

December 27, 1961

**Meeting of the Planning Commission on Subjects
Related to the VIII Consultation Meeting**

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Summary:

A collection of Brazilian ambassadors and ministers gather to meet and discuss the impact of Cuba-US relations on the region in preparation for a gathering of Organization of American States (OAS) foreign ministers scheduled for 22-31 January 1962. The government officials' primary concerns are to manage the impact of the "Cuban problem" on domestic Brazilian politics and to develop an independent line of thought, without jeopardizing its relationship with the US. The officials want to craft an approach for the OAS meeting that will not cause Brazil to become a mediator between hostile parties nor incite Brazilian public opinion in favor of communism.

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Minister Maury Valente - As I have a certain difficulty in expressing myself verbally, I am replying to your yesterday's order by some notes which I request your permission to be read (he reads):

As a final suggestion, the end of the year is a good opportunity for an encompassing speech revising the position taken by Brazil with regard to the different problems. I think that this government will obtain a good average.

State Minister - I think that rather than considering the Cuban problem as a separate issue we would profit by including it in the general picture of our position towards various other problems. We have some problems with France, Portuguese Africa, the Common Market and the Cuban problem should be dealt with by means of integrating same into these problems. The next point to withdraw is the final thought. It has more to do with the relation of the government towards public opinion than the relations between governments.

Ambassador Gibson - I consider Minister Maury's statements worthy of the greatest consideration. I really think he offered a good contribution to the committee's concerns. However, I would like to ask for permission to go back in time a bit regarding the Cuban problem, after having pondered his complete explanation of yesterday and recall what all of us still have on our minds but which, perhaps, may not always be remembered. We have gone through two essential phases concerning the Cuban problem: the first, which I would call the most constructive and positive one. The second, the one we are just facing, a negative and evasive phase. To conclude, I would propose that we tried to achieve or merge that second phase into the first or else, get back to the first stage.

At the beginning, the Cuban problem was just bilateral - between Cuba and the United States. There is no doubt about that and we, in Brazil, when the question arose, tried to situate it as such because we considered it to probably be the best way for an approach, with a view to find a positive and constructive solution for the problem. The United States always reacted and tried to deal with the problem in a continent-wide framework. In fact, it became a continental problem, not so much because of Cuba but by influence of the United States. After the failure of the invasion attempt the United States clearly understood that the only way to treat the problem was in a continent-wide manner. Thenceforth, by a strange coincidence, they started to note a flexibility among various American countries vis-a-vis Cuba.

From the moment on it became of continental interest it turned into a problem of diplomatic tactics for each country other than the United States. Today we are not in search of a solution for the Cuban problem, but a solution to the menaces in the form of the crisis of the inter-American system, which is negative. It is of great importance but negative. At best, if we continue this line of reasoning we shall find a way to save the system and, at the same time we, Brazilians, will come honorably out of a situation which places us in a minority position. This is a negative "optimum" because the real "optimum" is a solution for the Cuban problem.

If our efforts were towards forgetting the dazzling sensation we are feeling at present with these two problems of undeniable magnitude - the diplomatic situation in America and the public opinion about the impending menace to the American system - I would ask why we should not use some sunglasses to protect ourselves from the two suns and go back to a solution for the Cuban problem that might provide the key for both questions. I cannot assure that the answer will be affirmative but it would certainly be worth its try. There would at least be an advantage: it would demonstrate our seriousness concerning the subject. I would go as far as saying that in the present stage it would be a novelty. What in June and July was just common would now become a novelty: a country in America that was in fact looking for a solution of the Cuban problem rather than looking for the system's solution as it stands now.

Minister of the State - What was the June or July solution?

Ambassador Gibson - Our line was turning around the feasibility getting the United States to accept intervention offered by these countries. It was not a good plan. My opinion was that the matter required a maximum of discretion and a modesty of any country's action before making approaches to the United States with a view of obtaining acceptance of the latter regarding an understanding with Cuba. Because the problem was located in Washington and not in Havana. It has always been the American government that demonstrated an attitude of intransigence in dealing with the problem. Until the invasion phase, even though the aggressive actions had started in Washington, it was more approachable than Havana.

It looked to me that a country like Brazil could, on that occasion, have presented an idea to the United States with regard to the problem that could have convinced some of its interest to solve the problem in such terms. For that purpose it was necessary for Brazil to refrain from any kind of publicity (the reverse of "OPA" [Operation Pan-America, Brazilian President Juscelino Kubitschek's late 1950's proposal for hemispheric economic development-trans.]) trying its best to reach a solution for the problem. This for a simple reason. The State Department would never accept facing the public opinion with a confession that it had been lead by the Brazilian, Mexican, or Argentine diplomacy. The idea had to have had its origin in the United States. It had to be seen as a generous act by the United States. Around this point arose the action of Ecuador, Mexico, and Argentina which damaged the history a little bit. It was a matter of three countries and one of them being Ecuador, a country which lacks seriousness because of its involvement in a conflict with Peru, aside from playing a prestige game. Mexico did not accept much. Colombia was sympathetic. Argentina immediately brought in Brazil. Thereafter came Chile. There was a possibility to handle the question on that occasion. The idea of details was in mind at that time. We undertook conversations about this matter in detail like how negotiations between Cuba and the United States could materialize in regard with the expropriated domains, whether they would leave this for a system that would relapse into the Bogota Treaty.

I am not optimistic with regard to any success of a behavior within this line but it seems that we would not have much to lose if we considered the possibility of a conversation on this subject now, maybe only between ourselves and the United States. It does not look like an idea to be discarded without some examination. I am not too enthusiastic about it, though.

State Minister - It is a little overtaken by the events because at the stage when one thought that everything seemed to turn around a possible matter of re-absorption, so as if the problems were of indemnity for expropriation of confiscating nature or the absence of certain guarantees to private rights. Now everything denotes that we are dealing with an extra-hemisphere problem besides how Fidel Castro's posture adjusted itself to such an American interpretation of the events. The core of your idea encloses two points that impressed me. You think we are leading to an evasive attitude. What is your understanding of it? Escaping from the Cuban problem means evading the same kind of problem of the hemisphere or evading the problem's responsibility itself?

Ambassador Gibson - Evasion in two directions. Evasion because we are no longer looking for a solution to the problem as we think that the phase for a solution of the problem is too late. Also in the sense that being the minority within the organization we are seeking for the less unfavorable position for Brazil, in particular. To conclude, in my opinion, all that has happened in the last four months and culminating with Fidel Castro's speech excluded almost irreparably a solution of the problem. I see the problem as a bilateral one: United States-Cuba. It is possible that such a position may not be feasible anymore. This is the way it placed itself towards the continental public opinion. It is very difficult to convince people that the problem does not

concern the United States alone, but the hemisphere. If the United States succeeded in obtaining an agreement term with Cuba there would be no more problem in the hemisphere.

Ambassador Henrique Valle - The placing of the problem developed from a flexure to the establishment of a communist regime within the hemisphere. This is its present position at the consultative meeting. (I take the opportunity to say that the United States presented a memorandum stating that during that meeting the severance subject would not be considered.) We have just received from the Embassy of Bogota the American proposal ordering that relations be severed within 30 days if the OAS Council, after the Resolution is approved, does not state that it has returned to the system and has refrained from having relations of that sort with the Soviet bloc, etc. On the other side another proposal of various other countries orders that relations be severed immediately. (He reads the note.)

Ambassador Araújo Castro - I will try to summarize my impressions. I can understand Ambassador Gibson's frustrations. We, at this stage, are no longer concerned with the solution of the Cuban problem but with a solution for the inter-American problem. More specifically, making use of a Brazilian diplomatic solution, not only with respect to what is of the latter's interest but how we are to explain it to the public opinion which, in this case, is split. The matter is maximizing and in January the Cuban subject will become the great issue of the Brazilian politics. It is in fact impressive to note the problem of the left wing's pressure in Brazil. It gives the impression that they are mobilized about the Cuban problem. The other subjects are of secondary importance. In the case of Goa, for example, the reaction was null. Even our abstention in the case of Argelia was unnoticed, which demonstrates the public opinion's mobilization about the Cuban subject, be it the parliament or the press.

I go under the impression that it may be a personal reaction although I would rather place the Cuban problem within the Brazilian diplomatic field in order to explain our position. Evasion is unfeasible. The present situation does not belong to the past. There has been an invasion; there has been an American position which we all know will put an end to Fidel Castro.

State Minister - I was told by Ambassador Goodwin that he only believes in an internal revolution within the next six months.[1]

Ambassador Araújo Castro - The public opinion was poisoned by the State Department itself. The Department thinks to be a prisoner of pressure groups which he himself helped to create. The change of the American position in relation with Russia involves, at least, a political power game; as far as Cuba is concerned the problem is of an ideological nature and a more serious one. On the other hand, we are well acquainted with the importance of semantics in the American politics. They are terrified of the word "revolution". As a highly collectivized country they are horror-struck with the word "socialism". The fact of Fidel Castro having characterized himself as a Marxist-Leninist regime has a fundamental relation in the United States. In my opinion, any possibility to attenuate the American position in respect with the Cuban problem seems non-existent. This being the case, in addition to the United States failing to assume any compromise of a non-violence method, makes it obvious that any mediation on our part would be fruitless, suspicious and would place us in a position where we would be left at the mercy of two groups: either the United States or Fidel Castro. I also consider the latter's statement of the 3rd inst., as a desperate attempt to qualify the Cuban problem as a cold war and an East-West problem. It is not the case of having faith in what Russia is going to do but the lack of alternative. He thinks the American position heads toward invasion and not toward an unlimited confidence with regard to the efforts of Brazil, Mexico and Argentina, not only concerning its strength but also its stability. They think the problem should be situated as a cold war [problem] instead. Taking this smallest possibility into consideration we should reflect on the Brazilian position. I think we cannot have an

evasive attitude. Our attitude should be firm and previously defined. We should arrive with a determined position. I would not, at this point, try a new attempt of approach with Cuba or United States. Not even sounding the matter out or trying a large diplomatic articulation against the project. I would declare to be against it and vote against it. As a matter of fact, I would neither assume total responsibility for the solution of the Cuban problem nor for the inter-American system in a case which seems already lost. I think this case will turn out badly for the Pan-American system.

State Minister - Do you think the inter-American system is finished off?

Ambassador Araújo Castro - That is what I think. We hold a solid position. Let us proclaim it to the countries that followed us without influencing to the point of a plot of conspiracy. Thus the Brazilian diplomacy would remain dissociated from the Cuban one. We would have no more contacts with them inasmuch as at this point mediation seems almost impossible. Furthermore, if we maintain coherence until the date I think we will be in a position to face the storm with the required serenity. Once resolved we would have complied with the determinations. Otherwise we would have failed to consider the Rio Treaty.

A statement trying to establish the Brazilian diplomatic concept should be considered as well. Under the guise of general action principles we could take advantage of the colonial question showing that the Brazilian diplomacy is all around independent. Intrinsically it does not seem the right time to concentrate the Brazilian position in face of the problem. By trying to conciliate and adjust a position we will reach but indecision which may create an accusation from either side. An accusation against Brazil from the State Department will produce large internal effects.

On the other hand, if we define that Brazil is against either the application of sanctions, or the severance, if voted against we shall comply with it while staying in a very safe position. However, shall we make any attempt of mediation it will result in our impairment, in our hesitation until the last moment and, thereafter, position ourselves so as to be hit by both sides.

State Minister - The problem is the following. I think that the moment we start taking a public attitude giving it all determination and a clear-cut characterization there are two or three matters on which we cannot fail to comments about.

One of them concerns the existence of the socialist regime clearly linked with the hemisphere. This, because by stating that we are against the application of sanctions, severance of relations, in favor of the "status quo" maintenance is a position that no matter how much it may gain by its perseverance, by being clear and firm still opens a very large flank to inquiries that cannot remain without an answer. The Brazilian public opinion is completely convergent to the examination of the problem and will not fail to question us: your position is against the relations severance but what is your opinion? The more Marxist or Leninist the better? To what extent besides the manifestation of being against do our explanations have to go.

Ambassador Araújo Castro - I am under the impression that it would be vital that we reach a position about what we are going to do and enunciate it in the best possible manner. The emphasis given was against the thought that the diplomatic action is still possible. Maybe the opposite side has kind of exaggerated. It is not the fact that I do not consider Cuba as a real danger. My emphasis, however, is about the unfeasibility of an arbitrating action and about the excess of activities on our part.

State Minister - Do you think that in our clear statement we should also immediately say what we think of a communist country in the hemisphere?

Ambassador Araújo Castro - Yes, I do.

Ambassador Henrique Valle - We should clarify our position, make it really clear. We would as a first attempt find a neutralization. We should accept a socialist country within the continent and outside of the system. Otherwise, we have an open flank.

State Minister - It is time that we choose our enemies. I am making reference to the internal enemies. By means of taking from three to four positions, we should say who are the ones that shall throw the stones at us.

Ministry Maury Valente - It would be favorable to Brazil to guarantee a formula of declaring at once that Cuba is outside the inter-American system because it dissociated itself from the aspirations.

Ambassador Henrique Valle - Even the consequences of non-intervention lead us to admit it within the continent but outside the system.

State Minister - One thing is Brazil going to a conference ready to comply with its deliberations. The other is going to a conference where there is no longer any deliberation to be taken and where the proposal that has just been read is co-sponsored by 14 countries whereas our role is to offer our approval of the application to the system.

Ambassador Gibson - I think I need to make a clarification. I did not intend to say that we should, for example, start an offer of mediation to deal with the Cuban problem. I have no fancy optimistic ideas with regard to any success. But it is my opinion that we moved from the constructive to the negative phase. It was in this respect that I had requested your attention. The confirmation of this fact, when I mentioned a Brazilian conversation this year, is that I was thinking of a conversation between you and Rusk or with the ambassador here. I was not meant with a view of offering mediation or insinuating same but the statement must also be made to the United States. This bears a character of seriousness to the Brazilian politics and covers a certain field of repercussion of our attitude. Moreover, because what will be resolved will not present any solution to the Cuban problem.

State Minister - Ambassador Gibson would like to clarify that in case the proposal is approved, the very next day the Cuban problem would still be the same. The only thing we could think of it is that the resolution would have had the aim of placing Cuba even more outside the defense and more in defense of another action.

Ambassador Valle - This is the first step to agree with a collective action. Once the relations have been broken off the second step would be much easier.

Ambassador Gibson - We shall reach a situation where constructive and affirmative elements must be assembled and it seems to me that this is one of them. We shall reach a moment when we will have to give full explanation of our position because the military intervention does not solve the Cuban problem.

State Minister - The military intervention works as a power of great destruction. It will involve the overthrow of the Government, the defeat of a great number of party members. A slaughter always breaks a path to something. It would bring forth new problems because to massacre Cubans, causing the overthrow of the government by force, would create in other American countries totally incurable reactions of internal character. Each country's internal political fight will be exclusively marked by it. From the communist point of view it is the splitting being brought up and the transformation of the hemisphere political fight into an ideological fight.

Ambassador Araújo Castro - The communism in Latin America has never been a continental subject. However in this manner it would be converted into it. They are much more interested in a gradual and methodic penetration than in penetrating into Cuba where they know that the problem cannot last.

Ministry Maury Valente - The best would be that the inter-American system be prepared to accept an eventual existence of a Finland in the hemisphere.

Ambassador Dias Carneiro - I have some remarks: 1 - We cannot back out, especially of our non-intervention and self-determination with regard to Cuba. That seems totally impossible. 2 - We must recognize that the Cuban danger exists. 3 - We must give the Americans a pre-notice. 4 - In our consultative meeting we must take an affirmative and a drastic position of our disapproval of the Colombian proposal. 5 - Total repudiation, which already exists, to the pre-fabricated position. 6 - These are feasible positions before the Cuban revolution takes place and in case it gains a victory. In the case of a revolution the matter changes and maybe becomes different. In brief: unfeasibility of backing out of the position we have taken; recognition of the Cuban problem; need of a pre-notice; our position would be of disapproval of the Colombian proposal and our repudiation to the pre-arranged solution for this meeting; need of neutralization of Cuba, that can be made through Cuba's membership identification within the inter-American system.

State Minister - With regard to the pre-notice given to the United States, I go under the impression that what could most damage our relations would be the lack of such a pre-notice and taking them by surprise.

Ambassador Dias Carneiro - Also, the fact of not going to Washington and the lack of a pre-notice would be a hostile attitude.

Ambassador Araújo Castro - A vivid diplomatic articulation some days preceding the Conference would ruin our relations.

Ambassador Gibson - We have already fallen under this line.

Minister Carlos Duarte - I would like to make reference to the practical aspect of the subject as far as the facts we are facing are concerned. To my knowledge there has been no open dialogue so far with the North Americans and Colombians in objective and practical terms. We shall not forget that, whether we are willing to or not, we will have to face these resolution drafts that will be voted at Punta del Este. Thus I would ask whether it would not be a more tactical attitude, instead of ignoring it, that we try to talk with the Colombians and the American in objective terms, stating that we were unable to give our approval for one or another reason.

State Minister - This will lead us to end up agreeing with something.

Minister Carlos Duarte - Argentina itself, according to a memorandum that has been given to us and which was presented by Frondizi to the Canadians offers a series of suggestions (he reads the memorandum).

Ambassador Henrique Valle - I would like to ask whether I can talk with Goodwin who is going to have lunch with me now and inquire if he has knowledge of said memorandum.

Ambassador Gibson - Is there any general consensus about it being suitable that we comply with the resolutions that will adopted?

State Minister - I make a distinction.

Ambassador Henrique Valle - If we do not comply with it the inter-American system ends by being "de juris."

State Minister - I make distinction between the fact of going to a consultation at which we make deliberations and reach a conclusion, in which we are a defeated vote, and going to a pre-fabricated conference. The Rio Treaty only admits a two-thirds rule for the unchained or imminent aggression. The simple fact of coming with a resolution that within the next 30 days....proves that we are misusing the Treaty.

Ambassador Gibson - I do not say we should not comply but I preliminarily am of the opinion that we should not let our conversations with the United States demonstrate our conviction that we shall comply with what is approved. We shall leave the greatest doubt in this respect.

State Minister - Anyway, we must keep in mind that we have to protect the position in the most dramatic manner.

Ambassador Araújo Castro - We are reaching the time when we either internally or through our declaration at the Chancellors Conference shall use rather hard words with Fidel Castro. I believe we can no longer ignore the communist regime characterization and, maybe this is the moment to undertake a position against violence as far as Cuba is concerned.

Ambassador Leão Moura - I agree with the general consensus about the position that Brazil shall adopt. I was very concerned with the pre-notice. This has already been asserted by you. I consider it essential that they might not be taken by surprise. With regard to the matter that Ambassador Araújo Castro has just mentioned about our statement concerning Fidel Castro, I think there is a need for a more explicit declaration.

Ambassador Henrique Valle - I would like to go back to what Minister Maury Valente said with regard to the statement about external politics. I do not say it should necessarily be made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. It could eventually be taken over by the President of the Cabinet. A statement about this matter by the prime minister is also missing.

State Minister - I am sure that the prime minister will accept that suggestion and shall make a speech, however, our line of conduct has been to attract on us the problems of external politics. The President of the Cabinet has already a great problem on his shoulders which is to support the government. He cannot take a position. We have no interest in having him make a statement that may possibly reduce the cabinet's political support basis. This is our conduct in case relations will be re-established. We succeeded in avoiding that the criticism raised by the re-establishment of relations was divulged to the cabinet. It remained confined. There was a proposal to take a censorship motion to the minister of foreign relations but at no time any one thought about including the image of the prime minister and the cabinet as a whole. This makes sense at a time like the one we have to face. On the other hand, the president of the Republic cannot make statements in that respect, going beyond his constitutional limitations. I think I will have to make such a statement myself.

Ambassador Dias Carneiro - In this respect you mentioned before that it is suitable to know from where we shall expect the stones to be thrown at us. Is it appropriate to have a few or many stones thrown at us?

Ambassador Henrique Valle - The best would be a few stones coming from the same direction.

State Minister - Ours is a critical situation. In regard with the Brazilian external politics our position is more or less the following: we do not have restrictions inside the army. I have carried on conversations with General Segadas Vianna, with the Minister of the Navy and with some Admirals and have also had some contacts with the Air Force through General Travassos and two or three other Generals. The re-establishment of relations did not produce a negative effect within the military forces. Amidst the people the external policy is well accepted. It is not very popular because the Quadros government was a more admired one. Today the external policy lacks an interpreter with the needed positive reputation in the country. President João Goulart is not in charge of the external policy. Tancredo Neves has been very careless in the external policy. And, as far as I am concerned, due to the fact that the position of the minister of foreign affairs is rather limited and also because I am not much that type of a statesman. I am known as a man with positions skills rather than one who formulates positions.

Ministry Maury Valente - Would there be any interest for taking a firm position with regard to characterizing the inter-American crisis? Stating that the inter-American right is incapable to face the situation would be a legal argumentation that might penetrate well.

Ambassador Araújo Castro - We lack the courage of failure. It is the government's general intention by reason of internal political convenience to consider that certain politics was a success when this was not the case. I do not consider it inopportune to state that we are concerned about it, that we have no glimpse of a solution.

State Ministry - Our victory will consist of gradually giving up such a success towards the public opinion. This was the Jânio Quadros government pattern which I feel was sometimes impressing because once in a while this success corresponds to a wrong demeanor. It does not represent a reward for good politics. The great advantage for us was to have our self-respect being flattered a little bit.

Ambassador Araújo Castro - It is not the purpose that is important but the means. If there would not exist the least of opinion's support regarding a determined type of politics there would be no support to achieve such a politics.

State Minister - What we have to consider with respect to the consultative meeting is giving the impression of great determination. We cannot hesitate about anything even though such a resoluteness may cause us to face a decrease in popularity. No need to say that it must remain within the bounds of safety, beyond which our government may sink. However, always aware that our position must bear a character of determination.

Summarizing our conversation, the following ideas are worth being considered: We shall completely give up the idea of an elaboration through consultations. We have to develop our own lines and stipulate them with our particular moral and political authority;

Make sure that such a line be no surprise to either Cuba or the United States or even to Brazil. Consequently, it cannot be elaborated for presentation on a given date but must be made apparent and face any and even a prior criticism impact that it might arise.

Minister Carlos Duarte - My intervening was just with the purpose of pursuing a line of frankness.

State Minister - Another point is that in that statement we shall preferably seek for a general solution. We shall not only position ourselves with regard to Cuba. We shall situate the matter within the general picture of the Brazilian external politics and clearly show that one part suggests the other.

Ambassador Araújo Castro - In our statement, possibly by means of a newspaper interview, there would be no need for a specific backing up of the enclosed draft because some of these drafts are trusted to diplomatic means. However, a definition of Brazil in Montevideo will maintain the principle of non-intervention.

State Minister - I am considering some kind of statement that may extend itself to the point of containing the analysis of all that has been presented at the consultative meeting and not the solution of the problem. I think that such a thesis is too strong and, consequently, we cannot give our authority's support to a certain amount of measures which in itself do not hold any outcome as this runs the risk of only being a stage before something else comes up. We would be heading towards giving the American politics a continental ideological theme which the communist propaganda failed to offer. We are not evading from sanctioning Fidel Castro in a strong manner. It is not our intention to act as his body-guards. What we are doing is to be aware that an inaccurately performed surgery in that spot will open a new incurable problem of large proportions.

Ambassador Araújo Castro -Something that must be stated with special care is the idea about the external politics problem. In fact, problems are more serious now than a year ago. At that time we were in the stage of principles enunciation while now everything deals with making use of such principles. The Jânio Quadros Government did not really have an external politics problem except the matter of Santa Maria.

[1] Ed. note: A reference to Kennedy aide Richard Goodwin, who visited Brazil in December 1961.