pakistan. Cuban assistance in the form of goodwill service in establishing this kind of

relations between Afghanistan and its neighbors could, in our view, be useful. By the way, in our opinion the term "goodwill services" is more applicable here than "mediation." Of course, we will need a thorough coordination, first of all with the Afghan leadership, on the course of actions. It is important to prevent a substitution of some kind of international actions for direct negotiations between the existing government of Afghanistan and Pakistan, which is the goal of the authors of various plans that are being nurtured today in the West, who do not want to deal with the existing Afghan leadership. It seems inadvisable to us to have any degree of involvement on the part the General Secretary of the U.N in these affairs. This, among other aspects, would unavoidably be linked to the well-known anti-Afghan resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations. As to the question about a possibility of assisting Cuba in its goodwill services on the part of some other countries, members of the Non-Aligned Movement, this could probably be tackled later with a view to the developing situation; now this question should rather be left aside. It seems to us that, in starting talks with Afghanistan and Pakistan, and then, probably, also with Iran, we should from the very beginning keep our eyes on the goal of developing a complex of agreements among [those countries], agreements that, in addition to general principles of respect of sovereignty, development of good-neighborly relations, and non-involvement into the internal affairs of each other, would also contain clear and specific commitments to a cessation of hostilities and any other hostile activity conducted from the territory of these countries against each other and to the settlement of the issue of refugees from Afghanistan. In particular, we should demand a ban on recruitment and use of refugees for subversive activity against the DRA and [demand the] liquidation of refugee camps in the immediate vicinity of the frontiers with Afghanistan, the repatriation of refugees to Afghanistan and resettlement of those among them who would not wish to return, to central areas of Pakistan and Iran. Bilateral agreements that might be achieved in the course of such negotiations between Afghanistan and its neighbors could be supported by appropriate guarantees from, first of all, the USSR and the United States, and other states, each of whom would be acceptable for Afghanistan as well as for the opposite side. Such is in general terms a scheme of political settlement as we see it. Obviously, its realization will demand considerable effort and time, considering that the imperialist and other reactionary circles will put obstacles in the way. Therefore we have no illusions as to a possibility of fast movement towards this solution. So much for the considerations that we wanted to share with you, dear Fidel, in response to your letter. As a practical matter, we stand on the point that your idea [about the mediation initiative] must be discussed in advance with B. Karmal. On our side we also will approach him on this subject and, judging what his reaction could be, we expect to continue to discuss with you the issues concerning realization of your initiative. We also expect to hear your opinion concerning the considerations that we have laid out. You are right, Fidel, in pointing that in the existing situation Cuba has a chance to move to a more active policy within the framework of the Non-Aligned Movement in defense of peace and international security. This is all the more important, since the imperialist forces are striving to see in Afghanistan the only cause of aggravation of international tension, to divert attention from their dangerous activities aimed at the subversion of detente, to weaken the struggle of people for their rights. In conclusion I would like to send you and the members of the leadership of the CC of the Communist Party of Cuba warmest regards and best wishes from myself and from all our comrades. With comradely welcome, L. BREZHNEV 10 March 1980". Inform upon delivery by telegraph [Source: TsKhSD, f. 89, per. 34, dok. 5; documents provided by M. Kramer and Raymond L. Garthoff; translations by Carter-Brezhnev Project (report) and Vladislav M. Zubok (Brezhnev to Castro).]