

November 30, 1962
Cable from the Chinese Embassy in Cuba,
'Memorandum of Conversation between Ambassador
Shen and Foreign Minister Raúl'

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Summary:

A diplomatic meeting between Shen Jian, China's Ambassador to Cuba, and Raúl Roa García, Cuba's Foreign Minister.

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[...]

30 November 1960

Memorandum of Conversation between Ambassador Shen [Jian] and Foreign Minister Raul [Roa Garcia]

Shen: When I was about to return to China from Cuba, you asked me to bring back the fourth volume of The Selected Works of Mao Zedong. This is what I bring from Beijing.

Roa: Thank you very much. This is a generous gift. Many comrades will envy me because of it.

Shen: This is a copy of the statement issued by our government on 30 November in support of the IRO [Integrated Revolutionary Organizations] and the statement of the council of ministers. The master copy hasn't arrived yet though.

Roa: Thank you. I want to take this opportunity, on behalf of our government, to thank the Chinese people. The Chinese government, at the difficult moment of a possible imminent invasion, expressed support to Cuba, in particular, the support for the Five Demands, for our activities at the UN, and for our position adopted in the negotiation in the US. We want to take this opportunity to tell Comrade Ambassador, which Comrade Ambassador may probably have already known, that we have proposed a draft of trilateral parties which stipulates three countries' duties and also includes our Five Demands. Without spending more words, as Comrade Ambassador is bound to know, the US will not accept it.

Besides, we also expressed that we agree to multiple inspections, including the one from the US. But this is in line with the overall solution to the Caribbean Crisis; in other words, the [US] has to accept Cuba's Five Demands. This is the current situation. It's likely, or almost certain, that Cuba will issue a statement by itself [i.e., and not jointly with the US and Soviet Union-ed.]. The reason for it is that the development of the situation leaves Cuba with no other choices. This independent statement will express our point of view and our assessment of the crisis from the beginning to the end; will point out that the only solution to the Caribbean Crisis is to accept Cuba's Five Demands; [and] will also point out that although war is temporarily avoided, peace is not achieved since the US is still implementing its aggressive policies; Cuba is ready to participate in all sorts of negotiations, but it will not sell its sovereignty, or yield, nor will it agree to any solution that would damage its sovereignty. We hold that peace could not be achieved by handing over our power; [we] must stand up to aggressors with dignity and be firm. We said many times that Cuba would not fail. The fact of this period proves that Cuba, indeed, did not fail. This is the brief report of the current situation and the prospect for the Security Council due in the early next week.

Shen: It is on 17 October that I left Havana. On my arrival in Beijing, the situation in Cuba became tense. Being absent at the most tense moment of the situation in Cuba is a regret. But a redeeming feature is to see how our government, party, and people spared no efforts in supporting Cuba: we adopted the Marxist-Leninist approach. We noticed that the Cuban people in difficulty were so united that they resembled one person, uniting around the leadership with Premier Fidel [Castro] as the head. Our government issued statements several times in support of Cuba, and people voluntarily rallied in both cities and villages, demonstrated and assembled. In Beijing alone, demonstrations lasted four days, from dawn until dark, [occurring] in front of the Cuban embassy with one million participants. Over those days, the comrades of your embassy, especially the chargé d'affaires, Comrade Bide Luosuo [sic], chanted slogans and condemned US imperialism. I bring a documentary film this time and you could watch it when [you are] free. We are prepared to give as a present one [such

film] to the Cuban government. We believe that Cuba has made great achievements in this struggle. Cuba's struggle is not just for Cuba, but also for the Latin American people and for the people of the world. This struggle proves that a people, or a nation, could defend its sovereignty or dignity only by relying on its own strength. I have been away from Cuba for one month, during which [I] was receiving news only from papers. There are many things I don't know. Perhaps [I] will ask you to talk about them sometime.

Roa: All right, when I get rid of the busy tasks here. You know, over these days, apart from our soldiers and our people, this department is the center of all these tasks. Perhaps I shall go to your embassy sometime, or invite you to come to my home for a quiet talk. In this period, there are many extraordinarily interesting things to do.

Shen: Yes. The struggle of the Cuban people is very complex, in which there is not only the problem of imperialism; there is also a problem of another aspect.

Roa: Yes, very complex. The experience we acquired from this struggle is: when the people of a country faces a grave danger, if it could put up a sturdy fight against aggressors and dare to pay whatever cost, this people will win sooner or later. This is how Comrade Fidel told us. In order to [achieve] victory and stick to principles, [one] has to prepare for all sorts of sacrifices. When you are ready as such, you will be victorious. It is true, indeed. Now our people's awareness becomes higher. [They] band with each other more closely, with firmer resolve and clearer vision. Not only is revolutionary Cuba saved, its prestige is also increased. The truth is: none of these atomic bombs, whatever their sorts are, is able to affect the Cuban island or the Cuban revolution. This is our experience. As Comrade Ambassador must know, Fidel said in his speech that although missiles were withdrawn [from Cuba], our moral missile will never ever be withdrawn.

Shen: Nobody could ever move such missiles. The strategic weapon of the Cuban people is the people themselves.

Roa: Indeed it is true. Naturally when it comes to these problems, more time will be needed [for discussion]. I prefer to talk to you at another opportunity. Now I would like to briefly tell you that over this period, our people behaved extraordinarily well, very calmly. Nobody was afraid. Unlike some European countries, there was no event, such as panic buying of fuel or bread.

When [UN Secretary-General] U Thant arrived, I went to meet him at the airport, and came back with him via downtown. He said that he was surprised at [seeing] such a calm communist life on our streets. He told me that the people's calmness and sufficient supply really surprised him and that our people's behavior was truly moving. In those days, the presence of Western ambassadors could barely be noticed at the foreign ministry; it was them, the only [group of] people, who rushed to buy food. But the day after Fidel's television speech, the Italian ambassador came to see me, [saying] that [he] had no other important things, which was apparently an excuse. He told me, "I am already an old person. [I] have seen many things in the world. Few things could now still move me. But I did shed tears when Fidel was giving his speech last night. The Cuban people's behavior is a good lesson for me, and also a fine example. This speech of mine is, diplomatically, of no value; it's entirely a statement of individual opinion." You see, even an ambassador from a country that has conflicting interests with us is also moved [by us].

Shen: I bring some materials and maps concerning the Sino-Indian border problem. I want to present you briefly this problem.

Roa: Good. We have kept a close eye on this issue, and conducted several discussions. I also read the letter, delivered by your embassy, from Premier Zhou Enlai to Asian-African countries. It was well written, giving a comprehensive and

detailed presentation of the Sino-Indian border problem

Shen: (presented briefly the course of the Sino-Indian border problem in accordance with Premier Zhou Enlai's letter to Asian-African country leaders.)

Our general policy towards the Sino-Indian border problem is: our people's main enemy is US imperialism, rather than reactionary Indian nationalism. We advocate solving the Sino-Indian problem by peaceful and friendly negotiations. But we both had the experience that when facing capitalists [we] should not always make concessions; sometimes, necessary struggle should be conducted. We fought back, at the moment [we] were [imposed with] the unbearable and [left with] nowhere to retreat [renwukeren, tuiwuketui]. We wish that Asian-African friendly countries will exert influence and prompt [Jawaharlal] Nehru to go back to the negotiation table.

Roa: I want to ask Comrade Ambassador: what is the prospect of a Sino-Indian meeting?

Shen: From our part, we wish to negotiate.

Roa: I meant that from the Indian part, how is the possibility [of the Sino-Indian negotiation]?

Shen: This issue is complex. It depends on how the Indians will act, and also on the imperialist attitude.

Roa: Yes, this issue is complex. Behind Nehru, there are imperialists, in particular, US imperialists, and also British imperialists, which obviously complicates the issue.

Shen: The fact that imperialist countries and capitalist countries support Nehru does not surprise us. But there are some fraternal countries saying that Nehru is peace-loving. Nehru sent troops to attack us; Nehru is the representative of the big capitalist class; Nehru colluded closely with imperialism. How can he be described as a peace-loving person? They, at the point of [a] socialist country having conflict with [a] reactionary nationalist country, adopted an incorrect position. The fundamental problem is that [they did not] evaluate Nehru in terms of the class interests that Nehru represents. Comrade Minister [certainly] knows well this point, [since] you have conducted face-to-face struggle with Nehru.

Roa: Yes, Nehru is by no means a peace-loving person. From a long time ago, he has begun to play a reactionary role. From a long time ago, he has turned to imperialism. Just as Comrade Ambassador said, view him in terms of the interests he represents. Personally, I have never trusted him. He is a man of hypocrisy, pretense, and braggadocio. He is self-convinced that he speaks better English than George Williamson [transliteration; not further identified]. True, [he] does speak better English than Williamson, because he also speaks the political language of imperialism.

Shen: We know that the fraternal country Cuba is backing us on the Sino-Indian border problem.

Roa: We are very concerned with this problem. I will forward these materials and maps to the comrades of the Socialist Country Division and Asian Research Division who study this problem. To let them further the study and discussion on this problem [now] does not mean that they were wrong. The assessment of this problem has never been wrong. But in the past, [they] were devoid of tools, such as maps, which help [people] gain straight-forward information from knowledge and impression from maps.

[Chinese] Embassy in Cuba

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