

December 17, 1957

[N.S. Khrushchev's] Reception of the Syrian Government Delegation

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Summary:

They discusses the current state of the affairs in the Levant and Arab world, including plots against Khalid Al-Azm himself and several other regional leaders. Then, Al-Azm thanks Khrushchev for the Soviet government's support to the Syrian people and delegation members explain how the National Front has been acting to prevent the incursion of imperialist forces.

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RECEPTION OF A SYRIAN GOVERNMENT DELEGATION

17 December 1957

On 17 December N. S. Khrushchev received Deputy Prime Minister of Syrian Khalid el-Azm, the head of a Syrian government delegation.

[The following] delegation members from the Syrian side were present at the reception: Fakher Kayyali, Minister of Public Works; Khalil Kallias, Minister of the National Economy; Hasan Jabbara, Chairman of the Council of Economic Development; and Salah Tarazi, Ambassador of Syria in the USSR.

Present at the reception from the Soviet side were: A. A. Gromyko, USSR Minister of Foreign Affairs; V. S. Semenov, Deputy USSR Minister of Foreign Affairs; S. S. Nemchina, Soviet Ambassador in Syria; and D. S. Solod, Deputy Chief of the Near East Department of the USSR MFA.

The protocol of the conversation follows below.

After a mutual exchange of greetings Azm asks N. S. Khrushchev to devote some time to the Syrian delegation, since without this meeting the visit of the Syrian delegation to the USSR would not be complete.

N. S. KHRUSHCHEV notes that he was not in Moscow when Azm arrived in Moscow and that he is glad to meet with Azm now.

AZM says that before his departure the President of the Syrian Republic Shukri el Quwatli asked him to congratulate and pass his greetings to the leaders of the Soviet state, especially Cde. Khrushchev. The President also asked [him] to say that he very well remembers last year's trip to the Soviet Union.

The President, Prime Minister, and the entire Syrian people deeply store in memory the statement of the Soviet government and the speech of N. S. Khrushchev in defense of the Syrian people at a difficult time for them. The President of Syrian also asked [me] to pass on that he understands that if Syria has resisted the pressure and avoided the clutches of imperialism it is only thanks to the support of the Soviet Union.

While passing on greetings from the President of the Syrian Republic Azm requests it be understood that this greeting come the entire Syrian people for the support which the Soviet people have given Syria. Azm says, we will continue the struggle with all vigor against the imperialists, especially against those who have gathered in Paris at the present time.

We have become aware that Eisenhower has proposed throwing a bridge between the North Atlantic bloc, the Baghdad Pact, and SEATO. We also know that Eisenhower has offered a new weapon to the member countries of the imperialist military blocs. We view these proposals by Eisenhower as a new threat to our country, but we hope that these plans of the imperialists will fail, the same as their previous acts have failed. However, we need protection from these insidious designs of the imperialists.

N. S. KHRUSHCHEV thanks Azm for the greeting and requests that the President be told we are proud and delighted at the courage of the Syrian leaders. We have followed the impending danger threatening Syria very closely. We have taken steps to avert this danger beforehand. All the information we have which we published at one time and in which Turkey is accused of preparing aggression against Syria is genuine. Unquestionably the Americans will be surprised that we know their exact plans. We knew all the decisions of the Turkish General Staff about preparing an attack on Syria. The danger was great.

AZM asked: is it just the Turks?

N. S. KHRUSHCHEV says that first the Americans wanted Jordan and Iraq to act against Syria. However, such a situation has developed in which Jordan and Iraq could not act against Syria and declared that their troops can get out of control and not follow orders. The truth is, it was better for the Americans for Israel to begin action against Syria, but they were afraid that such an act by Israel would unite all the Arab countries. America wanted Jordan and Iraq to at least begin the action, but Turkey

would join them. But when this didn't happen, it was then decided that Turkey, which as a Muslim country could not cause the Arab countries to act against it, would act.

When we knew of this decision about Turkey's action against Syria we began pressure on Turkey. However, we did not use all measures of pressure. This was not required because the Americans began to restrain the Turks.

The Syrians held their own and evoked general delight. The danger has not diminished right now since it is known that when the interventionists attack from outside then the national forces unite against a common enemy. However, when the threat from outside is halted, then inasmuch as there are different classes in the society, ties between them began to weaken and dissension might appear.

A serious soberness of the leaderships of the various parties is needed in order to hold out and not permit the appearance of discord among the parties.

We know that when the US abandoned military action against Syria Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Iraq agreed to remove the current Syrian government. They allocated a large amount of money to fight Syria. Most of this money was contributed by the King of Saudi Arabia. Terrorist acts against Nasser, Quwatli, Asali, Azm, Bizri, and Bakdash were planned.

AZM. I am proud that they also wanted to commit terrorist acts against me.

N. S. KHRUSHCHEV. I don't think that the task of the organization of terrorist acts against individuals was eliminated; [you] need to be cautious and watchful.

Right now a course has been taken to aggravate internal differences in Syria. It is understood that we can sympathize against whom it is directed in the organization of domestic disorder, but averting it will depend on whether the Syrian parties are able to stand above narrow party interests. We would like Syria to develop as an independent country. It is a democratic parliamentary country. We understand that they threaten you with Communism but you can remain calm. We do not interfere in internal affairs and are ready to be friends and live well with a non-Communist Syria. The system of government is a domestic question but, believe me, you need to be careful since we know the plans of the imperialist powers against you. We can say that they want to use domestic forces against you, and in similar cases such actions as terror and murder have more than once been the means of achieving the goals set by the imperialists. Of course, the danger is not only in this. But right now the task is to remove Quwatli, Asali, Azm, Bizri, and Bakdash, and all means will be employed to do this. These intentions remain in force, and they need to be fought. We have reliable information about this and in due course we will also be able to show you the documents.

AZM. We are very grateful to Cde. Khrushchev. You are acting as a true friend. In Syria we consider ourselves people who are carrying out the mission of Arab nationalism. We are guided by the ideas of the unity of the Arabs and we consider that the initiative in accomplishing this unity will originate in Syria. We were the first to raise the banner of friendship with the Soviet Union. We were the first to conclude an agreement with the USSR about cooperation and we are confident that all the Arab countries will soon follow us. We are responsible to future generations for the future of the Arab countries and we are doing everything for future generations not to condemn us. We recognize the burden of this responsibility but inasmuch as we bear the responsibility for the future of Arab unity then we think that the differences between the parties should not play a significant role.

N. S. KHRUSHCHEV. I do not advise underestimating the danger. Enemies will play individual leaders off against one another. The clashes of leaders have often led to serious consequences; it is necessary to take into account that among leaders there are those actually devoted to an idea, but there are also such leaders who might act against their conscience, agree to something not in accord with the idea which they ought to defend. There are many such leaders in history. For example we have had people from a bourgeois environment who defended the cause of the workers well. For example, Lenin was a nobleman, in Romania Petru Groza was a large landowner, but they stoutly defended the interests of another class. However, we can find people who came from the working class but began to act against it. For example, I had a friend with whom I worked in a mine. However, although he was a worker. he acted against Soviet power together with Kornilov and was killed.

There are many examples in history when people from other classes served the working people honestly, but there have also been traitors to their own class who came from a worker's environment. But I am explaining this to you from our own Marxist positions.

AZM. We also have many similar examples, even if one takes our Syrian National Front. It was created before 1955 and took power into its hands. But in 1955 differences occurred inside the Front. Then the enemies of the National Front made use of this and as a result power in the country went into their hands. However, last year we again returned to the organization of all patriotic sources into a united front and we won. The new government relies on this National Front. Now we understand that if the existing National Front is destroyed then our plans will not be accomplished. Therefore we don't want the National Front to be destroyed any more. We now that all the forces and means of struggle will be used against us, murders will be employed underhandedly, and various fissures will be sought out in which the bloc can be insinuated and demolished from within. But now we understand all this and are trying to rally our forces into ranks even more. For example, the Syrian delegation includes representatives of the various political parties of Syria: Kayyali from the National Party; Kallias from the Socialist, and I from the independents. We also consult with Khaled Bakdash. Just yesterday we all together discussed the question of the cooperation of the various parties of Syria and came to the conclusion that we should preserve the National Front with all the conditions. General Nefuri, the Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Syrian Army, who also wanted to come to this meeting, could confirm the unity of views of all the groups comprising the National Front.

I want to assure Cde. Khrushchev that we want to preserve the National Front since we well understand that if now some other party comes to power in Syria this might create a situation in which the Soviet Union will not be able to find the means to help Syria.

The difficulty will be that the imperialists do not want to seize Syria. They want to occupy it only for some time in order to put a pro-American government in power which will carry out their will and instructions.

N. S. Khrushchev notes that we want the national patriotic forces of Syria to develop.

F. KAYYALI. I want to assure Cde. Khrushchev that from our part the policy of friendship with the Soviet Union is not temporary, it is intended for a long period. We have embarked on the path of pursuing this policy after a long study of the policy and goals of the Soviet Union, and when we found common ground then we decided to seek cooperation with the Soviet Union. We have followed the policy of the Soviet Union intently, not only with respect to the Arab countries, but also with respect to other countries. We are convinced that the Soviet Union proceeds in its policy from certain principles and not from positions with sympathy or antipathy for a particular country.

Having studied the policy of the Soviet Union at the UN we have come to the conviction that the Soviet Union, unlike other powers, proceeds from definite, unvarying principles. This policy of the Soviet Union has been studied not only by the leaders of the political parties, but by all the people of Syria. When the Syrian people saw the attitude of the Soviet Union toward Egypt, then their attitude toward the Soviet Union also finally crystallized. When the first Syrian-Soviet agreement about economic cooperation was concluded the Syrian people saw that the Soviet Union was giving economic aid without any conditions whatsoever, then the people of Syrian were even more convinced of the need for friendship with the Soviet Union. Finally, the position of the Soviet Union during the concentration of Turkish troops on the Syrian border finally convinced the Syrian people that Syria should only be with the Soviet Union. Therefore the foreign policy of the Syrian government is the policy of the Syrian people, and also the policy of all Arab peoples, since they regard cooperation with the Soviet Union the same as the Syrian people.

in the face of external danger the Syrian political parties compared the interests of the motherland and the differences which divide them from one another and saw that the scale dipped in favor of the interests of the motherland, and therefore we would like to solemnly assure Cde. Khrushchev that you can be confident in the Syrian

people, and the political parties of Syria draw confidence from the Syrian people. Therefore the unity of Syria will henceforth remain, and we will travel along the path of friendship with the Soviet Union.

We cannot have such differences of which enemies could make use. Many rumors are spread about the differences between the parties in the National Front, but these rumors have no foundation. We are optimists in this regard.

KALLIAS says that he entirely shares the views expressed by Azm and Kayyali, especially their views about the need to keep the current government in power and the unity of the National Front. After the imperialists suffered defeat in their plans to interfere in Syria's affairs from without they will try to search inside the country for any opportunity to overthrow the current government and to split the National Front. The imperialists are striving to foment differences between the parties and spread rumors about differences which in reality do not exist, attributing [them] to individual political leaders who supposedly gave an interview, [or] sometimes publish false information that a particular party in the National Front wants to leave the Front. Imperialist propaganda spreads all these rumors in order to create a state of alarm in the country, discord in the ranks of the National Front, and to make the accomplishment of their subversive plans easier.

Kallias further noted that all the Syrian people have united around the current Syrian government and it should remain in power for a long time. Therefore the preparation of another government to come to power would be a crime, bordering on treason to the motherland. We are grateful to Cde. Khrushchev for the comments he has made. I only want to add that if another government comes to power in Syria it will be a pro-American government and then, as the head of our delegation has already said, such conditions might be created in which the Soviet Union could not find a reason to give aid to Syria. But right now the Soviet Union can avert this by taking steps to strengthen the unity of the National Front, that is, if it acts as it has acted up to now. The Soviet government can give aid to the Syrians in the cause of strengthening the National Front, which is pursuing the following three main goals together with the current government:

1. Pursuit of a foreign policy on the basis of the struggle against the achievement of the plans of the imperialists. This struggle is being waged both in Syria and in the other Arab countries, and it will not permit the establishment of imperialist domination in the countries of the Arab [Middle] East.
2. The struggle against attempts by the imperialists to interfere in the affairs of the Arab countries and the liberation of these countries from under the yoke of the imperialists. The peoples of these countries are going with us. Our President Shukri al-Quwatli has asked [me] to pass to the leaders of the Soviet Union that we very much hope that the time will come when the same governments as ours will come to power in the other Arab countries and will come through the same route as government, that is, through the path of cooperation with the Soviet Union. The main task of our government is the strengthening of the Syrian Army so that it can repel any aggression.

3. The development and strengthening of the economic situation of Syria and to use the natural resources of the country.

All these three goals are interconnected and the main one of them is the third, which influences the successful accomplishment of the first two.

The Soviet Union has given us assistance in the realization of all three of these goals. The further aid of the Soviet Union in the accomplishment of these goals will be its aid in strengthening the unity of the National Front of Syria. This is why the Syrian people highly appreciate the unselfish aid to Syria given by the Soviet Union.

N. S. KHRUSHCHEV expresses a desire for the further strengthening of unity in Syria, ensuring the democratic development in Syria, and lifting the Syrian economy. He thinks that the economic development of Syria is the main thing. We will struggle at home over the solution of the economic problem. I can assure you that the Soviet government and the Soviet people will help Syria with all their soul, with everything that they can, and will stand on the side of the Syrian people and other peoples who

fight for their independence.

Permit [me] to thank you for those good words which you have expressed toward our people.

Please pass greetings to Cde. and Mr. President of Syria Shukri el-Quwatli. He was with us at a difficult moment, during the attack on Egypt.

AZM notes that Quwatli's health is poor right now.

N. S. KHRUSHCHEV requests that Syrian Prime Minister Sabri El-Asali and Chief of the General Staff of the Syrian Army General Bizri be passed greetings, and notes that although we did not meet Bizri we know that the imperialists curse him very strongly and we say that when our enemies curse [someone], that means he is doing a good thing.

AZM. Bizri very much wanted to take part in this trip to the Soviet Union, but he could not since he thinks that the Syrian Army is still not completely ready and he needs to remain in place.

Then Azm thanks Cde. Khrushchev, members of the Soviet government, and the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the aid and defense of Syria, and gives assurance that Syria is the country most friendly to the Soviet Union and will be together with it to the end.

The conversation was recorded by: D. Solod
[signature]

3-ds/ng/yek

Nº 11/obv

4 January 1958

[handwritten:] outgoing 4/obv