

June 28, 1967

**The Visit of the Czechoslovak President's Special
Envoy, V. Koucki, to the UAR**

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Summary:

The document summarizes Czechoslovak Politburo Secretary Vladimir Koucki's conversations with UAR President Gamal A. Nasser, Vice President Zakaria Muhi al-Din, and Arab Socialist Union (ASU) Secretary Ali Sabri during his visit to the UAR. The conversations concerned the Arab-Israeli War of 1967 and the UAR's military and economic situation. Koucki draws three conclusions about the UAR's position, mentioning pressure from internal and external reactionary forces and the lagging national economy. The appendix contains a report on military issues raised during a conversation between the commander of the UAR armed forces, General Muhammad Fawzi, and General Miroslav Smoldash of the Czech delegation. Koucki attributes Egypt's defeat in the war to technical and tactical weaknesses of the military leadership. He recommends that Czech cooperation with the UAR include economic support, military training, and delivery of military equipment.

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Contents:

Translation - English

Following the Czechoslovak Communist Party's Politburo decision of 20 June 1967, Valdimir Koucki [Secretary of the CZCP Politburo] visited June the UAR on 26-28.

Accompanying him were Major General M. Shmoldas, the representative of the Czech Chief of Staff, [Frantishek] Langer, the representative of the Foreign Trade Ministry and the head of the Special Technical Service, J. Molek, senior representative from the international department of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. The conversations were translated into Arabic by comrade I. Kubesh from the Foreign Ministry.

Comrade Koucki arrived at the Cairo airport at 4 AM, 26 June, and was welcomed by Minister of Communications, Kamal Henri Badir, and the director general of the Egyptian Bank, Ahmed Fuad. Later that day (8 p.m.), Koucki met with President Nasser, Vice Presidents Zakaria Muhi al-Din and Ali Sabri, Foreign Minister Mahmud Riyad, Supreme Commander of the UAR armed forces Muhammad Fawzi, and the UAR ambassador in Prague, Muhammad Magdi Hasanin.

[The following section, not translated, lists the meetings the delegation had during its stay.]

The negotiations with President Gamal A. Nasser

Koucki informed Nasser at the beginning of the conversation of the Czechoslovak decision to immediately grant Egypt [additional] weapon systems and asked Nasser for his assessment of what had happened recently in the Middle East.

Nasser said that one of the main reasons [for the defeat] was the American decision to overthrow his regime because of his attempts to conduct a non-aligned foreign policy, which annoyed the US. The UAR did not wish to act any differently from many other developing nations. It supported - maybe a little too much - all the anti-imperialist forces around the world: the struggles in Algeria, Yemen, the Arab peninsula, Congo, and other places. The UAR did not succumb even to the economic pressure from the USA. The imperialist tried to foil the progressive orientation of the UAR, first through the 1956 aggression and later through the conspiracy of the reactionary forces, "the Muslim Brotherhood." They hatched all sorts of alliances against the progressive Arab countries: Baghdad, CENTO, and recently the Islamic Pact. They did not succeed in their endeavors. Accordingly, they decided to use Israel against Egypt. Israel pretended to attack Syria and when Egypt came to Syria's help, the Israelis attacked Egypt. Nasser said that the Americans promised the UAR that Israel would not attack it and called for restraint. The USSR also, allegedly, demanded that in any case the UAR would not be the first to strike.

Israel's attack early on 5 June surprised and shocked the UAR. Nasser said that the American Sixth Fleet played an important role in the Israeli success in destroying the Egyptian planes. They [the Americans and the Israelis] were able to paralyze the Egyptian army and especially the activity of radars. The loss of the air force had a paramount influence on developments on the ground. Sinai is a special terrain. Once the Israelis achieved air superiority, the Egyptian army was doomed. Nasser recommended that Fawzi meet with General Shmoldas to discuss matters in detail. I myself [Koucki] did not take part in the conversation apart from "unloading" my feelings and saying that, at the command level, the whole army had been unprepared.

Then Nasser asserted that the situation was still explosive. The enemy's troops were camping 100 km from Cairo and 50 km from Damascus. These are threats which could cause another conflagration. The Arab counties' main task today was to

expedite the renewal of their military capability and prepare themselves for the possibility that Israel would not pull its troops from the occupied territories and the Arabs would have to force it to do so one day.

Nasser said that he did not want to speak about the solution of the Palestinian question, but only about the liberation of Arab lands. Nasser said that Israel would have never unleashed its attack without a directive from Washington. Comrade Koucki said that, even so, the US would have to consider a series of factors that were unfavorable to its interests.

Then Nasser went back to the issue of the imperialistic onslaught. According to him, at the same time [that the UAR was attacked] there was an attack on the progressive forces by the imperialist camp all over the world.

Recently they [the imperialists] achieved a series of victories against the progressive forces; evidence to which may be found in Ghana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Indonesia etc. If Egypt and Syria are defeated, Algeria would be next in line. If the imperialist succeed in defeating the progressive forces in the developing world, they would go on to attack the socialist camp. Nasser thinks it would be wrong [for the progressive camp] to go on by being on the defensive.

Nasser stated that the Egyptians had reached a situation in which they had only two options. Either they surrendered to imperialism and renounced all [the regime's] slogans and [ignored] the people who believed in progressive values, as some regimes of developing countries which had been under imperialist pressures had done in the past, or that they would walk further on the progressive road. Naturally, [the Egyptians] had chosen the second option and were taking various measures to protect [Egypt]. In any case, [said Nasser,] the policy of non-alignment was no longer sustainable, because this policy necessitated maneuvering between the two blocs; one of which was the imperialist [bloc] – Egypt's main enemy.

Therefore, Nasser called on the countries of the socialist camp not to stand idly by but to do everything to support the progressive forces, since the imperialists are the sworn enemies of both. In the face of the imperialist pressure a policy of aloofness or of coexistence would be a policy which the imperialists would take advantage of. The president reiterated that position many times.

Koucki answered that indeed there was a need to choose a specific alternative and explained what we [Czechoslovakia] hoped to achieve through the peaceful coexistence policy and referred to the President's speech at the youth rally at Sushitse [Sušice]. He emphasized our decision to help the progressive forces in the developing world to acquire their independence. He also explained our interest in the broadest possible cooperation between international communism and workers' revolutionary movements on the one hand, and national liberation movements and other progressive forces on the other, and the need for mutual consultations between all the progressive forces.

Koucki also referred to the Chinese leadership which had recently served imperialist aims by breaking the unity of the anti-imperialist forces.

President Nasser said that there was no real unity [of action] in the Arab world against the imperialists and the oil monopolies, mentioning that one cannot rely on the support of Saudi Arabia, nor Tunisia, Morocco, or Libya. He said he positively valued the help of Sudan and highly stressed the importance of the help offered by Algeria [during the war]. He said he had very good relations with [Mohamed Ahmed] Ben Bela and [Houari] Boumedienne . He explained that on 19 June 1965 a friendship treaty was concluded between the two states and Boumedienne proved early on to

be a true anti-imperialist fighter who struggles on behalf of the Arab nation. Accordingly, the relations between Algeria and the UAR improved, and they were now very good.

Comrade Koucki mentioned that our formal relations with Algeria were not developing [properly] and the relations with the FLN were severed because of several factors, the most important of which was the persecution of the progressive elements in Algeria; these elements were instrumental in initiating relations with the socialist camp. The devoted followers that fought for the progressive development of Algeria had been eliminated. Nasser said that he knows many of them and had good relations with them.

During the first hour of the discussions Nasser talked about the difficult situation in Egypt following the Israeli aggression and said that Egypt needed speedy help to restore its military capabilities. He said that the closure of the Suez Canal was costing Egypt 6 million British pounds monthly. It would take 8 months to open it [the Canal] even if the Israeli units were forced to retreat immediately. The repair of the Canal would be costly and lengthy; it might take up to 6 months to repair the damage. Another cause for concern was Egypt's inability to import raw materials and machines which were needed for the [re]construction process. Also, the flow of tourists from the West to the UAR had stopped.

Referring to our limited ability, Comrade Koucki said that we were ready to help as much as we could. It was agreed therefore that a meeting would take place between Koucki and a group of Egyptian colleagues led by Vice-President Zakaria Muhi al-Din. We talked also about the activities of the Arab Socialist Union in the last days and Nasser recommended that Comrade Koucki attend an ASU meeting with Ali Sabri and Kamal Rifa'at.

Basing his remarks on an overall and consistent analysis, Koucki used several opportunities during the three hour conversation to urge the leaders of the UAR to learn from the failures and mistakes which led to the weakening of their defensive abilities and to their defeat. He emphasized again the need to conduct a realistic policy and not to try to reach for the unachievable and illogical.

Nasser's planned trip to Czechoslovakia was discussed. Nasser said that he would come as soon as possible. It was agreed that this would be one of his first visits abroad. The conversation was conducted in a friendly tone. President Nasser followed attentively Koucki's statements in different matters. When he did not understand, he asked questions. He behaved with great respect for his guest and the rest of the delegation. His behavior towards the rest of the Egyptian participants in the meeting was also respectful, as was theirs to him. There was no sign of excessive respect or distance by them towards Nasser. Nasser behaved during the conversation like a man in a difficult situation who, however evaluates the situation realistically, and he did not demonstrate excessive optimism. Rather, he seemed tired and definitely pessimistic with regard to the possibility of halting the imperialist attack on the progressive forces in the world.

In conclusion, Nasser thanked Czechoslovakia and its president for their earlier support of the UAR, thanked Comrade Koucki as the personal representative of the president, and asked that his gratitude would be conveyed to the president and the rest of the Czechoslovak people.

The negotiations of V. Koucki with Vice President Zakaria Muhi al-Din

In the beginning of the conversation, which lasted an hour and a half, Zakaria Muhi

al-Din updated us on several aspects of the economic situation in UAR. He emphasized that the UAR would want to help the national liberation movements in the future.

Muhi al-Din pointed out that there was a danger that Israel would continue its aggression if its position was not accepted by the UN. Therefore all sorts of preparations must be made so that the UAR would be ready to repel that aggression.

Muhi al-Din continued to develop the themes that were brought up by Nasser concerning the country's economic problems. As part of the current economic problems of the UAR, he mentioned the loss of the Sinai oil income and the need to prepare to help the parts of UAR which were under temporary Israeli occupation. He said that the UAR currently had a debt of 125 million pounds. As a result the UAR adopted some austerity measures which resulted in the deterioration of the standard of living, but it seemed that the Egyptian people were ready for that sacrifice.

In this context Muhi al-Din requested that the socialist countries, as friends of the Egyptian people, help in overcoming the situation. He requested that Czechoslovakia do everything in its power to help. He admitted that they could not, at the moment, define precisely the nature of the help they need from us. He assumed, however, that Czechoslovakia could assist with economic aid, which would be approximately higher than 10 million pounds, and military aid, which would be higher than 3 million pounds. He asked us to study their request and emphasized that they do not expect us to foot the whole bill but rather that we would help them as much as we could.

Later our side talked about the lack of coordination between the different economic sectors of the UAR in asking for our help. In conclusion we agreed that the appropriate offices would compile a list of the requests which later would be subject to inquiry as to our capability and for negotiation by the joint Czechoslovak-Egyptian Board for Economic and Technical Affairs this year in July. An appendix with the list of demands is attached [not translated].

It was strongly emphasized that there would be series of questions which we could assess only after consulting with the rest of the socialist countries.

Information about negotiations with Vice President and ASU (Arab Socialist Union) Secretary Ali Sabri

At the outset, Sabri said he was happy to meet the secretary of the Czechoslovak politburo V. Kouckí. Sabri talked in brief about the situation of the different political organizations within the UAR. The ASU currently had 6 million members. Last year, when Egyptian society reached a higher stage of development and opted for socialism, it turned out that an ASU devoid of political control of the avant-garde, and without the participation of the most dedicated supporters of socialism, would not be able to fulfill its task. Accordingly, it was secretly decided to create (with a view to the danger from the opposition and reactionary influence) an ASU revolutionary nucleus. Currently there are 15,000 members in that nucleus – 5,000 of them in Cairo. They [the Egyptians] want to reach a target number of 100,000 members. Sabri indicated that the downside of that approach was the danger that hostile elements would penetrate the movement. Therefore the matter would be handled carefully and the future organization would take on a secret form (according to our embassy, Sabri told other foreign representatives about the preparations for the formation of such a body).

According to Sabri, the latest events in the UAR proved the necessity of organizing the revolutionary forces in the country in order to secure its progressive

development. Sabri said however that he acknowledged the importance of also establishing democratic elements in the organization. According to previous experience with departmental organizations in the UAR, in the majority of cases the members had the ability to choose between several people and elect to the job the most suitable candidate.

Ali Sabri also talked about the ASU leadership's intentions to establish women candidates in the rural elections who would work under the ASU leadership. The aim was to enlarge the participation of women in political life; there was some participation but it was still negligible. He said that at the same time he was satisfied by the activity of the ASU's youth organization which took an important part in the effort to mobilize the masses during the hard moments which the UAR went through. That organization currently consists of about 210,000 members.

Comrade Koucki said he was pleased by the manner in which the ASU reacted to the crisis. For instance, the ASU helped in organizing the masses during the difficult times which the country went through. Sabri said that the intellectuals did not participate to the same extent and did not play a positive role. He said that Nasser's resignation, thanks to the ASU, had developed in the right direction.

In its later part the conversation revolved around the organization of a seminar this May in Algeria under the theme of "Socialism in the Arab World." Ali Sabri said that this might be the first step toward the union of all the Arab revolutionary forces. Then he expressed his opposition to some of the representatives that the other Arab countries chose to send. [Sabri claimed that] they were not representative enough and might influence the congress negatively (comment: the Algerian representatives). Sabri said that he had mainly Syria's and Iraq's representatives in mind. Sabri added that in the future the ASU would encourage the participation of progressive representatives in a way which would make the congress' decisions more binding and positive. Later he assessed the situation of the progressive movements in other Arab countries but spoke mainly of Syria's Ba'ath party; his assessment is similar to ours.

In conclusion V. Koucki expressed his confidence that the relations between the two countries would continue to develop to the benefit of both.

He emphasized the advantages which accrue to the forces which are struggling to the advancement of mankind by the mutual exchange of opinion between the communist movements and the progressive leadership of the developing countries. Sabri agreed and added that the UAR would further work to cement its ties with Czechoslovakia.

Koucki invited Sabri to come to Czechoslovakia and Sabri said he would do so.

Regarding the latest changes in the leadership of the ASU (the appointment of Gamal Abd al-Nasser as General Secretary of the ASU and Kamal Rifat as the Minister of Labor) Sabri said that in essence nothing had changed. He continued to be fully in charge over the ASU and Kamal Rifaat continued to be the secretary of the ASU and, at the same time performed his duties as minister, and was also in charge of defense in the Ismailia region.

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Along side these meetings there were other meetings such as the meetings between General M. Shmoldas and F. Langer and several economic ministers as well as meetings between General M. Shmoldas and the leadership of UAR army. See appendixes A and B [Appendix B dealing with economic issues was not translated].

[The next part deals with the embassy's experience during the war – not translated.]

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With the exception of the strengthening of the police and army forces and the increased protection of public buildings and important installations, the signs of war are not apparent in Cairo. The city was not damaged by the war. The city's population – over 4 million inhabitants – leads a peaceful life. Repeating a pattern that emerged already during the war, the population does not respond to the air alerts. Supply, public transportation, the cinema, and the coffee houses operate normally. Hotels, restaurants, exclusive commerce and historical sites remain in a situation of almost complete vacancy, as Western tourism has stopped, while tourism from the socialist countries is not yet developed. Pedestrians and cars, mainly taxis, fill the streets.

Generally, Cairo and its surroundings welcomed us in a friendly manner. The population's expressions of sympathy intensified during the delegation's stay even in areas which are outside the city center.

Conclusions

1. Beyond the military defeat, the internal and external enemies of the country's progressive development did not succeed in achieving their desired aim – the overthrow of G. A. Nasser's regime. The Egyptian army has suffered significant losses in manpower and especially in military equipment, but these, however, are not irreparable. If the army is to be effective, it must be cleansed of opposition elements. This was done so far only among the higher military echelons. There is also an ongoing purge of the junior officers. Nasser wants to purge the army immediately and thinks that this task constitutes an important part of the army's reconstruction. It should be said that if, at the same time, not enough attention will be devoted to the elimination of the reactionary elements in the ASU and the state's bureaucracy, it will be hard to improve the performance of the army in any substantial way.

The USSR is more than ready to help immediately in re-equipping the army with military hardware and insure that the equipment would be used in an effective way. This help was greatly appreciated by the new commanders of various army units.

2. The military defeat, and the US's and UK's position in the current conflict, led the progressive and prominent citizens of this country, together with Nasser, to reevaluate the current nonalignment foreign policy. They decided to abandon that policy and approach the socialist camp. It cannot be said that this new concept is already fully developed; it is a reaction to the current circumstances rather than a result of a thoughtful analysis of the internal and external situation. Since this process is a matter of great interest to the socialist camp, we must think over the issue and engage it once the leadership of the UAR finally comes up with a final new conception of its foreign policy. But in any case, we think that we should encourage that approach and not hinder it with a reserved approach and unreasonable demands. The leadership of the UAR is aware that the aim of the reactionary forces at home and abroad is to widen the rift between the socialist countries and the progressive developing countries. At the same time, it was able to prevent reactionaries from achieving their main objective on the home front.

The socialist countries and the socialist camp must help Egypt in whatever way possible to find a way out of its predicament and to increase the prestige of the socialist camp in the UAR and the developing countries.

3. The UAR, due to the problems which are mentioned in this report, is going through a tough economic period. There is reason to believe that several leading business

personalities in the UAR, who oppose the progressive manner in which the country is developing and support an alliance with the West, would use this problem to reestablish a capitalist system in Egypt and inflate deliberately the socialist countries' ability to help in order to refute later - in the eyes of the Egyptian people - their ability and their strength. Therefore we must examine immediately our ability to help the UAR to strengthen its military and to insure the basic functions of the national economy. Within the limits of our ability, and in the most efficient and speedy manner, we must lend our help, which could fulfill a significant role, and would be, first and foremost, a help for the progressive development of Egypt.

Appendix IV

Report on military issues

The new commander of the UAR armed forces, General Muhammad Fawzi, met, on 27 June 1967, with General Miroslav Smoldash to further discuss the cooperation between the armies. The new chief of staff, General [Abd al-Munim] Riyad, was also present. The military attaché in Cairo, Colonel Frantisek Sykora, was present as well.

General Fawzi started by welcoming the Czech delegation and expressing the gratitude of the armed forces for the military equipment that was given as a gift. He took an interest in the equipment that would be supplied and the amount of time that would pass until it arrived to Egypt. It was decided that this question would be discussed in detail in a separate meeting between General Smoldash and General Riyad.

General Fawzi further informed us that the Arab side had submitted to the Czech side a request for military equipment. This request was [initially] submitted in the same wording to all the socialist states, but now each socialist government received a specific request. There was a priority for air force equipment, especially MiG-21 fighters and the L-29 training airplanes, and for equipment for the ground forces, especially armored personnel carriers and anti-aircraft weapons.

General Smoldash reiterated the position that was presented in the previous conversation between Koucki and Nasser in which it was emphasized that in Czechoslovakia, unlike other central European socialist countries, there were no Soviet forces and, accordingly, the weight and the responsibility for the first strategic echelon forces rested solely on the Czechoslovak armed forces. This situation demands that the Czechoslovak forces would be at the height of preparedness and equipped with the most modern weapons. This limited the ability of Czechoslovakia to lend this equipment to the UAR. The Czechoslovak government expressed its willingness to help the armed forces of the UAR in the supply of military equipment according to its ability.

General Fawzi said he understood the Czechoslovak position and moved on to discuss specific demands. The negotiation was conducted orally and the written request was given for further discussion between engineer Frantisek Langer and Minister for Arms Industries Bishari (see appendix IVb [not translated]).

During the discussion of the different requests, General Smoldash explained again that there were difficulties connected with the question of mastering and operating the newer equipment. Accordingly, it was explained that in order that the Arab units would be able to master the new equipment quickly and use it effectively, it was essential that several Czechoslovak instructors and experts arrive with the equipment, train the Arab units thoroughly by emphasizing the technical and tactical aspects, teach how to master the weapons and develop among the crews confidence

and trust in the tactical ability of the weapons.

General Fawzi agreed with that proposition and said that they were looking forward to the presence of Czechoslovak advisers in the units which would absorb the Czechoslovak weapons.

Then General Fawzi asked the commander of MTC General Salim to give the supreme command's view of the reasons for the defeat.

Among the main reasons for the defeat was the loss of the majority of planes in the first hours of the war. According to his view, the air force command did not have enough information on the initiation of the aerial aggression, because the Israelis had completely shut down the Egyptian radar system. Initial reconnaissance flights provoked the Egyptian radars to move to their main frequency. That action exposed the whole radar system to an effective blockage of the radar stations in that critical moment. This was done with the help of the American ship Liberty. Another method to achieve that aim was the spreading of a large amount of little metallic objects which were hurled from the planes in great quantities and caused interruptions on the radar screens which made observing of the actual targets impossible. Another effect was that each plane looked on the radar screens like three objects. Allegedly, [the planes used] rockets which used the radars' transmitted waves as a guiding signal to home in on the radars. General Salim admitted that all those difficulties might have been surmounted had the radar operators been trained for this exigency. Be that as it may, in the critical moment they were helpless. Besides, the radar service had never been organized as an independent service which could have supplied information on the enemy's air force and thus make possible at least a partial defensive action by the Egyptian air force.

As to the ground forces, there were two factors responsible for their failure. The main reason was the loss of the majority of planes during the first attack. The remaining planes were unable to defend the ground forces in the Sinai desert and thus the ground forces remained at the mercy of the Israeli planes. In addition, another important factor was the disruption of Egyptian radio communications. Allegedly, the ship Liberty disrupted the radio communications of one tank division and two tank brigades during a 6 to 8 hour period following the beginning of the aggression. For interrupting radio communications at the battalion level, the enemy used groups of Bedouins living in the Sinai desert and equipped them with small communication disruption devices.

As a result, in the first crucial hours of the aggression, the units were more or less disoriented, and, during the latter part of the conflict, the military command was unable to ascertain their positions. But the main reason for the failure, according to General Salim, was the low degree of preparedness by the radio operators who did not proceed to move to alternative frequencies and thus bypass the enemy's disruptions.

During their whole report on reasons for the defeat, neither General Salim or General Fawzi referred to what the senior officers were doing and that issue along with the aforementioned poor technical ability, was, in our mind, the main reason for the military defeat.

According to the reports of our embassy workers, the leading commanders of the army did not assume their positions. The air force was not deployed, the military alert was cancelled, and the commander of the air force was busy during the attack organizing a reception. General Murtagi, commander of the land forces, left Sinai during the period of aggression and went back to Cairo. Furthermore, mid-level officers in the air force and the land forces were allowed, even after 17 May, to leave their units and transfer the command to junior officers.

During the conversation there was also no reference to the organizational structure of the military command. The independence of the air force, the army, and the navy had minimized the role of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the extent that its function was merely to coordinate, and the special status of the Ministry of Defense on top of this created complicated conditions which rendered coordination between the various units during the conflict impossible.

But although these questions were not discussed during the conversation, the leading political and military organs are well aware of them. Evidence of this can be seen in the changes which are being introduced at the top ranks of the military command and are still being conducted at the lower ranks.

In conclusion, General Fawzi underlined that currently they were starting the effort to rebuild the armed forces quickly. At the same time they intend to learn from their experience during the war and [hope to] avoid the mistakes which led to the military defeat. He again expressed the gratitude of the [Egyptian] military and political leadership to the Czechoslovak government for the stand it was taking at this particular moment and expressed his hope that our military cooperation – already having a long tradition – would develop further.

On 28 June 1967, General Smoldash accompanied by engineer F. Langer, Colonel F. Sykora and engineer K. Haly, visited the new Chief of Staff, General [Abd al-]Munim Riyad.

With General Riyad we discussed the specifics of the Czechoslovak [military] grant. Engineer Langer informed [him] of the actions done for the delivery of special materials [weapons] and other forms of aid, and the growing cooperation [between Egypt and Czechoslovakia] in both fields.

General Smoldash mentioned the agreement which was signed by the Egyptian and Czechoslovak chiefs of staff in April 1967 and said that there was readiness from our side to realize that contract immediately, and likewise the military leadership of the UAR was eager for this to happen. General Riyad admitted that he was not well informed regarding the particulars of the aforementioned agreement but promised to support its implementation.

General Riyad, who reached the position of chief of staff after fulfilling the post of the chief of staff of the Arab armies, is a graduate of the Soviet military academy. He knows some Russian and while the conversation was conducted in English, he expressed himself sometimes in Russian. He makes an impression of an energetic and swift commander.

On the same day General Smoldash visited the new commander of the Air Force, Air Marshal Ezza.

Marshal Ezza immediately recalled at the beginning of the conversation that in 1955 he was trained in Czechoslovakia on a MiG-15. Already at that time he held in high esteem the Czechoslovak air force, especially the L-29 training planes (which he later learned to know better). He felt sorry that due to the negative attitude of the previous air force command there was delay in the purchasing of these planes from Czechoslovakia, and many training hours which could have improved the performance of the Egyptian Air Force had been lost. He emphasized that other high officers in the Egyptian air force also held the L-29 training planes in high esteem.

Marshal Ezza and the former commander of the air force, Marshal Sidki [Mahmud], had been, allegedly, at loggerheads and consequently [Ezza] left the army in 1963 to become the civil governor of Aswan Province. As of yet, we are unfamiliar with the

record of his service in his previous positions and his political orientation. It can be said, though, that in his office, which we know from previous visits to Marshal Sidki's office, the portrait of Marshal Amer was removed from the wall and was replaced by a great portrait of Marshal Vershinin, the commander of the Soviet air force.

Conclusion

The military leadership of the UAR's army, like the political leadership, greatly respects the position that our delegation presented regarding further cooperation between the two countries. They expect to receive help from the socialist countries, mainly from the USSR, which has already begun fulfilling that expectation by lending military and technical help and sending shipments. Every day brings to Cairo several dozens of substitute airplanes on AN-12 [planes] (40-60 units) which constitute a real military help. This aerial operation is a testimony that the planes can be quickly assembled, especially those delivered to the Egyptian air force.

The reason for the military defeat was the inadequate tactical and technical ability of the military leadership. It is clear, however, that there were other reasons, such as disunity within the army's leadership and inadequate ability of the senior and junior officers. One can find evidence [to that assertion] in the fact that there is an ongoing replacement of the former senior officers by new ones who were taught and trained in either Czechoslovakia or the USSR. The process of replacing the officers from the lower ranks is also ongoing. An effort to improve the skills of the officers and the soldiers is demanded by every new commander. General Salim, the head of the MTC, during General Smoldash's short visit put forward a request to create within the MTC a strong tactical [studies] department, although in the past he absolutely opposed similar offers we made. The view that one of the reasons for the military defeat was the poor quality of the weapons the UAR army had, and that the Western equipment used by the Israeli army proved itself superior, is prevalent in some quarters. This [notion] was stated obliquely by Vice President [Zakaria] Muhi al-Din during his talks with our delegation. These allegations were countered by the military members of the delegation with a concrete comparison between [Czech and Western] equipment. General Fawzi, the Supreme Commander of the UAR Armed Forces, is willing to let Czechoslovak experts help the lower rank officers acquaint themselves with the new equipment and gain trust and confidence in its use. We must make sure that our military cooperation with the UAR is not limited to deliveries of weapons, but also includes training and instruction.