

## **June 21, 1961**

### **Reception of Ambassador of the Republic of Iraq Abd el Wahab Mahmoud by Comrade N. S. Khrushchev**

#### **Citation:**

"Reception of Ambassador of the Republic of Iraq Abd el Wahab Mahmoud by Comrade N. S. Khrushchev", June 21, 1961, Wilson Center Digital Archive, RGANI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 566, ll. 40-45. Contributed by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg. <https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/209097>

#### **Summary:**

On June 20, 1961, Nikita Khrushchev, Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, held a farewell meeting with Abd Elwahab Mahmoud, the departing Ambassador of Iraq to the Soviet Union. The discussion reflected on Mahmoud's tenure in the USSR and the strained relations between Iraq and the Soviet Union under General Qasim's government. Khrushchev expressed regret over Mahmoud's departure, noting the deterioration in Soviet-Iraq relations. He criticized General Qasim for persecuting communists and patriots who supported Iraq's revolution, comparing Qasim's actions unfavorably to Lenin's strategic leadership during the Russian Revolution. Khrushchev also discussed broader ideological themes, emphasizing the superiority of the socialist system, Soviet progress in education and industrial production, and the country's long-term economic and cultural development program. Mahmoud acknowledged the challenges in Iraq, expressing optimism that Qasim's rule was temporary and that Iraq would eventually realign with democratic and progressive forces. He emphasized the Iraqi people's desire for friendship with the USSR. The conversation concluded with Khrushchev praising Mahmoud's work as ambassador and offering his best wishes for Mahmoud's future, with advice to share the USSR's perspectives with Qasim if it would not harm him personally. This document summary was generated by an artificial intelligence language model and was reviewed by a Wilson Center staff member.

#### **Credits:**

This document was made possible with support from Blavatnik Family Foundation

#### **Original Language:**

Russian

#### **Contents:**

Translation - English

Secret Copy N° 1

21 June 1961

N° [566]/obv

THE RECEPTION OF ABD ELWAHAB MAHMUD, AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF IRAQ IN THE USSR, BY Cde. N. S. KHRUSHCHEV

N. S. KHRUSHCHEV, Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers received A. W. Makhmud, Ambassador of the Republic of Iraq, on 20 June in connection with his upcoming departure from the Soviet Union and had a conversation with him.

MAKHMUD: I came to bid goodbye to you since I have to leave the Soviet Union. I was happy to live and work in your country, where I constantly felt a friendly inclination both from officials as well as from ordinary Soviet people. [My] stay in the Soviet Union for over two years has again convinced me of the need for Iraq to strengthen and develop friendly relations with the USSR. Therefore I leave your wonderful country with great regret.

KHRUSHCHEV: We also regret your departure, Mr. Ambassador, since we are very pleased with your work as Ambassador of the Republic of Iraq in the USSR and highly appreciate your efforts directed at the development of friendly relations between our countries. We sincerely further regret your departure because we see in this a step by the Iraq government directed at worsening Soviet-Iraq relations.

It needs to be frankly said that a worsening of relations between our countries damages the Republic of Iraq and the Iraqi people, and not the Soviet Union itself. Our country has always striven to develop friendly relations with the Republic of Iraq. General Qasim has forgotten that he conducted the coup with the aid and support of the Iraqi people and the Communist Party of Iraq. Right now he is making short work of the people who helped him make the coup. He is prosecuting and executing patriots who came to the defense of the Republic during the Mosul uprising. It is appropriate in this connection to mention the fable about the peasant whom a worker saved from a bear. This peasant not only did not thank his worker for the rescue, but he berated him for spoiling the bear's hide. Qasim is reminiscent of such a peasant, for he is persecuting the people who saved him.

As you probably know from history during the revolution in Russia Cde. Lenin acted differently. When in 1918 the White Guards armies approached Sverdlovsk, where the Tsar's family, whom the enemies of Soviet power wanted to use in the fight against the workers and peasants, was located at the time Vladimir Il'ich gave the order to liquidate the Tsar's family in the name of saving the revolution.

Lenin and Qasim are absolutely incomparable figures. Qasim should understand that if he does not abandon his current policy his government will be unavoidably doomed to perish. Right after the proclamation of the Iraqi Republic the Soviet Union decisively came to its support. We offered Qasim weapons without any accounting [ *raspiska* ], seriously warned Turkey and Iran, who were preparing an attack on the young Iraqi Republic, and held large military maneuvers in regions bordering these countries.

When Cde. A. I. Mikoyan visited Iraq he tried in conversations with Qasim to convince him of the injustice of the policy he was pursuing. However, Qasim exhibited arrogance and showed himself to be a politically immature figure who had not analyzed the political situation.

We think that such a situation cannot endure for long and that other people will come to replace Qasim. The democratic forces of the Iraqi people will find a way to join together and manage to get the upper hand over Qasim. But such a unification of democratic forces is associated with great sacrifices, for Qasim has embarked on a reactionary path of persecuting patriots.

We have given and are giving great aid to Iraq, but this aid is not intended for Qasim, but for the Iraqi people.

Recently Qasim began to compete with UAR President Nasser in the persecution of Communists. Such a competition will not lead to any good.

Nasser did not like my conversations with the OAR parliamentary delegation which recently visited our country. [I] should say that in reality we do not consider this delegation parliamentary, for it does not represent a body chosen by the people.

I mentioned neither Nasser nor the OAR in conversations with the members of this delegation. I only noted that the governments of some countries declaring that they are building socialism are at the same time throwing into prison and executing Communists who are fighting in the name of the victory of socialism. In such conditions how can one speak of socialism in these countries? The members of the delegation understood that this concerns the United Arab Republic.

I also had conversations with Nasser during his visit to the USSR during the period of the events in Iraq and Lebanon. I asked Nasser what he is fighting for and who he was defending in this fight? Nasser replied that he is defending the cause of all the Arabs. But the Arabs are diverse, there are capitalists and there are workers, there are feudal lords and there are peasants. The feudal lords strive to keep the land in their hands and force the peasants to work for them, and the peasants want to take the land from the feudal lords and be freed from feudal servitude. As is evident, the interests of these classes are completely opposite.

Nasser himself considers that he is defending all the Arabs against imperialism in the name of the idea of Arab nationalism and does not want to recognize the existence of class struggle in the Arab countries. It is well-known that in any country a unification of all class forces takes place during the national liberation movement. But such a unification means only the first stage of the liberation movement, after which there begins the division of the class forces and the class struggle begins. Nasser is making a serious mistake when he asserts that the theory of Arab nationalism is inherent only to the Arab countries. This theory is harmful and does not withstand any criticism. In the OAR, for example, Arab capitalists have arrived to replace the British capitalists. With the development of industry the working class will grow, the class struggle will become exacerbated, and there will come a day when the Arab nationalists themselves will liquidate both Nasser and Qasim.

During the Civil War in Russia friends and even brothers often found themselves in hostile camps, and fought one another. For example, I had a friend with whom I worked together in a mine. During the First World War this friend became an officer of the Tsarist army, in the Civil War he followed Kornilov, and was killed. The father of this friend was a Communist. This example once again affirms the acuteness of the class struggle in a country during a period of revolution.

Our socialist country was born 44 years ago, when there was no Republic of Iraq. Since that time we have experienced a bloody war started by Hitler at the prompting of the imperialists, who tried with his aid to destroy the first country of socialism. But, as you see, we defeated Germany and became even stronger and sturdier.

During my meeting with Kennedy he was forced to admit that the strength of the USSR and US is equal at the present time. It was hardly pleasant for him to admit such a fact.

To try and destroy our country today means to doom oneself to self-destruction. We are becoming stronger with every day and, if the imperialist powers understand this, a good basis for peaceful coexistence will be created.

Just yesterday at a CPSU CC plenum we adopted a new program for the further development of the economy and culture of our country. Right now we already graduate three times as many engineers as the US. The development of culture in our country cannot be compared with the cultural level of the US. Perhaps the fact is not indicative that there is not one theater in the capital of such a rich country as the US? In the Soviet Union each citizen has every opportunity to study, to gain scientific knowledge, at a time as in the US only rich people can get an education. Our system allows the capabilities of each person to be discovered the most broadly.

MAKHMUD: I read in the newspaper Herald Tribune that a group of American scientists were engaged in the study of the growth of industrial production in the USSR. These scientists came to the conclusion that the annual growth of industrial production in the USSR is 107.5% [SIC] and that at such a rate the Soviet Union will reach and surpass the US in the volume of industrial production in less than 10 years.

KHRUSHCHEV: Our new program, which I advise you to closely read, is intended for

20 years. By 1970 we will catch up to the US in the volume of industrial and agricultural production, and far surpass the United States by 1980. Our program provides for transitioning to a 30-hour work week with two days off, an increase of the length of vacations, the creation of a broad network of boarding schools for children and special boarding schools for the elderly, and many other benefits for the people. We intend to introduce free food for workers. Each family will have a separate apartment, and each family member will have his own room.

MAKHMUD: I will study this important program without fail. The Iraqi people not only are seeking friendship with the Soviet Union, but consider this friendship necessary for their country.

Mr. Prime Minister, you said that the fight of the Iraqi people for their rights is associated with great sacrifices. I completely agree with you, but would like to stress that these sacrifices are temporary, for Qasim's being in power is also a temporary phenomenon. I am convinced that in the near future the course of events in Iraq will go another route.

KHRUSHCHEV: I want to again stress that we are very pleased with your activity, Mr. Ambassador, and consider you a true friend of our country. If General Qasim receives you after your return to Baghdad, and I am far from confident of this, then please pass him our wishes and comments. But pass Qasim my words only in the event that this won't personally cause you harm.

Mr. Ambassador, I wish you success, health, and all the best in life.

MAKHMUD: Thank you very much for the attention and the conversation. If I have the chance I will pass Qasim the comments you made without fail.

The conversation lasted 45 minutes. USSR MFA OBV [Department of the Near East] attaché A. A. Baranochnikov interpreted the conversation.

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Nº 964/obv [several illegible letters, probably initials]

21 June 1961