

Dr. Constantine Menges, former Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs from 1983 to 1986, interviewed in his office at George Washington University, Washington, D.C., on 26 May 1993, by Antonio de la Cova.

DE LA COVA: Dr. Menges, my first question is, what was the overall Reagan Administration policy towards Cuba? Was there going to be a change of this continuity that had been going on since 1962? Was it going to be a radical change?

DR. MENGES: [Speaking into his own tape recorder] Interview on May 26, 1993 with Mr. Antonio de la Cova concerning the Reagan Administration and Cuba. And the question was, was there going to be a change?

DE LA COVA: What was the overall Reagan policy? As you know, the Cuban exile community believed that Reagan was going to get rid of Castro immediately, or was going to invade Cuba, or take a lot more stronger action than the Carter Administration had done.

DR. MENGES: Well, of course, you remember that Secretary of State Haig gave out speeches about going to the source if the Cuban and Soviet support for the Central American guerrillas didn't stop. Haig, I think, raised expectations of strong action against the Castro regime through those speeches in the spring of 1981. However, what in fact was done was to conduct a months-long policy review of what U.S. policy towards Cuba and towards the entire Communist threat in Central America and the Latin American region should be, and the ultimate decision, the ultimate outcome of that was an approach that emphasized maintaining the isolation of Castro: political isolation of Castro, economic isolation of Castro. In fact, on the one hand, while moving more actively to help those opposing Cuban-supported regimes and military forces to defeat those efforts. That meant specifically in Nicaragua, trying to help the armed resistance against the Cuban-supported Communist government of Nicaragua, helping the friendly governments in Central America to defend themselves against the Cuban and Soviet-supported Communist insurgencies. Also moving toward more active means of dealing with some of the Cuban activities abroad. By the time Reagan came to office there were seventy thousand Cuban military and secret police officials abroad, supporting a number of pro-Soviet regimes. And I would say that the increase in the Afghan anti-Communist resistance was also a general part of the effort of turning back the tide.

DE LA COVA: Roger Fontaine had said in the Summer of 1980 that the Reagan Administration, if Reagan won the election, they would have to take a look at the Kennedy-Khrushchev agreement, that had tied the hands of the United States in dealing with Cuba. Have you ever seen this agreement? Can you give me a description of this agreement? I know there are a lot of theories going on out there. What was your general impression of what this agreement consisted of?

DR. MENGES: The general terms have been discussed publicly and that is that, in return for, two things that Castro promised, and they were part of Kennedy's statement of November 20, 1962, in return for the removal of offensive weapons from Cuba and for the ending of armed

subversion against countries by the Castro regime, the United States promised not to attack Cuba militarily under the Castro regime or to openly invade Cuba. That was it essentially.

DE LA COVA: I believe, in reading the letter, that was changed, because Secretary of State Cyrus Vance was asked in 1979 to describe this, and he basically said that the agreement consisted of twenty-five letters that were exchanged in secret correspondence, of talks between Soviet diplomats and the Administration, that there was really a whole lot of things that made up this agreement. If I recall correctly, when Kennedy, in one of the letters asked Khrushchev to have Castro abide by this, of not fomenting subversion in Latin America, that Khrushchev said, those are Cuban internal matters that I can't make him, or we can't interfere with, or make him stop doing it. That was one of the issues which was raised and left hanging in the air, that was never really agreed to. Castro was very hostile to even having the missiles pulled out, or any type of secret agreement. But why would the Reagan Administration abide by this?

DR. MENGES: I think that U.S. Administrations tend to abide by agreements reached by previous presidents. Agreements of the government tend to move, continue on through administrations, international agreements. But what the agreement was, was obviously open to interpretation. If Secretary of State Vance is talking about a whole complex of letters, papers, negotiations, and the like, then obviously it meant that anybody in the Department of State could interpret the agreement as they chose to do so. I think in broad terms, the most fundamental question was, was the Reagan Administration ready to undertake war against Cuba, with the risk that this could bring the Soviet Union into war, since the Soviet Union and Cuba have a pact. The answer was no. It wasn't ready to undertake an open war against Castro risking a thermonuclear war. I personally think that was a good idea, and in fact, I am the author of an alternative approach, which in a sense I think basically was followed. The alternative approach was to continue the political and economical isolation of the Castro regime, and then also to essentially view the Cuban combat military secret police personnel abroad as Castro's vulnerability, and to help those seeking to attack them and to drive them out of their foreign imperial activities, and to drive Castro back from his extended operations internationally, and to deter his future support of armed subversion, and terrorism, and guerrilla warfare. And I would say that, that approach was viewed as more prudent, politically sustainable, and one that ultimately would accomplish the objectives the United States sought without risking thermonuclear war with the Soviet Union.

DE LA COVA: Is that then the reason why when Cuban exiles, for example, the veterans of the Bay of Pigs 2506 Brigade, asked the Reagan Administration to establish a Cuban Contra Program, is that the reason why the Reagan Administration never did, and Cuban freedom fighters were never given any sort of help, like the other freedom fighters in Nicaragua, Angola, and Afghanistan were?

DR. MENGES: Yes, yes, I think that's the reason. The reason was not only the carry over of the Kennedy-Khrushchev agreement of 1962, because, in my view, I argued that it had no basic validity because Castro had violated the promise not to engage in armed subversion, thereby vitiating the agreement as publicly announced by President Kennedy. Now Cuban American

scholar Jorge Domínguez, in many debates he and I have had on this, continuously says that there never was a public U.S. Government statement to the effect that the second element was involved, that is the ending of armed subversion. I showed him the letter of, or the statement in the Presidential papers of President Kennedy, in which President Kennedy is very explicit, and says there are two parts to the agreement: removal of offensive weapons and then the armed subversion. But aside from that, even if there had been no Kennedy-Khrushchev agreement as of 1981, I don't believe the Reagan Administration would have moved to take that kind of action against Castro in the initial stages of the Administration, that it would have been seen as imprudent and risky, beyond a strategic interest of the United States. In other words, it was better for us to defeat Castro's allies abroad, defeat Castro abroad, and then close in on Castro through a program that I again would have argued, would have been primarily political in nature. That is, I strongly urged the establishment of a political resistance movement and the funding on a regular basis of a major effort outright Solidarity in Poland, which I viewed as a, shall we say, which ever came first, but the concept of a large scale, broad-based, non-violent citizens' resistance to oppressive Communist dictatorship, and I argued for that kind of activity. Being that as a complement to the defeat of Castro's forces abroad. We never got around to that partly because as I outlined and revealed in my book, *Inside the National Security Council*, published in 1988, the Department of State had a strong faction absolutely determined to normalize relations with Castro's Cuba and took every opportunity to try to move the Reagan Administration in that direction, to undo President Reagan's policy of support for armed anti-Communist resistance movements everywhere, to essentially establish a second agreement with Nicaragua that would be modeled on the Kennedy-Khrushchev agreement whereby the Sandinistas would be permitted to remain in power indefinitely and could forget their pledge of democratic elections to the Organization of American States for the condition for the recognition by the OAS in 1979, in return for a promise of no armed subversion internationally. That's what the State Department faction was ready to give, and the fact that Castro had violated this agreement for nearly thirty years, or twenty years on that score, didn't bother them. There was a very strong group in the Department of State...

DE LA COVA: Who was spearheading that group?

MENGES: Spearheading it, Thomas Enders, as the career foreign service officer who really didn't know the region at all and immediately took the advice of the career officials whom he inherited on the Latin American Bureau, Craig Johnston, and others, there was a whole group of them. This was the mind set of the Bureau of Latin American Affairs, and this is the way they saw it, this is what they thought made sense. They didn't think President Reagan's policies made sense, and then they convinced Enders, Enders convinced Haig, Haig resigned, Shultz came in, the same group convinced Shultz. Shultz took that as his policy and opposed the President in ways I outlined in my book again and again on these issues. Keeping any semblance of a Reagan policy on track was an enormous struggle in the Reagan Administration because the whole policy process at the Department of State was in the hands of career foreign policy service officials.

DE LA COVA: But then again, Enders himself was replaced, and yet there was no change in

policy towards Cuba.

MENGES: He was changed in May 1983, in fact, we are almost at the anniversary of his replacement, and then Mr. Langhorn Motley was brought in. A real estate salesman from Alaska, who had grown up in Brazil and spoke Portuguese, and had been a credible Ambassador to Brazil for two years, who was brought in and kept all of the assistant secretary deputies from the Enders time, and in fact, simply took on the policy and went at it again, which was Shultz's policy, stayed with the Shultz Latin America Bureau policy versus the President's, President Reagan's policy, and was extraordinarily, in my view, misguided in his activities, and then, as you know, two years later, he was replaced also, in 1985, for this reason. Both Enders and Motley were replaced ultimately because their actions against the President's policy came to the President's attention, and that's their removal. In the meantime, there's sort of this huge internal struggle within the Executive Branch which I did chronicle in the book *Inside the NSC*, one in which you had simply two different views of international political reality and what was in the U.S. interest. The State Department viewed as one, and Reagan's position were another.

DE LA COVA: So basically then, the Reagan Administration never even thought about establishing any type of Cuban Contra program, or any type of aid to Cuban exiles.

MENGES: Yes, absolutely right, towards the Cuban exiles.

DE LA COVA: Aid to Cuban exiles to carry out any type of guerrilla war against Castro.

MENGES: Well, members of the Reagan Administration did think about it, and it was considered as one of the possibilities, and was rejected.

DE LA COVA: By the President?

MENGES: Well, I'd say, no I don't think it got to the President, I don't think it was ever put to the President as an option, I think it was rejected, as simply being too risky, too dangerous, for the purpose to be achieved.

DE LA COVA: But these Cuban exile groups were addressing the President himself. I know these letters were sent to him by the Brigade 2506, etc. He was aware that this is what the Cuban exiles wanted to do.

MENGES: I wouldn't bet on that at all. I mean, I've seen letters from thirty Congressmen and Senators never get to the President. What gets to the President is a very open question, you never know, and I wouldn't know whether those letters ever reached him. But, I was a member of the policy group that did consider the Cuba, Central America policy in some steps, and I was the representative of one major institution and there simply was, there was a consideration of that, and it was simply viewed as not prudent or practical.

DE LA COVA: Because in 1983 and again in 1985, newsman Tomás Regalado interviewed the

President for his radio program, and on both occasions asked him to denounce and abrogate the Kennedy-Khrushchev agreement, yet, the President refused to do so. He said that he felt that it should not be touched, that it should stay as it was. Why do you feel he took that attitude?

MENGES: Because the Soviet Union was, as you may recall, had engaged in a massive strategic military build up, as well as a conventional build up, and was very, very hostile, was deploying thousands of hydrogen bombs on medium-range missiles in Europe, and I think the President's view would have been that to denounce the agreement would open the way to the establishment of offensive nuclear weapons on Cuban territory which would lead to the United States being at a great disadvantage strategically, or the need to do something, which again rested on nuclear war. And you should remember that the Soviet Union was making threats on a regular basis in 1982, 1983 with the SSR early deployment if the United States should dare to match the medium-range missile deployment in Europe that was scheduled for November 1983, and the threats from the Soviet Union grew louder and louder and more of greater concern. So the idea of denouncing, and that of course had something to do with Grenada and the other thing, so the idea of denouncing the Kennedy-Khrushchev agreement would not have seemed in the interest of the United States, and would have freed the Soviet Union to then say, if the agreement no longer exists, we'll put hydrogen bombs on Cuban soil.

DE LA COVA: So you feel that then that's why, that the President thought that there was a real possibility that the Soviets could have reintroduced nuclear weapons in Cuba?

MENGES: They kept saying they were thinking of doing that.

DE LA COVA: But they were talking about Europe.

MENGES: No, no, no, they kept threatening with a number of variety of means, which I mention it in *Inside the NSC*, to make analogous deployment, that is, if we are going to move nuclear weapons so close to them, they were worried about the ten-minute flight time, they wouldn't have warning for their whole command and control evacuation and so forth. So they didn't like Moscow being destroyed in ten minutes, and they kept saying that they would do something analogous if we did that, and analogous could mean Cuba, Nicaragua or Grenada. Those are three places over which they had control, and so it was, shall we say, and this was taken seriously, the Soviet Union was both much more powerful relatively than the United States in 1982 and 1983 than it was in 1962, much more, by a factor of, by many, many factors.

DE LA COVA: It also seems that the Reagan Administration had also expanded the policy of the Carter Administration regarding Cuba as far as promoting and increasing these exchanges of sports teams, education, cultural exchanges. The policy seemed to have more a continuity than any type of abrupt change, even in that perspective.

MENGES: I don't have much feeling for that. I think most of us who were dealing with issues of war and peace and life and death, we were not really much involved with that, those issues of exchange programs, so I really don't know what happened. I don't know what the previous policy were, I don't remember they were being discussed, frankly. So I would guess that means the

career bureaucracy of State and USIA just continued doing whatever they were doing. I don't remember it being an issue ever in discussion.

DE LA COVA: Another issue here is that the Reagan Administration bombed Libya in April of 1986 in reprisal for a terrorist attack against the Americans, when one American was killed in Berlin. Yet, Cuban-sponsored Puerto Rican terrorists murdering American sailors down in Puerto Rico, they were attacking the FBI and Marshals Offices down there with anti-tank rockets, and setting off bombs in New York City, they robbed seven million dollars from a Wells Fargo depot in Hartford, Connecticut, and half the money went to Cuba, according to the Attorney General Edwin Meese at the time, and yet, here we have Castro's agents running amok here on U.S. soil and the U.S. is taking no retaliation or reprisal as they did against Libya. What do you think was the reason for that? And did this at any time come up in any of the NSC meetings with the President?

MENGES: When did you say that those activities began?

DE LA COVA: They continued. As a matter of fact, in 1980, when the Puerto Rican Macheteros machine gunned a bus of Navy personnel down there, Reagan at the time, I'm sorry, this is November 1979, Reagan at the time gave a radio address something to the effect that Cuba was behind this, that they had supplied the weapons. Now, all throughout, oh, by the way, in 1981, when Reagan was President, the Muñiz National Guard Air Force Base in Puerto Rico was bombed by the Macheteros, creating 45 million dollars worth of damage, and put pipe bombs in the turbines of the planes. They knocked out eleven planes. That was 1981. In May of 1982, is when a U.S. ship that was down there in port in Puerto Rico, two of their sailors were killed, machine gunned by the Macheteros. The attack on the FBI offices was a week after Grenada. When the Macheteros put out the communique, they said this is in reprisal for Grenada. They missed the shot, they hit one floor below, they hit a column. Our magazine in Puerto Rico, that I was editor of, *La Crónica*, came out with a headline that said, "The Gang that Couldn't Shoot Straight Strikes Again." So, a lot of this terrorist activity was going on all through the early years until the Macheteros were arrested in 1985. And this is when Meese came out, and even Judge Webster, head of the FBI, came out and said, we know Cuba is linked to this. And yet, we see no reprisal from the Reagan Administration

MENGES: Well, I think its, I think, there probably are, it may be that because of the number of fronts on which Castro was committing aggressive and hostile acts, that these individuals were the secondary linkage to these acts, was not focused, because in fact...

DE LA COVA: But this was right on U.S. soil.

MENGES: Well, I think that's true, but that's part of it, because what happens when its on U.S. soil is the problems of the domestic part of the government. And so the domestic part of the U.S. Government undoubtedly treated each one as a police issue, an investigation issue, and so forth, and I don't think it was really considered in the aggregate on the international problem.

DE LA COVA: Well, wait a minute, you are saying that had Libya done this, had sponsored

people blowing up things in the U.S., it would have been a domestic matter.

MENGES: Well, no, you remember there was credible evidence of Lybia having decided to assassinate Reagan and some members of his cabinet.

DE LA COVA: Five times.

MENGES: And that was starting in eighty-two. The attack you mentioned was in 1986. So the counter-strike, as I call it, in April 1986, so you see, the United States Government is, I think the United States Government has a hard time dealing with indirect aggression of armed subversion, conceptually, operationally, and legally. I don't think it quite knows what to do, when it isn't that, when indirect aggression and violence is used this way. Even in its own territory. I think the United States Government, but what I would say is, that I think that Castro was so active and hostile internationally, that these activities on U.S. soil, which were then the focus of domestic U.S. agencies, really didn't in a sense become a focus of consideration about international reprisal. Not in our time. And I would say that, by the way, that is again partly due to the tendency of significant elements in the State Department to always want to downplay everything. In other words, the State Department people, or what was a significant faction there would be saying is: well, you see, if we would only normalize relations with Castro, he wouldn't have to do this to get our attention. And that would be their analysis: a case for normalization after reprisal. And the few people who would be talking about reprisal, such as myself, would be seen as very extreme.

DE LA COVA: Another issue here that we see, more or less in the same line, where the Reagan Administration didn't take a tough line, was with the Mariel criminals that were in U.S. jails since 1980. Instead of forcibly sending them back, or as Alexander Haig suggested one time, in a ship, an expendable ship, or as Florida Governor Bob Graham said: let's put them in the Guantánamo Naval Base and release them on the other side. Or even during the Grenada invasion. The Congress Representatives passed a non-binding resolution asking the President to return the Mariel criminals back to Cuba with the prisoners of war. Yet, at none of these times, did the President take any type of forceful action. Instead, he tried to negotiate an immigration treaty for seven years, to the tune of costing forty million dollars to keep these people in prisons and insane asylums. Why did the Administration fail to take even a tougher stand in dealing with the return of the Mariel criminals?

MENGES: I think you have to ask the domestic side. It wasn't an international issue. I mean, that's part of the reality of the U.S. Government. There really is a difference between agencies that are concerned with, when things happen on U.S. territory, they are domestic matter. You know, CIA can't even collect information on it. Foreign terrorist activities on U.S. soil are totally dependent upon the domestic intelligence organization, the FBI, to tell her what's going on. So there is a really strong separation of both perspective, you don't look at what's going on, and responsibility.

DE LA COVA: Well, this was from an international perspective when they were trying to

negotiate an immigration agreement.

MENGES: Well, I would say the issue was basically given over to State to handle in its sort of customary diplomatic way, and that's what was done. You see, what you have to understand is that there are only, when you have basically a George Shultz, who has a sort of, seek to dominate all the foreign policy making, who has totally taken the position of the State Department staff of his on virtually every issue.

DE LA COVA: Right. Even when he had refused to have them submit to a polygraph test.

MENGES: Yeah, that's then on international policy. When you have that, and you have then a very small number of sub-cabinet officials, of which I was one; me, Richard Pearl, Roger Robinson, on international economic issues, and there were about six, or seven, or eight of us, and then three Cabinet officials: Casey, Weinberger, on some issues Kirkpatrick, when she was involved, but generally, Casey and Weinberger. That's it. That's the policy making influence and there are only so many issues you can take up. So if you are fighting to avoid those setbacks through normalization with Castro, setbacks through cutting off the armed resistance in Nicaragua, setbacks through false treaties that Shultz had and was going to surprise the President with in October 1984, that the President didn't know about. When you are fighting to prevent that.

DE LA COVA: False treaties?

MENGES: Yeah, false. The Central America treaty would bring a total defeat for all of Reagan's objectives. But when you are trying to prevent a series of State Department plots, in every area, it's true in strategic weapons policy, tactical nuclear weapons, international economic relations, wanted a pipeline in every one of these, you know, where Haig tells after the Summit with Reagan in 1982, where Haig tells the European foreign ministers that despite Reagan's objection to having them become totally dependent on the Soviets for natural gas and give the Soviets another fifteen billion a year on hard currency, he tells them don't worry about Reagan's objection, I'll take care of it, just don't worry about it, he tells them. He got him fired by that.

DE LA COVA: That's what got him fired?

MENGES: That's what got him fired, because he made the mistake of talking on the phone, I'm told, and then there were transcripts, and then there was some, you know. So when you have a situation in which the President of the United States has given orders, made decisions, and the Department of State, led by first, Haig, and then Shultz, most issues, not all, but on eighty-five percent is fighting the President on his fundamental policy.

DE LA COVA: So, why didn't he fire Shultz?

MENGES: Because, because he didn't, because, I'd say that he didn't know in detail, and I think part of the reason he didn't know, remember, I was the last Republican foreign policy expert on



the NSC. Once I was gone, my Latin American responsibilities ended in July 1985, and once I was gone, from then on you had all career FSOs and career military. You had no more Reagan foreign policy experts. And once that the President has no independent staff, he didn't even know it, he didn't understand the difference, and without an independent staff that could tell him what was really going on, a lot of the other things then could happen. That's one of the real challenges of the modern presidency, when the president's know what's going on. You've just seen it with President Clinton where, I don't believe President Clinton approved this whole little plot to get this travel agency in Arkansas in, and to fire these people. It isn't true that, it wasn't that he was shown the plan, and he said: oh, that's great, let's do that, check it off, yes, I'll do that. He didn't know that, you are talking about second level management, and so it's very hard for presidents to know what's going on in the U.S. Government, and it's very hard among the Department of State to do this [...]. So my point to you is, there are only so many issues you can fight. You remember the Radio Martí issue, where Jorge Mas gave me the proposal in the Spring of 1980. I took it to candidate Reagan, I took it into the Reagan Administration and pushed it, so it took five years to get the broadcasting done. Five years, really. Radio Martí was ready to go for a good year and a half.

DE LA COVA: But in 1960, when the Administration at the time, when they get Radio Swan going, they didn't go through the Congress to do it, and that came out over night.

MENGES: But that was a special activity, and the idea of Radio Martí was to establish an open transmission and establish a normal broadcasting activity, and not as a covert something. And so, I think it's right to go propose it to Congress, get the Congress to approve it. So what I'm telling you is that even once the Congress has approved, just because this group within the Executive branch didn't like the idea, they held it up for two years.

DE LA COVA: And is this State Department group?

MENGES: yes, exactly, yes.

DE LA COVA: You mention that in your book that Shultz was opposed to Radio Martí from the beginning. During one of the meetings they held, I believe it was an NSC meeting, that he came on saying all the reasons why Radio Martí shouldn't come out on the air.

MENGES: Well, I don't remember that now. I wrote it, and I recall it. I know the Department of State was opposed to Radio Martí, and continually and constantly tried to end, and worked with McFarland to keep it from being considered getting to the President.

DE LA COVA: You mention also that Enders had excluded in the winter of 1981 Robert Fontaine and General Robert Schweitzer from the meetings.

MENGES: Right, on Cuba and Central America.

DE LA COVA: Why was that?

MENGES: Because they would be more tough-minded and hard line.

DE LA COVA: That Roger Fontaine was going to be more tough minded?

MENGES: Yes, he didn't accept the, he was perceived as not accepting or, I would say they probably excluded them simply not to have the National Security Council inform, keep them ignorant, so they couldn't be a complicating factor, because they wanted the State Department to dominate the process.

DE LA COVA: But Fontaine had written a book in 1975, *On Negotiating With Cuba*, and he had even been promoting a rapprochement with Cuba.

MENGES: Well, Tom Enders didn't know that, if he had known that, maybe he would have invited him in. Now, they excluded him, I'd say basically on the grounds of simply wanting the State Department to dominate the process, and the best way to do that is just keep the NSC out if you can, and I protested that, as I've said. I thought it was unfair to the NSC and to the President.

DE LA COVA: Your book here mentions that at the NSC meeting in late May 1985, in the Situation Room, you mentioned you were not present, but you learned that Secretary of State Shultz opened the meeting by giving the reasons why this was not the right time to launch Radio Martí. And the President interrupted Shultz and asked if it were set to go, and said to go ahead and do it. You don't know what reasons he may have had?

MENGES: No, no, I don't know. I didn't recall it in my book.

DE LA COVA: One thing that intrigues me about this, and I've always thought that maybe there was a reason for Radio Martí coming out was that in November 1984, we have the immigration treaty signed with Cuba. There seems to be a closer rapprochement between the two countries. Now, on January 1, 1985, Ishmael LaBeet, a murderer from the Virgin Islands, that had done a racial murder down there in 1972 and killed eight people, hijacks a plane to Cuba. State Department repeatedly asked in January, February, March, for Cuba to return this guy, and Cuba never returned him. Now, at the same time, Jorge Mas had been saying that Radio Martí was going to come out on January 28, 1985, and I believe other people in the Government were saying the same thing. Radio Martí doesn't come out on January 28th, which was José Martí's birthday, and I sort of have a feeling that possibly because this hijacker wasn't returned, in January, February, March, that this is what speeded up Radio Martí coming out on May 20, 1985.

MENGES: I don't think so. I think the delay was due simply because the significant faction of the Executive branch led by the State Department was very nervous about Radio Martí, they were very nervous about Castro's retaliation, they didn't want to take the risk, and simply felt this would be put off indefinitely and were willing to do so. And the reason it started is because Jorge Mas got Charlie Wick to get to the President and tell him, everything is ready, let's go, and the

President said let's go.

DE LA COVA: I read that in your book. The Administration at the time came out with these other plans that if the station would be jammed, there would be surgical strikes against Cuban jamming stations, etc. and Radio Martí has been jammed now since TV Martí came on the air. I don't know, I see it as sort of a moot question now. I did argue with Mr. Wick about that, and he disagreed.

MENGES: I'm sorry, Radio Martí is being jammed?

DE LA COVA: Right, both TV Martí and Radio Martí are being jammed.

MENGES: I didn't know that.

DE LA COVA: It hasn't gone into Cuba since TV Martí came out.

MENGES: And when is that effective?

DE LA COVA: I think 1991.

MENGES: I didn't know that.

DE LA COVA: Yes, as soon as TV Martí came on the air, they started jamming TV Martí, and about two weeks later they jammed Radio Martí. It's been jammed ever since, and my argument with Mr. Wick was, he was saying, no one was jamming, the interference is very minimal. He said it's coming in loud and clear. And I said, why then is Radio Martí trying to hire these local Miami radio stations, including Regalado's station, to reprogram Radio Martí programs into Cuba.

MENGES: Well, Wick didn't have anything to do with this in 1991.

DE LA COVA: Right, but he obviously didn't know. One last question. When Secretary of State Alexander Haig met secretly with Cuban Vice President Rodríguez in November 1981, was this on his own initiative, or did the President want him to do this? What was behind this? Because here was a guy that's been saying he wanted to go to the source, or do this, or do that, and then he tries this secret rapprochement route, and that he even later sent General Walters on to expand.

MENGES: Yeah, it's even worse, that's right, because in March of 1982, well, I think it's all part of, again, this sort of particular style the Department of State has, that it tends to try to have back-door negotiations in second tracks, and so forth with foreign dictators, in imitation of Henry Kissinger, which is this stupid desire to commit the Department. I can only tell you that when I learned of the clandestine meeting, and brought it to the attention of members of the Cabinet and then the President, it was stopped immediately.

DE LA COVA: The clandestine meeting with Rodríguez?

MENGES: No, the whole negotiating track that Haig had opened up. At Enders suggestion, I would imagine, he opened up the whole negotiating approach which was kept secret, and I would argue, was kept secret from most of the U.S. Government, all of our allies in the region, and that always it was only the Cuban Government that used the secret negotiations against the United States. See, what the Cuban Government did was to say to friendly countries: you see, the United States hasn't told you about this, but we have these secret meetings, so you can't trust the United States. They are devious, they are sneaks. So we always told you, they'll always sell you out. They are trying to sell you out right now. General Walters is in Havana talking to Castro, and you don't know about it, do you? And that's what they did. And when, as I say, I learned about this, through our means, and once I learned about it and brought it to the attention of a member of the Cabinet who brought it to the President, the President immediately told Haig to stop it. And once it stopped, it immediately helped things in the region.

DE LA COVA: So, this was after March 1982?

MENGES: No, it was...

DE LA COVA: After the meeting of Walters with Castro and Rodríguez?

MENGES: Oh, that's right, but then there were no, Haig was ordered to stop that activity. I believe it was engineered, proposed by Enders, that Haig decided to do it. It was all very much limited. They both worked with Kissinger. It was very sort of Kissingerian, very duplicitous of U.S. allies. Yeah, duplicitous of U.S. allies and solicitous of hostile dictators. A certain style of international politics, and it was not Reagan's style. When he found out about it, he stopped it. And then Haig was fired in June of 1982, after he also then was being duplicitous of his President, and the President of the United States saw a tape recording of what Haig was telling other people, to ignore the President, that he'd just been with other major summit [...]. I think President's have enough, to a certain point, where they really don't want members of the cabinet or sub-cabinet to undermine them.

DE LA COVA: To say, "I'm in charge here."

MENGES: Yes. But I think you have to see the Cuban policy of the Reagan Administration in the context of two realities: one was the reality that the Soviet Union was heavily armed, perceived as highly dangerous, and a close ally of Castro. Therefore, any actions of a military kind directly against Castro carried the risk of thermonuclear war, a risk not worth taking, since there are other means to accomplish the purposes of the United States of containing and ultimately defeating Castro. The second reality is that the Reagan Administration came to office with the Department of State dominated by career foreign service officers who had a policy view on a broad array of international issues opposed to Reagan, and that they again, and again, and again, worked to have their foreign policy views dominate, in spite of the orders and written decisions of the President. And therefore, those who were on Reagan's side working at the

President actually governing foreign policy, could only take on so many issues. There was a limited number of battles you could fight, and for some of the Cuban battles that might have been fought, were not, because there were others that were more important.

DE LA COVA: Thank you very much, Dr. Menges.