

May 22, 1959

**Record of a Conversation between N.S. Khrushchev
and UAR ambassador in Moscow M.A Al-Kush**

Citation:

"Record of a Conversation between N.S. Khrushchev and UAR ambassador in Moscow M.A Al-Kush", May 22, 1959, Wilson Center Digital Archive, RGANI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 561, ll. 23-42. Contributed by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg
<https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/300897>

Summary:

In the conversation, N. S. Khrushchev and M. A. al-Kuni discuss tensions between the USSR and the UAR (Egypt), particularly misunderstandings stemming from speeches by President Nasser and Soviet responses. Khrushchev emphasizes the USSR's commitment to aiding the UAR and supporting anti-imperialist struggles while rejecting accusations of spreading Communism intentionally. Al-Kuni conveys Nasser's regret over the escalation of disagreements and his desire to preserve the friendship between the two nations. Both sides acknowledge the challenges posed by regional dynamics and agree on the importance of improving relations for mutual benefit and peace in the Middle East. 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

[handwritten: distributed the CPSU CC Presidium members and candidate members and Cde. Kuznetsov]

RECORD OF A CONVERSATION

between N. S. Khrushchev, Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, and M. A. al-Kuni, UAR Ambassador in Moscow, 22 May 1959*

*the record of the conversation was not reviewed by N. S. Khrushchev

N. S. Khrushchev apologized that he has been unable to receive the ambassador earlier due to the press of business.

al-Kuni thanked N. S. Khrushchev for the readiness to receive him, and said that he had hoped to be seen earlier but understood that there was not such an opportunity. President Nasser asked [me] to personally pass to N. S. Khrushchev [his] best wishes and noted that he, the President, highly appreciates the personal friendship with the head of the Soviet Government and the good relations between the USSR and the UAR.

N. S. Khrushchev expressed gratitude and satisfaction with the fact that the President values the personal friendship and favors good relations between the two countries. N. S. Khrushchev asked that Nasser be thanked for his good wishes and pass him greeting and best wishes.

al-Kuni presented N. S. Khrushchev with a personal message from President Nasser dated 12 May (the translation is being distributed separately). He said that the message is somewhat long and required much time to write. It has 63 pages.

N. S. Khrushchev expressed gratitude and noted that the President doubled the length of his, Khrushchev's, letter.

al-Kuni said that he re-read the President's letter of reply several times. It is dominated by a remarkable spirit of conciliation and friendship. It also contains the presentation of several facts and corrections with respect to some facts cited in N. S. Khrushchev's message.

President Nasser wanted to assure you, continued Al-Kuni, that he quite values friendship with the Soviet Union and will do everything that depends on him to preserve and strengthen this friendship. At the same time he naturally has to strive to preserve the independence and maintain the dignity of his country.

His speech in Port Said, which the President sincerely regrets, apparently served as the beginning of the misunderstandings between the UAR and the USSR but in his speech he in no way wanted to insult or criticize Communism as a teaching, but wanted only to warn local Communists, and he devoted only 10 lines to them. He regrets that his speech was taken in Moscow as attacks on Communism as a teaching, and considered that N. S. Khrushchev's speech at the 21st CPSU Congress was not friendly toward the UAR in some places. Nevertheless, the President displayed patience and did not respond to this speech, and only Arab journalists commenting on this speech expressed dissatisfaction with the statements in it regarding our country. In his subsequent multiple speeches in Syria the President did not refer to the statement of N. S. Khrushchev; likewise he avoided speaking about the USSR in a bad way and, on the contrary, stressed the good that the Soviet Union had done with respect to the UAR. Therefore N. S. Khrushchev's 16 March speech in the Kremlin at a reception on honor of an Iraqi economic delegation was quite surprising. This speech was sharp and therefore he was forced to defend himself. Please understand that we were forced to defend ourselves when we were attacked.

We realize that all this is only to the benefit of our common enemies. For this it is sufficient to see what is happening right now in Jordan, Sudan, and in Lebanon, where Chamoun comes on the stage again and, to a certain extent, in Iraq. We sincerely wish to overcome these difficulties and restore our friendship. Of course, a certain time will be needed for this, but we will be ready to apply efforts in this direction and are confident that this friendship will be of use to both countries as well as to the cause of peace in the Middle East.

I would like to stress one circumstance, namely that you, as it seems to us, did not exactly understand the meaning of the President's speech about gratitude toward the USSR. I am confident that you will be satisfied with Mr. Nasser's reply.

N. S. Khrushchev thanked the ambassador for the explanations. He said that only when familiarized with Nasser's message will he be in a position to form a proper opinion about it. Right now, continued N. S. Khrushchev, I only want to note that if the message contains what the ambassador just said, then we cannot agree in advance with the interpretation as if we attacked but you defended. It is not hard to determine who attacked: the press, our messages demonstrate that we were not the attacking side. And, really, we had no basis for this. You are right in saying that the only result of polemics was that it caused harm to relations between the USSR and the UAR. But we could not want to cause harm to these relations. Would it not be senseless at one and the same time to help your country and to create difficulties in relations with it? We thought that you had a better opinion of us and did not consider us such naïve statesmen. We have actually given you aid. If you talk about military aid, we have sold you much dirt cheap, for it is completely obvious that handing over weapons to you is by no means a commercial deal since payment for weapons has a purely symbolic nature. Moreover, we have supplied you with such weapons which we have not given to another country at any price. All this says that we sincerely wanted to develop a friendship between our countries, although we knew from the very start that you are not Communists. Thus the steps which led to the misunderstandings were not made by us, but by you.

We have not interfered in the internal affairs of other countries and we do not interfere. We are also friends with countries which openly take anti-Communist positions. Of course, we have our own point of view on the social system of capitalist society, but this is a matter of our convictions and we do not impose our point of view on anyone.

But when President Nasser took upon himself the task of attacking international Communism, on which Mussolini and Hitler had previously stumbled, then we could not let this pass by.

I do not plan to engage in arithmetic and count right now how many times Mr. Nasser has recently spoken and what positions he has advanced. But I firmly know that your press is completely controlled by the government, that those editors who do not follow the prescribed course are slowly replaced and then jailed. Therefore what was written in your press against the Soviet government and its leaders does not contradict the point of view of the President.

The slogan "neither dollars nor rubles" is also by no means an invention of Syrian kids. But we do not have intentions of imposing rubles on anyone, we have the very biggest pockets. If you don't want to receive rubles, refuse them. We will use them productively in another place, especially as Soviet replies are awaited with impatience in many places abroad. We eagerly give rubles when we can, but we do not want to be called fools for this and slandered to the whole world. It is one thing when a party giving aid does not advance political conditions, but another thing when those offering unselfish aid are subjected to insults. It is necessary to understand that we are in a difficult position: in the UAR they slander us, but we continue to give it aid. Public opinion of our country is perplexed, but abroad they can accuse us of pursuing some special goals if we continue to give aid in spite of the insults. Therefore, if rubles do not suit you, refuse them.

I remembers the meetings with Marshal Amer. He is a pleasant conversationalist and a fascinating person. He was able to convince us of the need to give you credits. Now they insult us for this.

If we are so hostile to the leadership of the UAR, as you depict it, then how can we explain that during the last trip of Mr. Nasser to Moscow we dissuaded him from flying home from Moscow via the Mediterranean Sea to avoid dangerous consequences and recommended going via Iran. For with ill-will on our part we would not have dissuaded him. In this event we would have lost an aircraft with a crew, and you, a President, but we fully recognize that important role which he plays in your country.

We have treated the President as a friend and have warned him of plots being prepared against him more than once. We were sincere in our relations with him and

treated him and the people of the UAR like brothers. Therefore we explain the steps taken against us by other causes. If you want, I will say what.

al-Kuni asked N. S. Khrushchev to say.

N. S. Khrushchev said that the first reason is that President Nasser has encountered great domestic difficulties in Syria. The business of uniting Egypt with Syria was not sufficiently thought out, continued N. S. Khrushchev, and they did not listen to the warnings which were made to Mr. Nasser during his last visit to Moscow when we explained that he had made a big mistake with respect to the form of the unification. And we did not do this because we pursued any special goals. For no one wanted to make Syria socialist: to do this the Syrians need, as we say, to eat a lot of salt [Translator's note: a proverb which means "to know them very well"]. Such things don't fall from the sky. Neither in Egypt nor in Syria are there such conditions which would allow them to become socialist countries. We are not inquiring into policy. Therefore what we said to Mr. Nasser with respect to Syria we said while cherishing sincere feelings of respect toward the President and the Arabs.

Yes, and moreover I said this after the unification. I said that this act was not sufficiently thought out, that it would bring you only difficulties. And this is understandable. The population of Syria was accustomed to several democratic institutions – a parliamentary system, a parliament with a government accountable to it, and other attributes of a bourgeois democratic country. It can hardly be disputed that Syria was a more democratic country than Egypt. I am not confident, but I think that the standard of living in Syria was higher than in Egypt. Although I do not have systematic information, I think that the percentage of literacy in Syria is higher than in Egypt.

Imagine what you will get if you take all this and mix it. You will not get a single whole, its constituent parts will push away from one another. In fact Syria had its own political leaders who played a definite role in the government. After the unification they left the scene altogether or [now] occupy a tertiary role. It had its own army there, its own command staff. It is natural that President Nasser decided to replace the old officers and generals with new ones. Finding myself in the position of Mr. Nasser we might possibly act the same way, intending that [we] had to resort to this after the unification was carried out in that form which Mr. Nasser preferred. It was necessity to have loyal officers and generals. But those Syrian officers and generals who were replaced or demoted could not quietly endure this; they switched to the opposition.

Now imagine that if the unification had been done on another basis, on the basis of a federation or a confederation. Then the independence of both countries would have been preserved, the political leaders would have held their posts, and there would have been a consolidation of the two Arab countries under the leadership of President Nasser.

Right now, not only Syria but also other Arab countries are fearing unification with the UAR; then with another approach and solution of this problem they would have strived for unity, for it needs to be kept in mind that there are kingdoms among the Arab countries whose heads cannot agree to a more complete merger of the Arab countries.

I was convinced that they were rushing with the union of Egypt and Syria and that difficulties would unavoidably arise as a result of this. And here, having encountered these difficulties, the leaders of the UAR have decided to find a scapegoat in the form of world Communism.

I will not give advice so that your conceptions are not incorrect. However, I think that the difficulties pointed out by me will grow. I will add only that you yourselves have stirred the pot, so you need to clear it up yourselves.

The second cause of the difficulties which have arisen in our relations is that a desire has appeared in the UAR to play to the Western powers on an anti-Communist violin. These melodies are beloved in the West and they even pay for them. We know that they have already paid you something for this. We know that the Westerners say: let's do this secretly since otherwise the Communists will make use of this. We know how much you been promised and how much was promised. We know that for now the Westerners give you only a taste but give little: they still don't trust Mr. Nasser

because he has actually done well in the fight against imperialism. They look at him, they throw him away – the more active the anti-Communist statements the more they promise. But if the President breaks with us, then they will give nothing.

There was a time when we didn't even have an ambassador in Cairo, but we got along without this and developed. If you decide to break relations with us this would not prevent us from moving forward. The situation is such that we would lose little from this, but you [would lose] much more. It would cause harm to the Arab countries. But time would pass and people would figure out who was right and who was at fault.

Maybe it would have turned out such that the Arab countries would not have started to get aid from us, but it wouldn't have made it harder for us. Even if one imagines the worse, that the Americans come to agreement with you about placement of their military bases it also would not be a great disaster for us, for we lived even when there were British bases in Egypt. It is clearer to you who is better, the British or the Americans.

If you quarrel with us, we would lose something, but you [would lose] much. The other Arab countries would lose much since this would create conditions for the imperialists to put pressure on them.

I will note that nothing passes in history without a trace. At one time we had an ambassador in Iraq. Then they expelled him. Later there came other times, the King was liquidated, and our ambassador went back.

So, such methods of fighting international Communism or the Soviet Union do not yield dissidents. I do not want to exaggerate the role of the UAR, but the socialist camp is strong and not only will they not crush us with mosquito bites, but also not with a kick.

Of course, frictions with you also do not provide us with a benefit. Yes, and there is some benefit to you from this: for what you get from the West for quarreling with the USSR is considerably less than what you get from us. So you yourselves see how it will be. We wrote the President a frank letter and our relations will depend much on the position which he takes. In one of the unpublished conversations with journalists Mr. Nasser declared that he will respond with 10 statements to one of mine. But I do not intend to compete with him in this, but please bear in mind that we will not remain in debt.

But it would it not be better to stop the mutual accusations in the interests of our countries and the battle for peace against the imperialists [?] We are not vindictive. In politics we ought not to be guided by grudges but by the goals with which we are faced. Whoever looks at yesterday in his policy will never outline the correct path forward. But ahead are such problems, the solutions to which demand that we be friends, and we are especially interested in this.

If President Nasser wishes to restore friendly relations, personal [ones] and the [ones] between the countries, we will be pleased to seek this, but on condition that this will be done sincerely. After all, it is possible not to speak in the press, but to nevertheless say unpleasant things, and often what they whisper in Cairo sounds in Moscow like through a loudspeaker. At times it turns out such that you whisper to some people, and those, to others, and it finally reaches us.

But you had an opportunity to be make sure of the correctness of our information. When, for example, we and you fought against the imperialists who unleashed aggression against Egypt, and against their intrigues with respect to Syria, we informed you accurately about all the intentions of the imperialists. When the colonizers wanted to stifle the Iraqi Republic we informed you of all the intrigues of Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan. In addition, we could have informed you that right now you are speaking about us to your former enemies; we don't consider this improper al-Kuni said that he will talk outside the bounds of the message and, in presenting his thoughts, will touch on rumors from Cairo which are reaching Moscow.

N. S. Khrushchev points out that these are not rumors.

al-Kuni insists that in discussions with him neither Nasser nor other UAR leaders ever said a single bad word with regard to the Soviet Union. After the worsening of relations President Nasser even spoke with great sympathy about N. S. Khrushchev

as an outstanding figure. Of course, he was speaking about difficulties, but without bitterness.

This surprised me, continued al-Kuni, since it does not correspond to our nature but, evidently, our character itself has changed. The President did not even condemn that in the conversation with [Karandinya] you compared him to a frog, which tries to puff himself up to [the size] of an ox. He was not insulted even that you asserted that he makes incorrect decisions from youth and a quick temper.

N. S. Khrushchev replied that references to the fact that he supposedly compared the President to a frog and an ox do not correspond to reality. As concerns a quick temper, continued N. S. Khrushchev, although this is also a good quality inherent to youth, at times the quick temper of Mr. Nasser brings negative results. If you don't allow him a quick temper there would have been no worsening of relations with the USSR. Another example is the desire to join Iraq to the UAR provoked a counteroffensive, especially as he already had the experience of Syria, which lost [its] independence. Attempts to make a union with Iraq on the same basis as with Syria led not to a strengthening of the Arab republics, but to their weakening. It is necessary to seek such conditions for the unification of the Arab countries even on the basis of national slogans in which the countries would not lose their independence. Then they would recognize Nasser as the leader; otherwise, there will be only a weakening of the Arab countries.

You deny the teaching about class struggle; Mr. Nasser especially ganged up against me for my speech about this question. But I didn't think up class struggle. It formed as a result of historical development, as a result of the existence in society of the poor and the rich. It needs to be remembered that we live in such a time when slogans of unification on the principle of one ethnicity, one religion, are losing their importance. And we have had a movement of pan-Slavism in our history, but it was a reactionary movement. The Germans also had a nationalist movement. But this is already another question and we will not delve into it.

For we have never argued with you about the slogans of Arab nationalism, although we also understand that, however good the fast Arab racing horses are, you won't get far on this Arab horse. I don't plan to dissuade you that this slogan is attractive. We don't have grounds to object to it since objectively it might be useful insofar as it is directed against imperialism. We have never criticized this slogan in the press, considering the dispute pointless, although we have our own, deeper, point of view on this.

I will speak frankly. There are no reasons for conflict between us. Nowhere do our interests clash. On the contrary, in many cases they coincide if, of course, you do not hoist the slogan of fighting Communism on your banner. Otherwise we will compete with you and will advise choosing a good Arabian horse to fly from the saddle.

al-Kuni said that everything turns out specially for N. S. Khrushchev. Even if he says unpleasant things, the speakers don't quarrel.

Even those of my colleagues who consider you their enemy, continued al-Kuni, but I am not among them, recognize this quality in you.

I want to stress that President Nasser never took upon himself the responsibilities of waging a fight against world Communism. He neither intended to do this in the past nor in the future.

N. S. Khrushchev points out that when they speak of Communists as agents of a foreign power then accordingly they mean that someone is commanding them. We will fight such fabrications.

al-Kuni said that when someone from Jordan or, for example, Khalid Bakdash, attacks the UAR from the rostrum of a CPSU congress this causes certain thoughts. In spite of the personal friendship with N. S. Khrushchev the President had the painful impression that such statements were made.

N. S. Khrushchev replied that Cde. Bakdash actually spoke at a congress as a Communist. But it needs to be kept in mind that Communism as a teaching is worldwide. For example, in Indonesia the Communists took a very active part in liberating the country, and he, Khrushchev, was not familiar with even a single Indonesian Communist; they acted within their country [*u sebya*] without any dependence on the USSR. I could cite other examples.

If there had been no statement of President Nasser in December 1958, N. S. Khrushchev said further, we might have asked Cde. Bakdash to refrain from [his] speech. But when Mr. Nasser spoke against international Communism among us [*unas*] naturally there was no desire to act that way.

I don't want to defend the Syrian Communists, but I should say that they have never opposed the unification of Egypt and Syria and the Egyptian leaders personally.

We are Communists, but we think that at one time capitalism was a progressive phenomenon. We consider the fight against imperialism under the flag of Arab nationalism a progressive phenomenon, inasmuch as this consolidates the forces of colonial and dependent peoples.

The Syrian Communists, I am not talking for them, of course, but I am expressing my own point of view, were for unification, but on another basis. I repeat, you made a mess with the unification, and you face the consequences. As a Communist, I sympathize with the Syrian Communists, but I do not at all want to take the responsibility on myself for their actions. They are not asking for our advice, and if they did ask we would refrain from advice. One cannot take upon oneself the responsibility for the solution of the problems of another country whose way of life, historical and other conditions are distinct from your own. Many leaders of Syrian parties, not Communists, who previously favored the unification of Syria with Egypt, are against this right now. Is this the result of our advice?

I warned the President, whom we regard with great respect, about the haste with the unification, but he did not listen to our advice and took the bit between his teeth. But what happened? They say that now 500 or 1,000 people have been repressed in the UAR. Possibly part of them are Communists, but many have no connection to Communism. It needs to be remembered that in arresting 1,000 people 1,000 malcontents are created.

I don't plan to give advice. I only want to recall that in our country the 1905 Revolution was crushed. V. I. Lenin called this revolution a rehearsal, a revolutionary drill. The Tsar was confident that he had completely made short work of the first revolution, and had put revolutionaries in jail and executed [some], Lenin was forced to emigrate, etc. But the calm after the 1905 Revolution was saturated with an electricity which resounded like thunder in 1917. It is necessary to know history, otherwise it will punish those who do not reckon with it.

I fear that, having received your information, President Nasser might again get angry with me. Of course, he is a tempestuous person, a military man, but having the great experience of a statesman. We have our own examples: Marshal Zhukov, an excellent general and hero of the [Great] Patriotic War, but in politics he turned out to be unhelpful and immature, and his career ended. Let Mr. Nasser not be offended, in no way do I intend to belittle him, but I want to give a warning in a friendly manner to avoid mistakes. If we were enemies then, on the contrary, we would not give a warning, but would discard [him] when he makes more mistakes. Let him ponder over our words, and if he draws the correct conclusion then we will be happy for this.

We are not so naïve to try to organize a Communist state in Egypt or any other Arab country, for the social system is the result of the internal development of a particular country.

al-Kuni said that he had his own opinion regarding Communism in Africa, Asia, and the [Middle] East, and also in Europe. He thinks that conditions have not become ripe for Communism in Asia and Africa and that the activity of the Communist Parties there will only inflict harm on the cause of peace and the interests of the Soviet Union. The people in these countries are still not suitable for Communism - they are of an insufficiently high cultural level, the religiousness, and the conservatism in thinking - in all these respects they are not suitable for Communism. The time for Communism has not yet come in these countries, the main thing in these countries right now is to wage a national liberation struggle.

N. S. Khrushchev made a stipulation that this, of course, does not relate to such countries of Asia as the PRC, DPRK, and the DRV.

al-Kuni confirmed this and said further that when Communists are active in Asia or Africa then this will lead to the appearance of anti-Communism, which will unavoidably lead to a weakening of the common front of the struggle against

imperialism. Even in those countries which recently gained their independence the conditions for Communism are still not ripe, and the Western powers are using the emergence of Communist movements there for their ends, asserting that this is connected with world Communism, with the USSR.

It seems to me, said al-Kuni, that at the present time not a single country of which I have spoken is able to become Communist; attempts to create such states there only weaken the front of the anti-Communist struggle.

But this situation is distinct from the activity of the Communists in Europe and North America. Here Communists are a big force in the struggle for peace, here Communism weakens the front of the forces advocating war. In addition, the majority of the Western countries are in a single bloc, their governments will act on the side of the US against the USSR. This is explained in particular by the fact that these capitalist countries envy the successes of the Soviet Union and the PRC. I am not a Communist, but I am of the opinion that at a time when Communism is needed in Western Europe and North America, in Asia, Africa, and Latin American it brings only harm.

N. S. Khrushchev asked that he be heard out and correctly understood. When Communism appears anywhere they say that it is the hand of Moscow. But we are not at all monopolists of Communist teachings. Thousands of books have been written about it in the entire world. Take, for example, the Arab and Asian students who study in the universities of the West; they study these books. Some of them take Marxist positions and, returning to their countries, begin to find like-minded people and create Party groups. They don't ask us about this, and indeed they don't have such an opportunity. Inasmuch as Communist teachings are in defense of the interests of the disenfranchised, people unite around these Marxist groups and so Parties are created.

Imagine we would say to them, leave all this business, you are still not mature enough for Communism. I am confident that they would send us to the Devil and say to us - you have achieved brilliant results in your Communist country, but have forgotten about those poor people which you yourselves were at one time. They would say - we are hungry and we cannot be patient any more, you give us such advice because [you] yourselves were mistaken with Nasser and do not want to spoil relations with him. Consequently, you betrayed Marxist-Leninist teachings and ignore its international importance but we, they will say, will act as the Communist teachings advise.

What will we say to them in reply?

Not so much time has passed since the first Marxist group was born in our country under the leadership of Plekhanov, "The Group for the Liberation of Labor" which initially included only several people. This was 76 years ago. But now Soviet power has already existed in our country for 43 years.

The spread of Communism does not depend on our will, on the will of our people, it is an objective factor of the development of human society. Understand this and do not accuse us of spreading Communism.

Of course, they can be acts in the direction of Communism and there where the conditions are still not ripe for this, but in this event we cannot do anything. An idea, if it has been born, exists apart from the will of people. Among us we say, "spoken words are like flown birds - neither can be recalled". If a Marxist teaching has appeared, it has flown to God's heaven in the form of such a little bird, but [you can now try and] catch it to your heart's content For how many people have been put in prison for a devotion to Communism. Many of them, in China for example, had their heads smashed, but what resulted from this? For example, in Vietnam poor peasants beat the French not with weapons, but with their devotion to an idea. After the overthrow of the October Revolution in our country the British, Americans, French, Japanese, and Poles started a war against the Soviet Union, but we smashed them all. Illiterate peasants in bast sandals, for they helped the White Guards with everything - ammunition, guns, and shells. We took away these weapons and beat the interventionists and White Guards with their own weapons.

Please understand that the question of ideology is the business of peoples, don't accuse us of spreading an ideology. If, as they say, Moscow has a long arm, then why

did it not reach to the United States? For, as you know, the Communist Party there is quite small, although the US economy is the best prepared for a move to socialism. If they gave us all the American equipment, then based on it we would have already astounded the entire world by now. However, there are five million unemployed people in the US, but they elected the billionaire Rockefeller, "the defender of the poor", as the governor of New York state.

And there are poor people in your country who clearly see the results of socialism in the USSR, but these people do not always get things right. Frankly speaking, I don't know a single one of your Communists, but I know where they are, whether they sit in prison or are free. We sympathize with those of them who are imprisoned, but I never speak about this to the President, knowing his convictions. Therefore we have never raised the question of Communists. You forced us to enter into polemics, you raised the question of world Communism and we should give a reply.

al-Kuni said that if the Soviet leaders had possibly refrained from public statements in support of those who are in prison in other countries this, in my opinion, would have brought great benefit, for such statements do not help the prisoners, but complicate relations between countries.

N. S. Khrushchev pointed out that we have never made such statements.

We have prepared a good, sharply critical article with respect to UAR policy, he continued. But we have decided to hold it inasmuch as the hostile campaign in the UAR has somewhat subsided, although your press still continues to speak against us.

al-Kuni said that N. S. Khrushchev called President Nasser a hot-tempered person. Actually, said al-Kuni, you are a more experienced statesman. Your country is much stronger than ours, although you had difficulties in the past. Wouldn't it be better for your side to display more restraint with respect to criticism of President Nasser [?]

N. S. Khrushchev replied that it is not always good since such a position might be understood incorrectly. We should explain our relations. Perhaps we could be silent when the President interferes in our matters, and inquires where Bulganin and Molotov are, declares it is not Khrushchev but Bulganin who sent a certain message during the Suez Crisis, etc.

al-Kuni replied that the President mentioned Bulganin and Molotov only in that connection that they, like Shepilov, made mistakes and should have left.

Al-Kuni said, I think that sometimes the statements of our leaders are incorrectly interpreted. Possibly this happens as a result of an insufficiently good translation from Arabic to Russian. I have already had occasion during the conversations of President Nasser with you in Moscow to direct attention to an inaccuracy in translation.

N. S. Khrushchev replied that he knows it is difficult to speak about the quality of translations. However, he noted that in this case when negotiations concerned economic aid to Egypt the translations evidently were good since the sides came to an agreement, but in politics difficulties suddenly appear because of an inaccuracy of translation.

al-Kuni replied that it is know how often the Soviet government has broad and correct information. Nevertheless, sometimes it also gets very bad information. For example, when Rountree visited Cairo, they were surprised in Cairo that the Soviet Government attached such great importance to the role of this politically insignificant person, who was supposedly able to make the Egyptian leaders change their minds.

N. S. Khrushchev noted that the Soviet government has accurate and detailed information.

Let's not interfere in one another's internal affairs, continued N. S. Khrushchev, You started such interference, but you take on yourself the deplorable task of fighting Communism on a worldwide scale. Many have started this ill-fated business, and yes, they broke their noses.

Let's not touch on questions of the social systems of countries; this is our firm policy.

Let's forget what led to a worsening of our relations and consider it only an episode, but leave a policy of improving relations in force. We'll do it so that your foreign policy does not harm our country and vice versa. We will strive for the policy of both our countries to assist countries waging a struggle for their independence and to increase the welfare of the peoples of these countries. We can productively cooperate

with you on this basis.

Please pass our best wishes to President Nasser. I would like to invite him to visit us, but I understand that he might incorrectly understand that it might be incorrectly understood in Europe and in other countries. I decided to go to the UAR myself but unfortunately invitations I previously accepted do not permit me to make a trip to your country right now. However, I think that the time will come when I will again be able to meet with Mister Nasser and talk about everything in detail.

I only want to say that you will not find better friends of the Arab countries than us. We are your truest friends. You well know that we came to your aid during the triple aggression against Egypt; when you needed [marine] pilots, weapons, wheat, when you were blockaded, we came to your aid.

Perhaps you were for Communism when we helped you? As we say about pioneers, you are still insufficiently politically mature elements; when you are mature and whether you mature at all in this sense, it is difficult for us to judge, but this should not create obstacles for the development of friendly relations between the two countries.

I would like to end the conversation with this and wish your country all the best.

al-Kuni expressed gratitude for the reception and noted that the situation has been cleared up and expressed the hope that the head of the Soviet government will be pleased with the message of the President of the UAR.

N. S. Khrushchev jokingly asked whether after reading the message they will have to publish the article they prepared.

al-Kuni replied in the negative. He said that in conclusion he would like to touch on one question. When relations [between] the UAR and some Arab countries, meaning chiefly Iraq, worsened, the Soviet Union got involved in this matter, supporting one of the sides. He, the Ambassador, thinks that the USSR should support all Arabs, all who are fighting against imperialism, but to avoid standing on the side of a particular Arab country in the conflicts which sometimes arise between them.

N. S. Khrushchev replied that we look at the matter this way, and we want all Arab peoples to unite in their efforts. This would be to the benefit of the peoples of these countries, and would benefit the cause of peace in this region.

We sincerely desire that you have friendly relations with the Iraqi Republic; we pursue no other goals since this would only be to the benefit of our enemies, but we have almost the same enemies.

If I have spoken in support of Qasim, said N. S. Khrushchev, then only for the motives which I explained in the letter to the President and I will not repeat here.

We don't know Qasim well, he is from the military and seems to be not a bad person, but we have formed the impression that you want to swallow the Iraqi Republic. If the Iraqis themselves want unification then there would be nothing bad in this. We ourselves thought that the process of unification would begin after the revolution in Iraq. But evidently the haste in the accomplishment of the unification of Egypt with Syria deterred the Iraqi people.

We think that the Arab peoples have achieved much in this struggle. In a long conversation in Moscow together with President Nasser we were delighted at the revolution in Iraq.

al-Kuni said that in the UAR they also welcomed the Iraqi revolution and sincerely regret that at the present time relations with this country have become the same as they were under Nuri Said.

N. S. Khrushchev expressed the opinion that these relations are improving. If Nasser and Qasim became friends this would be to the benefit of Arab nationalism. N. S. Khrushchev jokingly added that he himself is beginning to talk like an Arab nationalist.

al-Kuni asked to believe that in no circumstances would dollars buy their country although, of course, they have economic relations with the US. For example, recently the Americans twice offered a credit for the purchase of wheat from them. The World Bank is ready to offer a loan at 5-6% annually, but we prefer not to report about it in our press so as not to advertise this matter.

N. S. Khrushchev jokingly noted that the Soviet Union and friends are paid at a rate of 2% a year on a loan, but enemies are paid 5-6%. But ought you not think about making friends pay 10% on loans [?]

If we wanted to go the way of improving our relations with Britain and the US at the expense of the Arabs or at the expense of our conscience, said N. S. Khrushchev, then it would be very easy to do, and it would cost us nothing. But we have taken a principled, fair position with respect to Egypt and then the UAR. Our notes to the governments of Britain and France, which attacked Egypt, contained a direct warning to take armed force against the aggressors, as a result of which our relations with Britain sharply worsened, but with France almost led to a rupture. But now in the UAR instead of gratitude they paint us with black paint.

al-Kuni said that in his country they are giving credit for the aid given by the Soviet Union.

N. S. Khrushchev and al-Kuni said goodbye.

The conversation lasted two hours and 20 minutes.

The conversation was recorded by Yerofeyev