



April 16, 1965

Czechoslovakian Report on Visit of Cuban Delegation and Talks with Minister of National Defense, Bohumir Lomsky

Citation:

“Czechoslovakian Report on Visit of Cuban Delegation and Talks with Minister of National Defense, Bohumir Lomsky,” April 16, 1965, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Czech National Archive, Prague, CPCz CC collection. Obtained by James Hershberg and translated for CWIHP by Adolf Kotlik

<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116687>

Summary:

Report on visit of Cuban Delegation in Czechoslovakia and conversation on 16 April 1965. This document contains information about visit of the Czechoslovak military delegation in Cuba on 30 March - 9 April 1965. There are attachments to the document: draft of the resolution, the report, report on important conversations in connection with the visit. The visit occurred at the time of heightened acts of aggression of the USA against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and thus it was regarded as highly important in Cuba. It contributed to strengthening of Cs. Cuban friendship and to strengthening of the friendship in arms of our armies.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from the Leon Levy Foundation.

Original Language:

Czech

Contents:

- English Translation

Presidium of the CPCZ Central Committee

5490/ 7

Sequence No.: 20

On the issue:

Information about a friendly visit of the Czechoslovak military delegation in Cuba

From 30.3-9.4 [30 March - 9 April] 1965,

a delegation of the Czechoslovak

Peoples Army visited Cuba; the

delegation submits a brief report

about the stay and talks with leading

representatives of Cuba.

Submitting: C. B. Lomsky

16th April 1965

Number of sheets: 14

This material must be returned to the office of the 1st Secretary of the CPCZ CC within one month.

Adopted resolution

Attention of: c. B. Lomsky

A T T A C H M E N T I

Attachment I

Draft of the resolution

Attachment III

The report

Attachment IV

Report of important conversations in connection with the visit

Report of talks with the Deputy Chairman of the Cuban Revolutionary Government and Minister of the Revolutionary Armed Forces Raul Castro

File No. P 5490/ 7

R e s o l u t i o n

on the issue

Information about a friendly visit of the Czechoslovak military delegation in Cuba

(c. B. Lomsky)

R e s o l v e d :

The CPCZ CC Presidium accepts the information of c. Lomsky about the friendly visit of the Cs. military delegation in Cuba.

5490/ 7

A T T A C H M E N T III

Report about the friendly visit of the Cs. military delegation in Cuba

Based on the CPCZ CC Presidium's resolution from 10th November 1964, a Cs. military delegation, headed by Minister of National Defense, Army General Bohumir Lomsky, visited Cuba after several invitations from the Deputy Chairman of the Government and Minister of Revolutionary Armed Forces, Commander Raul Castro Ruz.

The visit occurred at the time of heightened acts of aggression of the USA against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and thus it was regarded as highly important in Cuba. It contributed to strengthening of Cs.-Cuban friendship and to strengthening of the friendship in arms of our armies.

The time of the visit can be divided into two stages:

I. Stage – before arrival of Raul Castro from a trip in Europe and a visit of the Cuban provinces outside of Havana.

II. Stage – after return of Raul Castro, and the stay in Havana.

The delegation held a number of cordial and unofficial meetings with troops of the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces and with workers. The delegation met with: representatives of the Joint Staff and the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces [MINFAR], commanders of the Eastern Army in the Oriente province, sailors, members of the 78th Division, pilots at the air force bases at Holquin and St. Antonio de los Banos, and with members of a military vocational school of armed forces.

During the visit, the delegation met with number of Soviet [military] advisors and with the main advisor General Colonel Shkadov.

A general draft is in effect in Cuban armed forces for the first year. The Army is the only highly organized force in Cuba – it is underpinning the Government. A tendency of its growth is apparent; discipline, organization, and order are improving. There is a great effort to master the new equipment. Armaments – Soviet and Czechoslovak.

Apparent shortage of educated cadres. They have 1,800 in training in the USSR. Officers trained in the CSSR hold important positions of regiment commanders, lieutenants and higher. They like to remember the CSSR. Many commanders yearn for training in the CSSR.

The delegation met workers in

Cardenas – in a sugar refinery, in a shipyard,

Havana - in a tobacco factory,

St. Cruz del Norte – in a sugar plant with sugar cane cutters, as well as in

Playa Giron – with sailor youth.

The delegation visited the party leadership in the Oriente province.

Revolutionary enthusiasm and a resolve to fulfill the key goals:

harvest of 5 million tons of sugar by May 5, 1965;

master 6th grade education (2 hours a day);

set by the government at the time is apparent everywhere. The main goals will be achieved but other results will be less remarkable.

Talks were held during the visit with:

First Deputy of the Revolutionary Armed Forces, Juan Almeida,

President Osvaldo Dorticos, in presence of Raul Castro,

Chairman of the Cuban Revolutionary Government, Fidel Castro (in the Ambassador's residence).

Ambassador's report of the talks – see Attachment IV/1.

Before the departure, Fidel Castro authorized an important discussion with Raul Castro and the Joint Chief of Staff Sergio de Valle. C. Langer's report – see the Attachment IV/2. The friendly visit accomplished its objective.

According to the CPCZ CC resolution of November 10, 1964, Raul Castro with a delegation of the Revolutionary Armed Forces was invited to visit the CSSR at the time of the III. National Spartakiade. He preliminarily agreed.

A T T A C H M E N T IV

Record of important talks in connection with the visit of c. B. Lomsky

A meeting of the Cs. delegation's leader was initially affected by Raul Castro's absence, since until his arrival, the talks remained at the level of the 1st Deputy Juan Almeida who takes over the function of Minister of Armed Forces in the absence of Raul Castro. It was explained that Raul Castro was still absent because he took part, as Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of the LSSR [United Party of the (Cuban) Socialist Revolution; PURSC], in the Moscow consultations of communist parties, and then visited a number of socialist countries. Following his return to Havana, a number of significant acts took place as a culmination of the Cs. military delegation's visit (handover of a battle standard to the military school of Antonio Maceo, a visit with the President of the Republic [Osvaldo Dorticos], a reception in the Ambassador's residence in presence of Fidel and Raul Castro and of other representatives of the LSSR and CRG [Cuban Revolutionary Government]).

During these days, talks took place that can be summarized as follows:

A visit at the Joint Staff in the absence of Raul Castro

During the visit, impressions of the delegation's stay were shared, which was followed by a friendly conversation with members of the Minfar [Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces] Joint Staff, during which opinions on military questions, armaments, and Cs. armament shipments were informally exchanged. 1st Deputy J. Almeida mentioned that just before arrival of the delegation, the CRG submitted to the Ambassador a request for a shipment of 100 pieces of 30 mm anti-aircraft cannons. The Cuban side emphasized that the current situation warranted strengthening of the anti-aircraft defense. There was no concrete discussion about conditions for delivery of these weapons, especially payment conditions. At a dinner with the Joint Staff, where R. Castro was not present, C. Langer asked Almeida about delivery conditions but the Cuban side did not specify these conditions, and did not do so later either. The delegation did not revisit the issue. However, it obviously is an important question that will have to be answered, so that we could consider shipment of these weapons under the most favorable conditions within our capabilities. Since the first request in September 1964, this issue is still unresolved and will require close attention.

2. The delegation's visit with the Republic's President Dorticos

The conversation was very cordial, even though rather official. C. Minister Lomsky informed the Republic's President on behalf of the delegation about the stay of the delegation and its impressions and findings. He passed on greetings of the leading representatives of the CPCZ and the Government, above all of c. [Antonin] Novotny, which greetings c. Dorticos returned. Information mutually interesting to both parties was shared. It was information regarding the economic development of the both countries, and various current political issues in connection with the USA aggression in Vietnam, West German militarism and its efforts to acquire nuclear weapons, and the Moscow consultations of communist parties and their results. Both sides emphasized the need for unity of the ICM [International Communist Movement] and joint actions of socialist countries against imperialism and aggression. The Cuban side pointed out that the situation in Vietnam creates a precedent that could be repeated in other places, namely in Cuba, if the aggressors are not decisively condemned by countries of the socialist camp, which is partially hampered by a disarray among countries of the socialist camp, especially the current policy of the Chinese leadership. The cordial manner of the talks, in which Raul Castro took part as well, reflects a very friendly atmosphere formed around the visit of c. Minister Lomsky and the military delegation.

3. A visit of Fidel Castro at a reception in the Ambassador's residence

The most important meeting was that of Fidel Castro at the Ambassador's residence. This visit is so important because the Cuban Prime Minister did not visit a residence of any titulary of socialist camp countries under similar conditions for the last 2 - 3 years, with the exception of the 15th anniversary of the PRC [in October 1964—ed.]. The visit in the Cs. Ambassador's residence on the occasion of a reception in recognition of the military delegation also underscores the situation that is developing after Cuba's participation at the Moscow meeting of communist parties.

C. Minister Lomsky had a very cordial conversation with Fidel Castro during the visit. He used this opportunity to criticize the approach of the PRR [People's Republic of Romania] who is entirely neutral on the issue of relations with Beijing and whose policy towards the USSR, socialist camp countries, and western countries is sure to raise suspicion. The PRR has gone as far as Yugoslavia, if not farther - and [he said] that he "didn't like Yugoslavia." He emphasized that Cuba's strong friendship with socialist camp countries did not keep her from having her own policy, appropriate for the objective conditions. Regarding this, he pointed out the current development in Latin America where inflation and economic difficulties are increasing exponentially and making the situation much worse. It turns out that the policy of the IMF [International Monetary Fund] and the Alliance for Progress is a complete failure. That destabilizes the situation in Central America and in majority of other LA [Latin American] countries where revolutionary struggle is again intensifying. National liberation and revolutionary forces made serious mistakes in Brazil (especially its CP),

also [Cheddi] Jagan in British Guyana, and others. The big problem is that revolutionary movements advertise ahead their agenda and objectives, instead of confronting imperialism with hard reality. He pointed out the need for the correct tactics. Algiers can serve as an example because it has not yet nationalized French oil concessions. It is all right to continue with such a policy as long as consolidation of the revolution requires it, which is the first priority. He has exchanged opinions about it with [Algerian President] Ben Bella. The group around [Leonel] Brizzola, who unlike [former Brazilian President João] Goulart always showed revolutionary decisiveness, is considered an authentic revolutionary force in Brazil.¹ The last guerilla activity in Brazil is his accomplishment, with which Cuba is helping him within its limited capabilities. It appears that the development in Chile could also lead either to adoption of truly revolutionary reforms or to a new, even deeper crisis.²

Imperialism has considerable difficulty in Africa with national liberation movements in Congo, Angola, Mozambique, etc. The fight intensifies with the help of Algeria and the UAR [Egypt]. Cuba also may provide some assistance - for example, it intends to be active in Congo due to the fact that the [Cuban] population has experience and is ethnically tied to Africa. The fight will be long in Africa, and Congo in particular appears to be a key position, which has to be conquered, albeit in a long and exhausting struggle. Impressions and experiences of the Cs. delegation from the stay in Cuba were shared in the conversation. Economic issues were discussed in detail: sugar harvest, questions regarding the JSSR [unknown Czech acronym, possibly Yugoslavia—trans.] and unity of the ICM [International Communist Movement], and other topical international issues. In the spirit of his last speeches at the University of Havana from the 10th March and his speech in commemoration of 13th March, Fidel Castro sharply criticized Beijing's approach to the issue of the ICM and help to Vietnam. Regarding the last speech of [US President Lyndon] Johnson, he believes that the USA probably does not want a direct conflict, especially a nuclear one with the USSR, but seeks to establish negotiating positions in order to save its prestige and position in Vietnam and Southeast Asia.³ Beijing's approach prevents effective assistance of the socialist camp countries, and also blocks the possibility of negotiations. Beijing's conduct is unprincipled and inconsistent. Its objective is to damage the Soviet prestige and to promote at all costs its own selfish interests. He stressed that Beijing undermines the unity of the ICM only to assume a leading role. It is willing to sacrifice everything to this goal - even Cuba, which it does not care about and whose very existence it is also willing to sacrifice in its efforts to achieve hegemony in the ICM. However, he [Fidel Castro] believes that even in the PRC, there are reasonable people who disagree with this narrow nationalistic policy, whose main protagonist is Mao Zedong. He believes that after his departure, these factions will be more able to gain prominence.

On the other hand, he emphasized the wide and selfless assistance provided by the USSR, without which the revolutionary and socialist Cuba could not even exist. He mentioned that the USSR has and always had a very friendly attitude towards and understanding for the situation and needs of the Cuban revolution. Relations and cooperation with the USSR are continuously improving and developing. After the departure of Khrushchev, the new Soviet leadership shows full interest in the development of the situation in Cuba and its economic and other needs. It appears to him that the current political leadership of the USSR, particularly [Leonid I.] Brezhnev and [Alexei N.] Kosygin, applies a sophisticated and scientific approach to tackling important issues. Their approach to issues such as the unity of the ICM is much more constructive. He stressed that once 4 million tons [of sugar - ed.] was harvested in the last days, there was a real possibility of reaching 6 million tons harvested this year. Cuba will preferentially develop agricultural production. The value of other production beside sugar may exceed the value of today's sugar production by 1970. They will particularly focus on increasing citrus and livestock production for export.

We stated in the conversation that we shared their opinion, particularly regarding the need for unity of the ICM and for help to Vietnam. Last declarations of the Cs. government and positions of the CPCZ CC on the results of the Moscow consultations of communist parties were mentioned, as well as the issue of the upcoming talks about a long-term agreement on further economic cooperation between the CSSR and Cuba. Fidel Castro expressed interest in these issues and he expects that negotiations can be successfully concluded as soon as possible. Finally he asked that

greetings be passed on his behalf to c. Novotny, Cs. government, CPCZ and to all Cs. people.

In a conversation with the Soviet ambassador, after Fidel Castro left, we could state with confidence that we shared high appreciation of the importance of Fidel's visit. [Aleksandr] Alexeyev also praised the current conduct and policy of the Prime Minister, which are gaining a considerable prestige in Latin America and elsewhere for the revolutionary leadership. He said that he never had serious doubts about Fidel Castro's opinion on the issue of ICM unity and the Chinese position. This situation now became even more clear. While Raul Castro has always openly held the Marxist-Leninist line, Fidel, on the other hand, has a profound view of the situation and main problems, which allows him to find solutions appropriate to the situation, conditions, and status of Cuba whose political and economic consolidation are still undergoing significant progress.

5490/ 7

IV/2

[1] Ed. note: Castro refers here to Brazilian President João Goulart, who was deposed in a military coup in late March/early April 1964, and to his brother-in-law Leonel Brizzola, the governor of Rio Grande do Sul province whom US officials considered a dangerous leftist with communist connections and tendencies.

[2] Ed. note: Possibly a reference to the 7 March 1965 Chilean parliamentary elections, won by the Christian Democratic Party.

[3] Ed. note: A reference to Lyndon B. Johnson's 7 April 1965 address at Johns Hopkins University.