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Report for the HSWP Politburo on weapons exports to the UAR and Syria by Minister of Defense Lajos Czinege

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Summary:

This report by Hungarian defense minister Lajos Czinege outlines the tensions between Hungary and the UAR over military aid.

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Hungarian

Contents:

Translation - English

Image: Strictly Confidential Image: Image

REPORT

For the Politburo

In April this year the defense minister of the United Arab Republic requested us to provide for them as soon as possible the following military technology equipment worth about USD 60 million:

- 400 57 mm anti-aircraft guns /together with radars, directors and telemeters/

- 200 57 mm double barrel

- 100 armored reconnaissance trucks

- 680,000 57 mm ammunition.

After consulting with the competent ministries we worked out the following position which we reported to the Defense Committee and I also informed the UAR's defense minister about it in June.

- Since Hungary has never manufactured 57 mm self-propelling anti-aircraft guns, we cannot provide these items for them;

- We agreed to provide some of the other requested equipment (10% of the requested amount) with delivery beginning in 1971 – since we do not have any reserves – except for the radars, for we do not manufacture such equipment and we do not have any reserves either.

- At the same time I offered to provide the other military items which were requested by their foreign trade organization.

I have not received a written answer to my letter but Fawti and other state leaders of the UAR made exasperated and negative comments to our ambassador to Cairo claiming that we fail to understand and take their situation seriously and therefore they no longer see our willingness to assist them. The attitude towards us was growing cold and the Arab leaders also suggested that our position regarding their request might have a negative influence on political relations too.

Next, their foreign minister talked about this issue with Comrade Péter and the delegation of the Arab Socialist Union intervened in it when visiting Hungary at a meeting first with Comrade Lajos Fehér and later with Comrade János Kádár.

Taking all this into consideration – and based on my authorization – I sent a letter to Fawzi in September in which I suggested that there was a possibility to meet their need for military equipment, so it would be practical to send their military-economic experts to Hungary for negotiations. Their reaction was positive and their delegation of four members came to Hungary in September with Fawzi's message in which he said it was vital for them to get the 57 mm guns and that they knew that only we could provide these guns for them. After we had outlined our problems concerning manufacturing and delivery and made another offer to them the delegation continued to stick with the original demand and definitely asked us to provide at least 4 complete batteries in 1969 and begin continuous supply in 1970 on the basis of domestic production.

We re-evaluated the situation and asked the Soviet Union for help regarding the radars, to which we received a positive answer on 18 October. As a temporary solution, they will give us 22 overhauled radars in 1970/71. They will provide us with the documentation of the new, modernized RPK-1 radar in order to launch its manufacturing in the Hungarian People's Republic with the purpose of meeting the needs of both the member states of the Warsaw Treaty Organization and the developing countries.

In view of the above our position negotiated with the Ministry of Transport and Economy, for which I request the approval of the Politburo, is the following:

1. We should provide 4 complete batteries /24 guns with 1000 pcs of ammunition for each/ from the supply of the people's army – to be returned later.

2. The Hungarian industry should begin to manufacture 73 batteries /a total of 414 guns with 1000 pcs of ammunition for each/ – with gradual increase in quantity – in 1970 so that the requested quantity can be delivered by 1974 /if the UAR can agree with the schedule/.

3. The Hungarian and the UAR's economic and foreign trade organizations should carry out the necessary negotiations and sign the agreements for the equipment to be delivered in the amount of about 35-40 million US dollars.

4. The Hungarian foreign trade organizations should make an agreement with the Soviet bodies on the radars and other items to be imported from the Soviet Union.

After the Politburo has given its consent

- I will inform the defense minister of the UAR on our position in a letter sent to our embassy in Cairo;

- in collaboration with the affected state, economic and foreign trade bodies we will complete the exploration of the situation and submit a proposal for making the necessary state resolution.

Budapest, 20 October 1969.

Lajos Czinege