

**September 16, 1964**

**Record of a Conversation between Chairman of the Council Of Ministers of the USSR, N. S. Khrushchev, and Prime Minister of the UAR, Ali Sabri**

**Citation:**

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**Summary:**

Khrushchev and UAR Prime Minister Ali Sabri met to discuss recent developments in Africa, the Middle East, and global imperialism. They reviewed efforts to strengthen Arab and African unity, the ongoing conflicts in Cyprus, Yemen, and the Congo, and growing US military interventions, particularly in Vietnam. Khrushchev affirmed Soviet support for Arab states in their struggle against imperialism, while the two leaders also explored expanded Soviet assistance for agricultural development in the UAR.

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RECORD OF A CONVERSATION  
BETWEEN CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE USSR, N. S.  
KHRUSHCHEV, AND PRIME MINISTER OF THE UAR, ALI SABRI<sup>[1]</sup>

16 September 1964

On the Soviet side present at the talks were:  
Cdes. D.F. Ustinov, S.A. Skachkov, Ye.Ye. Alekseyevsky,  
N.A. Tikhonov, S.G. Lapin, A.I. Savinykh,  
V.Ya. Yerofeyev and A.D. Shchiborin.

On the UAR side present at the talks were:  
Deputy Prime Ministers Aziz Sedky and  
Abdel Mohsen Abu an-Nur; Minister of Light Industry,  
Amin Hilmi Kamil; Ambassador of the UAR to the USSR,  
Murad Ghaleb; Ambassador Mustafa Murtagi.

N. S. Khrushchev: I believe we should let you speak first, [as you are] a guest.

A. Sabri: First of all I would like to present you with the brotherly address of President Gamal Abdel Nasser.

N. S. Khrushchev: Thank you.

A. Sabri: If Chairman Khrushchev agrees, I would like to start with laying out the events that have taken place since your last visit to the UAR, i.e. from May to present time.

N. S. Khrushchev: Please.

A. Sabri: Starting in May of this year a number of conferences and visits have taken place in the UAR. We would also like to point out certain things and exchange opinions on the international situation.

I should first of all mention the conference of the heads of African states which took place in the UAR in July of this year. This conference was dedicated to the issues of African unity and didn't produce any major results, though it did have certain significance for the fight against imperialism on the African continent. The main item of the agenda was the creation of African unity, a united government, and a parliament, which was proposed by Nkrumah. It was clear that there was a big divide among the participants of the conference. The opposition was comprised mostly of countries which were French colonies in the past. The conference supported the position of the UAR that, before creating a united government and parliament, it is necessary to unite the efforts of African states. One cannot transition to constitutional unity without uniting efforts in key areas: communications, culture, and economics. It is quite obvious that the majority of African countries are still not independent from the economic standpoint. African states also have big differences socially and in their social philosophy. Consequently, it would be right to start with establishing close ties in all areas. In this connection the conference resolved to establish a number of commissions on different issues. They will prepare reports for the conferences of African states. The second issue was the fight against colonialism and racial discrimination. Naturally, there were no disagreements about the Portuguese colonies, the RSA, and Southern Rhodesia. Nevertheless, there were disagreements on the issue of Angola. The problem is that they have two liberation movements: one with the center in Congo (Leopoldville) and the other in Congo (Brazzaville). The capabilities of the movement that has a center in Leopoldville are broader due to the geographic location of Leopoldville. However, important events have recently

happened there which were related to Tshombe's return to the country. He pretends that he is ready to fight colonialism; however, we know that he is an agent of imperialism. Therefore the majority of the conference participants spoke in support of the orientation towards the Angola government in Brazzaville. Some participants (of Guinea, Mali, and Algeria) spoke in support of all liberation movements, irrespective of their forms and from where they originate. Therefore the conference issued a resolution to support both movements and to create a commission for coordinating their activities.

After this conference Tshombe undertook steps which confirmed his open connection with imperialism. He is currently using American airplanes, as well as pilots and officers from the RSA. An uprising has started against the reactionary government in Congo, and we are supporting it. However, it is difficult for us to get to the areas controlled by the rebels and to deliver aid to them. For this reason we are trying to support the struggle against Tshombe's government by political means. On 5 September of this year a conference of ministers of foreign ministers of African states took place in Addis-Ababa. It condemned the use of foreign aid by Tshombe's government against the Congolese people. Furthermore, a resolution was passed to create a commission for mediating between Tshombe's government and the Stanleyville government. The purpose of this step is to give legitimacy to the rebel movement. We are striving to give the rebels the opportunity to hold out for as long as possible, as there is a risk that the foreign aid and soldiers may obliterate them. This is in general terms what the situation is in Africa.

In August of this year Archbishop Makarios visited the UAR. Our position on the Cyprus issue is clear. Our positions on this issue coincide in the joint statement about the discussions between Gamal Abdel Nasser and Khrushchev. Before arriving in Alexandria, Makarios visited Athens where he had discussions with the Government of Greece. It was clear that the Greek support of Cyprus deters Turkish aggression. The Greeks told Makarios that they can openly provide military aid to Cyprus only in the event when something bigger than just the independence of Cyprus is at issue. Greeks put forward the unification of Cyprus and Greece as a condition for waging war with Turkey. Makarios stated that he agreed to this on condition that there would be no military bases on Cyprus during the transition period. He told the Greek Government that he would, however, like to consult with Gamal Abdel Nasser before giving the final answer. After this he urgently departed for Alexandria. Nasser stated to Makarios that our main goal was that there be no military bases on Cyprus, including NATO's, but unification with Greece was the issue to be dealt with by Cyprus and its people. Makarios gave assurances that, even in the case of the unification of Cyprus and Greece, he would prevent the establishment of military bases on the territory of Cyprus. Then the discussions touched upon the issue of military aid to Cyprus and the possibility of shipping Soviet weapons through the UAR. Our country has expressed its readiness to start the military training of Cypriots on our territory. As to shipping Soviet weapons to Cyprus through the UAR, we are ready to do this if the Soviet Union agrees to this. Makarios also voiced a number of other requests. For example, a request that the UAR provide an air base to Cyprus in the event of Turkish aggression. But we refused them because we believed that this base would be effectively used by Greece, and since Greece is a member of NATO, it would indirectly pull us into a military conflict.

Finally, the 2nd conference of heads of Arab states took place in Alexandria. It was convened to implement the plans developed by the 1st conference of heads of Arab states with respect to the use of the Jordan River waters as a counterbalance to Israel's unilateral actions aimed at increasing the immigration of Jews into Israel. The conference also discussed the issue of imperialistic military bases on the territories of Arab countries and [discussed] the parts of the Arab world which still remain British colonies. Full agreement was reached on these two issues. However, it is possible that the more important discussions took place outside the walls of the conference. It is known that there are serious disagreements between the Arab countries, between Algeria and Morocco, for example. The King of Morocco didn't attend the conference, but his brother was present. A joint session was convened that included Algeria, Morocco and the UAR. The parties agreed to eliminate political tensions between Algeria and Morocco, so as not to raise the issue of the borders anymore. Ben Bella expressed readiness to conduct negotiations with Morocco about joint natural

resource development in Algeria. In addition, they agreed to conduct monthly meetings between Ben Bella and King Hassan, or their representatives, to discuss controversial issues.

There are also disagreements between the UAR and Saudi Arabia concerning Yemen. Ben Bella and Aref intervened in this dispute. The UAR, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, and Iraq had joint consultations. Saudi Arabia demanded the withdrawal of Egyptian troops from Yemen and holding a referendum on the issue of preserving the monarchy. However, it is clear that a referendum in Yemen cannot reflect the will of the people since tribal sheikhs maintain their influence. Our position is that there is no return for the Yemeni monarchy, and our military should stay in Yemen until it creates an army that will be able to withstand external plots. The main threats to the YAR are not the tribes, but the presence of a British base in the south of the Arabian Peninsula and being in close proximity to Saudi Arabia. As a result the Government of Saudi Arabia has agreed that the UAR will not withdraw its troops, and the leaders of the tribes would get together on the issue of declaring a republic.

Now on the international situation. Lately we have been concerned by changes in American policy. It has begun to resort to the use of force, though on a limited scale (Vietnam, Congo). Britain supports this policy which is evidenced by the maneuvers of the British Navy directed against Indonesia. This causes concern that force can also be used by them in other regions around the globe where a struggle against imperialism is taking place. It is not clear to us whether this policy is temporary and is conducted in connection with the election campaign or not. We would like to hear Chairman Khrushchev's opinion on this issue.

N. S. Khrushchev: I thank you for this detailed information. Our positions coincide on all the issues that you have touched upon. We support Arab unity, uniting the forces against imperialism, and we are paying attention to your position with respect to Israel. We consider your position regarding Yemen correct. We have a common understanding on the issue of the relations between Morocco and Algeria. Your tactic for improving relations between the UAR, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan, is correct. Of course with this respect you cannot be in absolute agreement, and you shouldn't have any illusions about it, but you are now benefiting from this tactic. The issue of the African unity is very great and important, but at the same time it is very complicated. We are aware of Nkrumah's ideas. They are noble and progressive, but they are currently completely unrealistic. Currently liberated African countries are going through a stage of social stratification. Previously in the struggle against the white colonizers it was clear who was a friend and who was an enemy. But now it takes time to figure out who is a friend among the black community and who is the enemy. Apparently this process is currently taking place among the black people. But even after the stratification is complete it will be difficult to create a unity of African states. There are far too many national, tribal, clan, and other prejudices. After all, look what's happening even between the socialist countries which are founded on a Marxist-Leninist basis. This is nothing but a manifestation of bourgeois chauvinistic prejudices. And these are parties, founded on a common basis, which just interpret it differently, but there are different trends. Some say that they support who knows what kind of socialism, others favor capitalism. There are monarchies in Africa. How would they submit to a unified government? It is impossible to imagine. As a guideline, these goals are correct, but from a practical standpoint, this is a matter of a distant future. Evidently, they will ultimately come to this when all states adopt progressive positions, positions of a scientific understanding of events. But a unification of military and economic efforts needs to be implemented between all independent countries.

We have a common understanding of the situation in Cyprus. This is a complicated issue. Makarios wants independence for Cyprus but doesn't want to allow the creation of a Turkish base instead of the British one. He hasn't stated this anywhere, but evidently in reality he strives to have Turks leave Cyprus forever. But he only weakens himself by this. He cannot treat a Muslim Turk the same way [he treats] a Christian. After all, he is a priest. And in this lies his weakness. We have stated more than once that we would like the Turks and Greeks to live as brothers. But Makarios doesn't understand this. Consequently, the struggle has a nationalistic basis there. The Greeks are oriented toward Greece and the Turks [toward] Turkey, and the

imperialists use this. The Greeks support the annexation of Cyprus to Greece, and are ready to compromise with Turkey, and to create a Turkish base on Cyprus. The USA and Britain are interested in this. They want to keep Cyprus as the base against the Arabs and the Middle East. After all, they don't need Cyprus as a [military] base against Greece and Turkey. They are masking their intentions by pretending that they want to bring order to Cyprus. But the order will come when the military base is eliminated. We believe that Cyprus should be provided with military aid and we are ready for this. But we think that the Cypriots won't accept it. Their delegation is currently visiting here. They have come here to improve their image and scare the Americans. The common folk are of course in favor of this assistance, but the rulers are opposed. Greece is also against it, and don't even get me started about the Turks. You can expect just about anything [to happen] on Cyprus, including a coup and the murder of Makarios. Just like you, we stand for non-interference in Cyprus' internal affairs, and in favor of its independence. Unification with Greece is the matter for the Cypriots to decide. It is easier for them to get weapons through you than from us. If they want to get them directly from us, then we are ready for that. If they want to have them delivered through the UAR, then that's your business. Syria has also expressed a desire to help Cyprus. Their president stated that. But we know that Syria is just rambling on about this. It is itself vulnerable to Turkey. On our side, we lack the ability to communicate with Cyprus directly. There are NATO countries between us, and they will not allow this. Engaging in a war with Turkey is not smart. If Greeks allowed the overflight of our airplanes over Greece, then we could do something. There are no other ways. We could also make use the territory of Bulgaria, provided that it agreed to that. But one has to take into account that it is also vulnerable to Turkey.

We consider that the overall international situation is not bad. America is exhibiting aggressiveness in Vietnam, but it doesn't want to engage in a big war. It is more than likely a policing, punitive expedition. America is afraid of a second Korean War. It got into Vietnam and doesn't know how to get out. It doesn't want to get stuck even deeper. It cannot use nuclear weapons in this type of war, but it doesn't want to use manpower to fight a war in a jungle. America always fights wars with technology. In WWII Americans lost less than we lost in just one operation. Therefore Americans instigated Vietnam with their Navy, and this way, in the eyes of the reactionary forces, Johnson won the battle prior to the elections. He lost five or eight airplanes and left. I think that he is not going to start a war there. He is afraid of war. Moreover, nothing is threatening America directly. It is now trying to preserve its status quo in the world, i.e. to prevent capitalist countries from transitioning to a socialist system. This is not the case when the whole nation clearly and decisively stands for its independence, as it is in the UAR, for example. The Americans are forced to come to terms with this. But if there were forces who would take up arms against the government, then the Americans would take their side. The nature of imperialism is aggressive and we have to take this into account. Fidel Castro used to say that Americans were plotting this and that against Cuba. I answered him: And what do you want? You want them to help you build socialism on Cuba and send you greetings?

After the October Revolution the British, French, Germans, Americans, and others opposed us. They wanted to strangle us then. And now they come to visit us and make pleasant speeches, because they cannot do anything about us and want to earn some capital. But they don't accept us, though they tolerate us. In a word, they are using every opportunity to suppress revolutionary movements and preserve the capitalist system. We have to understand this. We are doing the same thing. We also help people who are ready and are fighting against imperialism and capitalism. It's a prolonged struggle, and it will continue until imperialism and capitalism are wiped off the face of the earth. But these are not wars between states, these are wars inside countries, wars between the poor and the rich. This is a sacred struggle and it needs to be supported. That is specifically why we have differences with China. They consider wars between states acceptable though they don't talk about it. They consider that such wars weaken imperialism and facilitate the transformation of the countries to socialism. This is a very dangerous course. This is where Mao Zedong's slogan originates from, "On the ruins of fallen imperialism an even more beautiful society will flourish". It is ultimately correct. After every fire the grass grows back. After wars it's the same, but what kind of disaster will it bring, how many people will

survive, nobody knows, including Mao Zedong. So would you have the Soviet Union start a war with the USA for the liberation of the American people so that they can build socialism? What would that mean? A nuclear strike. Otherwise we just won't be able to reach them. They live 11,000 kilometers away from us. We will destroy industrial centers, for example, Chicago. What will be left of the workers there? After all, bombs do not discriminate between workers, farmers, and capitalists. Or, let's say, we strike West Germany. Our scientists say that we can't drop a 100-megaton bomb on it, or else our soldiers will be harmed. This war will reduce [everything to an absurdity]. Moreover, Americans are not going to beg us. They are going to drop bombs on us. Their bombs are not as powerful as the Soviet ones, but they may be greater in quantity. Therefore we renounce military action as a means of achieving the victory of communism in the world. But we support a war inside a nation, a state, a war of the oppressed against the oppressors by any means available - peaceful or revolutionary. This depends on the conditions in each specific country. Our sympathies are on the side of the people and against the oppressors. Therefore we support the struggle in Angola. This is a sacred war, and we are prepared to help the patriots. We welcome the war in Congo against the colonizers, we are supporting Indonesia and your country in every way, because it is our common cause. You are defending your rights and organizing your society the way you like it. You said that the Americans are taking part in the war in Congo. This is true. But they are now behaving more cautiously there than in Vietnam. They are not taking part with their military personnel, they are using Cuban counterrevolutionaries and South Africans. They gave Tshombe old planes which needed to be demolished. The reason they do this is clear: they are afraid of the growing power of the people, they want to preserve their base there. They took Tshombe as a tool for a war directed against the people. If one of the peoples revolted in the Soviet Union, then the Americans would give them weapons. This applies to you too. But they are not going to start a war. At least not now. They are not prepared for it. Our objective in the future is not to create situations that would start a war. We believe that the situation now is not bad, considering that the globe is like a Noah's Ark, where the clean and unclean live [together]. If [we] didn't have such differences with China, then Americans wouldn't allow themselves to even think about what they are pulling off right now in Vietnam. China is effectively destroying the unity of socialist countries, though it is itself fighting against imperialism. The Chinese effectively encourage the aggressiveness of imperialism. We have a military alliance with China which was concluded against the Japanese and the Americans. It is in force. Now Mao Zedong tells Japanese specialists that the Russians, he says, seized a lot of land and we are going to pay them back one day. Of course, Americans think that it would be possible [for them] to barge into Vietnam: the Russians won't be able to stop us because they themselves are also threatened by the Chinese. Mao Zedong told the Japanese that there are three powers in the world now. First is the Soviet Union and American imperialism. Second are the liberated countries or those in the process of being liberated, and the third is China, Japan, France, and West Germany. Thus West Germany and France end up among the progressive forces. But what is the difference between De Gaulle's policy and the American policy? None. Between the policy of France and Britain? None. They are fighting amongst themselves for "greatness" and a place on earth. But these are imperialistic countries. The issue is who has the power and who has lost it already. And if the Soviet Union started falling apart, every one of them would try to get a piece of the pie for themselves. But unfortunately for our opponents and fortunately for us they cannot do anything tangible.

We have means to overcome all of them together or one at a time. The number of divisions on each side is an outdated way to count, but that's still Mao Zedong's position. In 1958 I had a friendly conversation with him. He told me that imperialists have so many divisions, and he started counting their population. And he said, we have way more. I told him then, you can't measure the ratio of forces this way anymore. The number of divisions was a decisive factor when the wars were fought with pikes and bayonets. The appearance of the machine gun already changed the [way we] count, and artillery introduced its own laws. The invention of an atomic bomb overturned the whole concept of war. In case of war West Germany would not even make it to our territory. We would have defeated it within its own borders. For this we would have needed maybe a few dozen missiles. Missiles are our deterrent

power. We don't want a war. I cannot speak for the US, [I cannot say] that they do not want a war, but they are not prepared for it. We are currently dedicating all our efforts to economic development, but we are in no way lessening our attention to weapons. On Monday I dedicated a whole day to military issues. I visited Kubinka where all new weapons systems were test-demonstrated. I was satisfied and I thanked the scientists and soldiers. [We] can work calmly. On 23 September I will see you off, and then go out of town for a couple of days to observe the launch of a fabulous strategic missile. This is the main thing that preserves our independence and inviolability. We look into the future in an upbeat mood. We have what we need to protect ourselves from aggression and to respond in kind. We have already proven our superiority in peaceful competition, as our growth rates are several times greater than the Americans'. And this is the most important [thing]. The old system can be only overcome by a new, more productive system. If a country is strong militarily, but its economy is weak, then it cannot be strong. The basis of military power is economics. As some speakers say after they have delivered a five-hour speech - this is, in short, what I wanted to say.

A. Sabri: Thank you very much for this thorough description of events and opinions of the Soviet government. It is clear that our positions on key issues are similar, and better yet, they are unified.

Now I would like to touch upon relations between our countries. I agree that economic power is the most important thing. As you could see for yourself during your visit to the UAR, we are making great efforts in this area. And in this the Soviet Union is helping us with complete sincerity. During your visit to us you agreed to extend a new credit to us for laying the groundwork for industrialization - for heavy industry. Among members of our delegation there are the Deputy Prime Minister for Industry, Aziz Sedky, and a group of experts. I believe that they will meet with the Soviet experts and reach an agreement. I want to bring up a different subject right now. When you and I were in Alexandria, you made important comments about the development of agriculture in the UAR. We agree with them. But, due to the political and social conditions, until now it still has not been clear to us what avenues there are to solve the problem of agriculture. Political and social conditions that were in place prior to the revolution of 1952 forced us to take a certain path to solve the issues in this area. We felt that these steps were not sufficient and that they were not bringing the kind of results which we wanted. On the other hand, the development of agriculture goes along with the development of industry, which makes planning more difficult. After our conversation in Alexandria and your offer to help develop 10,000 feddans, we decided to introduce new practices in agriculture. However, we are ultimately concerned about a possible decrease in productivity of labor. After all, any failure in the production area will be used by the enemies surrounding us. Chairman Khrushchev said in Alexandria that productivity of labor is higher on state farms than on collective farms or individually-owned farms. Now we want to get a first-hand familiarity with this subject.

N. S. Khrushchev: Productivity is almost twice as high at state farms than at collective farms. This is given they are equally technically equipped. It is the same machinery but different organization. And in your case the productivity will be 20 times higher. I am saying this without preliminary calculations, but even 10 times or five would be enough for you. This will be a tractor versus a hoe. When you are in the Hungry Steppe [*Golodnaya Step'*], the engineers will show you everything in real life.

A. Sabri: We are serious about wanting to begin this method [*opyt*], but we don't have any experience in technical and organizational respects. We want to get it from you. As we have already discussed in Alexandria, this method will be very hard to implement in existing villages. We are going to implement them on the new lands which will be created as a result of the Aswan High Dam construction.

N. S. Khrushchev: I didn't suggest that you start with the existing farms. If you did this, you would have a quarrel with the peasants. On the new lands there will be no one with whom to have a quarrel. The workers will make money. This will be beneficial from both economic and political standpoint. The old peasantry will later see for themselves that you can no longer work the old way. V. I. Lenin used to say that if we had 10,000 tractors and could show a peasant how his work should be done, he would have said that he supported communism. But we didn't have this at

the time. This thought is useful for you.

A. Sabri: We are firmly convinced that this is the right way, but we need the assistance of the Soviet Union so that we could ensure the success of the method. We ask that you provide technical assistance. Could you possibly help us develop 200,000 feddans of land and sign an agreement with us about that? This is the subject that we would like to discuss with you.

N. S. Khrushchev: I am not prepared for this right now. I need to think, to calculate what will be needed for this. You will see everything, as if on a scale model, [when you are] in the Hungry Steppe. I have a very concrete idea what it means, and you don't yet. It requires a lot of effort and resources, though it later pays off. There you will see in practice what kind of equipment you will need. President Nasser and I spoke about shipments of machinery to the UAR. This is a possible thing to do. In any case, working capital will be needed. On our [farms] this capital pays off in a year and a half, and then the farms start working like printing presses for printing money. These are highly cost-effective farms, they bring riches, but as I have already said, working capital is needed. We are going to organize an experimental farm for you. You will see how fast it will start making money. We can take upon ourselves the training of personnel, partly in the Soviet Union. Education is better not on paper, behind the desk, but in the field. You will see that your guys will be able to work no worse than our guys from Uzbekistan. You yourselves have to formulate what you need. We will take upon ourselves the supply of machinery. Maybe it will be more cost-effective for you to produce some machines by yourselves. Of course we will supply you with licenses and provide technical assistance. This is a formidable task. I attach great political and economic importance to it. In the Hungry Steppe you will see the desert, the construction process, and farms that are already working and yielding a profit. You will see what accommodations equipped with modern conveniences, what schools, day-care centers, pre-schools and hospitals we build for the workers. Cde. Alekseyevsky will accompany you. He is an irrigation specialist. You will be met there by Cde. Sarkisov, who heads the construction. He is a very knowledgeable person. In two or three years he manages to bring the size of the crops to 25-30 centners of raw cotton per hectare.

Let your people get behind a desk with Skachkov and start working. Let each side demonstrate its abilities.

The conversation was translated by V. I. Solov'yev.

Written down by: [signature] (O. Kovtunovich)

2-OK/zf

18.09.1964

No.01486/obv

[handwritten: Inv. No.730/obv

28.09.64]

[1] This Memorandum of Conversation has neither been disseminated, nor reviewed by N. S. Khrushchev