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LETTER DATED 15 OCTOBER 1979 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF ISRAEL TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

On Friday, 12 October 1979, Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz addressed the General Assembly, not only as President of Cuba, but also in his capacity as Chairman of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. He assailed my country virulently and attacked my people slanderously. In the process he grossly insulted the memory of six million Jews who perished at the hands of the Nazis during the Second World War.

As is customary in the face of such abuse, I sought to express my right of reply. However, in deference to your position that traditionally there is no exercise of the right of reply to a statement that is made by a head of State, I waived that right. I should like to point out, however, that a corollary of a tradition that would accord such courtesies to heads of State addressing the General Assembly is a corresponding duty incumbent on those heads of State to respect the courtesies extended to them and to refrain from insulting and slandering Member States. The tone and content of President Castro's statement in the general debate were a grave deviation from all the accepted standards of conduct and expression expected of a head of State when appearing before the United Nations.

In these circumstances, I wish to take up the suggestion that I might put in writing what I had in mind to express in my right of reply. Had I been able to deliver it in full, I would have said:

"Cuba presented itself here today as the spokesman of the Non-Aligned Group of Nations.

"One is bound to note that Cuba follows a very odd form of non-alignment. Indeed, its track record scarcely qualifies it as a non-aligned country at all. As is all too well known, Cuba has over the last two decades put itself both militarily and politically at the complete disposal of one particular super-Power. Its troops have been ever-ready to act as proxies for the expansionism and neo-colonialism

of that super-Power and as its mercenaries in all corners of the globe, including the Middle East.

"In 1973, Cuba provided pilots to South Yemen in its war with its neighbour to the north. Later in the same year, a Cuban armoured brigade was in Syria at the time when that country launched the Yom Kippur War of aggression against Israel. Today Cuban troops are to be found throughout the Middle East, particularly in Syria, Iraq and Libya.

"For a country which scatters like confetti slogans and phrases such as 'colonialism' and 'imperialism' at the drop of a hat, Cuba surely has a very long way to go before it can prove that it is not the puppet of a certain super-Power and thus is capable of exercising a policy of restraint and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries.

"Furthermore, as a country which was so aptly described in Le Monde of Paris on 16 February 1979, as a 'Tropical Gulag', Cuba is scarcely qualified as an arbiter on anything which touches on fundamental human rights and the dignity of man.

"How odd it was that such a self-proclaimed champion of human rights, who feels so strongly about oppression and genocide, did not have one word in all his long oration to say about the ongoing genocide, oppression and human misery in South-east Asia.

"Instead, he made an obscene comparison between the Jewish State of Israel and the accursed Nazi régime. The entire world knows that the Jewish people was the prime target and the main victim of Nazi barbarism before and during the Second World War. More than one third of the Jewish people fell victim to the Nazi hordes. The civilised world will thus join in emphatically rejecting and condemning this shameless and scurrilous comparison which constitutes a grave affront to the memory of six million Jewish victims of Nazi tyranny and oppression, including one and a half million children. It will be recalled that before Mr. Castro sold himself out completely to his masters, he spoke with an entirely different voice about Israel and the Jewish people."

I have the honour to request that this letter be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly.

(Signed) Yehuda Z. BLUM
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Israel
to the United Nations
