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August 22, 1988

To: HA - Dick Schifter  
From: HA - George Lister 2  
Subject: USG Dialogue

As you know, I have long been convinced that one of the most costly defects in our foreign policy performance has been our frequent failure to conduct adequate dialogue with non-Communist opposition groups, especially those critical of us, and to identify countries with governments (e.g. during the Somoza regimes our relations with "Nicaragua" were considered to be excellent). The Communists have exploited this weakness extensively, seeking to show we are on the side of the oppressors while they support the oppressed. Fortunately, our human rights policy has proved very helpful in this respect, usually requiring contact with a wide range of opposition leaders.

In connection with the foregoing, please read the attached memorandum of September 12, 1983 (it was classified Confidential because of an attached cable, which has been removed). In brief, in 1980 an opposition leader of a foreign country was invited to speak to the Open Forum. Tony Lake of Policy Planning urged that the meeting be restricted to a very few. EA's Dick Holbrooke simply called up the invitee and imposed the restriction. The Open Forum then protested to the Secretary. Patt Derian did the same. The Open Forum meeting was held with a full house.

The name of the controversial invitee? Benigno Aquino.

cc: Bill Farrand