

April 9, 1965

Czech Record of Talks with the Deputy Chairman of the Cuban Revolutionary Government, Raul Castro

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Summary:

Meeting between Raul Castro, Bohumir, Lomsky, and Langer. Castro informed Lomsky that internal danger has been eliminated, and contra-revolutionary and anti-government groups operating directly in Cuba have been broken up and practically destroyed. They evaluated the strategy of the cuba's defense, revised operational plans, and carried out number of changes. They originally approached the CSSR with a plea for a shipment of 200 pieces of 30 mm double cannons. The current situation, however (especially the situation in the DRV), is forcing them to ask for 30 mm cannons again.

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On 9 April 1965, Cde. Raul Castro asked for a meeting with the Minister of National Defense of the CSSR Cde. Army General B[ohumir]. Lomsky, and with the Joint Director of the Main Technical Administration of the Ministry of Foreign Trade Cde. eng. F. Langer. The talks took place in the villa where the Cs. delegation was staying, in the morning from 8:50 till 9:45.

Present were:

for the Cuban side: □ Cde. Com. Raul Castro,
Deputy Chairman of the Government and Minister of the Revolutionary Armed Forces
Cde. Sergio de Valle, Joint Chief of Staff
Cde. Manolo Lopez, Chief of the Department for Procurement of Armaments for the
Cuban Peoples Army;
for the Cs. side: □
Cde. Army General B. Lomsky, Minister of National Defense
Cde. Pčolka, Cs. Ambassador in Havana
Cde. F. Langer, Joint Director of the Main Technical Administration of the Ministry of
Foreign Affairs (MFA-MTA)
Cde. Colonel Kriz, Cs. Military Attaché in Havana

Minister Raul Castro opened the talks with an extensive presentation about the military situation in Cuba. He informed Cde. Lomsky that in the beginning of 1964, a thorough analysis of the military situation in Cuba was done under the leadership of the CRG [Cuban Revolutionary Government] Chairman Fidel Castro. A conclusion followed from this analysis that internal danger has been eliminated, and contra-revolutionary and anti-government groups operating directly in Cuba have been broken up and practically destroyed. The analysis at the same time stated that external danger still fully persisted, that is, the danger from the USA and their minions, the danger of direct aggression.

At that, Cuba is not a member of the Warsaw Pact and does not have a bilateral treaty with the USSR either; there is only a "moral obligation of the USSR to help Cuba in case of an attack," which follows from several declarations of the USSR government about this matter. Another guarantee is Kennedy's statement that Cuba will not be attacked. However, the value of such a guarantee from the USA is undermined by the fact that Kennedy is dead and some members of the USA government reject such a commitment, and besides that, the USA is known to willfully violate even written promises, let alone the oral ones.

Based on the above analysis, they evaluated the strategy of the country's defense, revised operational plans, and carried out number of changes. They decided to concentrate forces into individual strategic locations instead of dispersing them throughout the whole territory, as was done before. Considering that they are within reach of not only tactical but also intercept air forces of the USA, they decided to station critical equipment in underground bunkers. The cost of this plan is about 30 million pesos. A number of civilian construction projects, some of them under construction, had to be stopped in order to free the necessary resources. Due to Cuba's dependency on imports of fuel for its air force and military equipment, they are also building, for instance, large underground storage facilities for fuel.

They have built quite good anti-aircraft defense. Beside modern equipped air force, they also have surface-to-air missiles; however, these weapons are effective especially from 1000 meters up.

Since the USA focused on airspace violations and attacks from lower altitudes, their anti-aircraft defense was augmented last year against low-flying aircraft. At the same

time, measures to defend the missile batteries against low-flying aircraft had to be taken.

All these measures are very, very expensive. They are taking them while fully aware that even their completion cannot guarantee Cuba a permanent capability to resist, to repel permanently any aggression from the USA or their minions. However, they want any aggressors to find out that Cuba is a tough one to beat.

At the same time, they are even now getting ready for a possible insurgency on the territory that the enemy would conquer (armories, organizations). According to their opinion, events in the DRV [Democratic of Vietnam, i.e., North Vietnam] fully confirm that this approach is correct. They think that things can start happening in Cuba in a similar way. First an attack under some pretense, and the USA is a master in finding pretenses, then many more attacks without any reason.

That's why, after the first events in Vietnam, they were speeding up all projects - that was also the reason why they in 1964 asked the USSR and the CSSR for anti-aircraft weapons, and later they turned to the PRC with a similar request.

They originally approached the CSSR with a plea for a shipment of 200 pieces of 30 mm double cannons. C. Raul Castro then said they were offered 100 pieces of refurbished cannons against an immediate payment in Cuban goods, and he also noted that the first shipment of cannons in this quality was for a discounted price. They are, of course, aware that at the time, a payment in convertible currencies was expected. Therefore, they could not accept the offer at that time and were content with anti-aircraft cannons from the USSR and the PRC. The current situation, however (especially the situation in the DRV), is forcing them to ask for 30 mm cannons again. A review revealed that they would need 100 pieces of these weapons. However, they don't want them for free; they would not want and even consider it right that the CSSR should wait 15 years for a repayment.

C. Castro said they were aware that they were very much in debt to us because thanks to our kindness, payments in convertible currencies were changed to payments in Cuban goods. He said he was ashamed that they were not able to fulfill their obligations better. The above-mentioned shipments, including ammunition and priced the same as the first shipments, would cost about 6 million pesos, and they could start making payments from 1966 by 1 million pesos a year in goods.

In his response, Cde. Lomsky assured Cde. Raul Castro that he would pass the submitted request to the Cs. Government, and explained that we shared like brothers with the Cuban army even the first shipments of these cannons, and if the now requested cannons are delivered, the Cuban army will have more of them than the Cs. army. That was why we could not have offered more than 100 pieces; we were taking these from the counts allotted for our own troops; we even had to reduce numbers of these cannons for our own units below the originally planned numbers.

Cde. Lomsky further pointed out that the CSSR was the first to help Cuba with weapons, regardless of possible consequences in relations of many countries with the CSSR. That is, I think, [Cde. Lomsky said,] the strongest evidence that it was a truly selfless help from the CSSR. He also said that, for instance, the requested 30 mm cannons were not delivered to any other country. The weapons considered for delivery to Cuba are practically new and will only have to be checked, not refurbished. However, it is more complicated with ammunition, which is not available and will have to be manufactured, which will require purchasing raw materials.

However, we fully understand the requests of the Cuban Revolutionary Government, and will pass them to the Cs. Government, along with a full explanation.

On Cde. Minister Castro's remark that the refurbished cannons were sold at a discount in the past, Cde. Langer explained that this time, a delivery of practically new cannons is being considered, as Cde. Lomsky mentioned, that were only checked before shipment. These are, therefore, weapons in the same quality as those that were sold for full price before. Of course, if refurbished cannons are delivered, their price would be adjusted accordingly.

Cde. Langer also said that our government at that time did not assess the delivery from the credit point of view. It followed from previous, quite open talks about these questions, which let us assume that should the Cuban side ask for credit, it would also state its repayment capabilities, much like Cde. Raul Castro conveyed the CRG's request today. The original request was assessed like number of other requests in return for immediate repayment, which were negotiated and realized in the past.

As for the future, Cde. Langer conveyed a request that important questions, above all payment conditions, be openly discussed from the very beginning, so that the capabilities of the Cuban side can be considered during talks. That will expedite negotiations and solutions of all problems.

In his response to Cde. Langer, Cde. Castro then talked about other questions, like training of officers, sending study groups to the CSSR to gain experience, which he would not have time to discuss.

C. Minister Lomsky then repeated an invitation for c. Castro and his military delegation to visit the CSSR, and expressed an opinion that the visit should occur as soon as possible, so that other issues regarding development of relations between the armies can be discussed.

Then the whole party left for the airport.

The talks were conducted in open, comradely manner, and ended very cordially.