

July 1955

Report on the Activity of the Czech Commercial Delegation in Cairo

Citation:

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Summary:

The report discusses a request by Egypt for arms from the USSR. The Soviet Union denied the request, but forwarded it to Czechoslovakia for consideration.

Original Language:

Czech

Contents:

Translation - English

In Prague 22 July 1955 Top Secret:From: The Ministry of Foreign TradeTo: Comrade Major L. David, the Prime Minister's OfficeSubject: Special Export to EgyptAttached you will find a report regarding the special export to Egypt which was sent to us by Deputy Minister Comrade Kohout, who led the delegation to Egypt. We ask that you refer this to the Prime Minister.Special Export to EgyptDuring the time that I was in Egypt for the [industrial] exhibition in March, the undersecretary at the War Ministry, General Hassan Ragab, handed me a list of preliminary requests for airplanes, tanks, and cannon. He added that an Egyptian delegation would be sent to Prague to discuss these matters as soon as some important shipments, expected from Western Europe and especially England, would arrive. Until the arrival of our delegation [to Cairo] in June, nothing came of it. [Then] I tried to make the Egyptian side start negotiations. But it turned out that General Ragab, who is an assistant for military commerce, cannot negotiate the matter further and could help only by informing... the Minister of War, Amer, and the Prime Minister, Nasser, about the possibility of negotiating with us. It was discovered then that Egypt did not really believe that we are willing to sell heavy weapons in considerable amounts, with their ammunition and replacement parts. Moreover, they were apprehensive about revealing their specific demands because they feared that we would expose their weaknesses. Lastly, they feared the intervention of the Western powers in the form of [discontinuation] of military equipment shipments and of "American [economic] assistance," and [as another from of interference] the pressure of the British garrison in the Canal.After the Soviet ambassador probed the possibility of shipments from Moscow, he received instructions from Moscow that this matter should be handled by Czechoslovakia. Before the departure of our delegation I obtained a specified list for:80 MIG 15 fighter planes; 20 bombers;100 heavy and 50 light tanks with transporters;24 self-propelled 105 mm cannon with transporters;125 armed infantry carriers;2 medium sized artillery regiments, together with ammunition and spare parts.[The Egyptians] put a great emphasis on issues such as prices, quick delivery, payments in kind (e.g. cotton), and on spreading out the payments...Before my departure I discussed the matter with the head of Nasser's office, Ali Sabri, who confirmed that Nasser and Amer had decided to buy weapons from us and that the negotiations will be conducted personally by Ali Sabri...The Soviet ambassador, who was informed [about all of this], explained that the Soviet side refused to send soviet experts to Cairo and that Ali Sabri was informed by the Soviet military attaché that he should approach Czechoslovakia about this.It is important to keep the negotiations secret and inform the [Czechoslovak] ambassador that there is a possibility that Sabri may speak about the matter with others. Sabri emphasized that they wanted to start the negotiations at once [but] they would not be able to accept the first shipment before 15 August, when the [arms] shipments from France and England would have arrived. General Ragab warned us about the Egyptian diplomats in Prague - he claimed he had reports that they were inclined to support the Western powers.Prague, 22 July 1955 Ing. Jaroslav KohoutPS The Egyptian side decided, according to a preliminary report, to send its delegation to Prague in the beginning of August.