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Conversation Record of N.S. Khrushchev with G.A. Nasser in New York

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Summary:

In their 1960 conversation in New York, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev and Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser discussed global political tensions, particularly US influence over the United Nations, the Congo crisis, and colonialism in Africa. Khrushchev criticized the UN Secretary-General as a tool of American imperialism and proposed a tripartite leadership structure representing socialist, imperialist, and neutral states. Nasser highlighted Western interference in African and Middle Eastern affairs, while both leaders expressed concerns about imperialist strategies and reaffirmed their commitment to supporting anti-colonial movements.

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN N.S. KHRUSHCHEV AND G.A. NASSER
IN NEW YORK

24 September 1960

After exchanging greetings, Nasser mentions that he heard about N.S. Khrushchev's recent long speech at the U.N. General Assembly meeting.

N.S. Khrushchev explains that the reason behind this is the accumulation of complex problems that must be addressed. However, he continues, some people speak as if they are comforting someone with a warm towel, while we directly and openly express what we think.

G.A. Nasser says American newspapers are trying to focus public attention on what they call "the attack of N.S. Khrushchev at the U.N.," neglecting disarmament and colonialism issues.

N.S. Khrushchev notes that it is the Americans who set the tone and teach others how to make speeches. Well, that is ok, he says. We'll get to colonialism later.

G.A. Nasser notes that one of the newspapers, echoing Herter's statements, writes that Khrushchev allegedly declared a war on the U.N.

N.S. Khrushchev replies that the Americans want to maintain the United Nations as a branch of the State Department, with Hammarskjöld continuing to serve as Herter's deputy. This is exactly what happens in reality. However, this cannot continue indefinitely as each Secretary-General ends up essentially carrying out America's will. After all, America will never tolerate a Secretary-General who would act in the interests of socialist countries. So why do we tolerate such a situation when the U.N. Secretary-General is an obedient tool in the hands of U.S. imperialist forces? That is why we put forward our proposal to elect a U.N. General Secretariat consisting of 3 people: one representative from the imperialist, monopolistic states led by the United States, one representative from the socialist countries, and one representative from neutral countries. Such a secretariat would not act to the detriment of the United States, nor to the detriment of neutral countries, nor to the detriment of socialist countries. Is it bad?

Currently, Americans do not want to have an equal situation. And we no longer want to tolerate an unequal situation.

The Americans propose to establish an international armed force once there is an agreement on disarmament. However, a question arises – who would command these armed forces? If they are commanded by Hammarskjöld, it would essentially mean that they are under the command of the United States.

As you can see, emphasizes N.S. Khrushchev, this is an important question; this is a question of questions. Until the question of the U.N. Secretary-General is resolved, the question of disarmament cannot be resolved either.

Take the issue of Congo. International U.N. military forces were sent there. However, Hammarskjöld commanded them, and look where that led.

If the current situation persists, the Americans, of course, may want to deploy international military forces to the Soviet Union. We will never agree to this. It is better, in this case, to live with the threat of missiles than with the threat of international armed forces under the U.S. command.

The establishment of a general secretariat comprising three people would reflect the actual situation that has developed today in the world, in which there are objectively three groups of states with different social and political systems.

This is the objective state of affairs, N.S. Khrushchev emphasizes, and no one is able to change this situation now. It is no coincidence that I have long been advocating for you, Mr. President, to become a communist. But nothing comes of this. I, of course, regret this, but there is nothing I can do.

G.A. Nasser jokingly remarks that N.S. Khrushchev still managed to achieve some success along this path.

N.S. Khrushchev, laughing, says that if there is such success, then, unfortunately, he did not notice it.

Obviously, he continues, each of us holds our own opinion, and this is quite natural

since Nasser, on a number of issues, adheres to ideas that are directly opposite to our ideas. However, the U.N., as an international organization, should not act in the interests of any particular group of countries. Would you agree, asks N.S. Khrushchev of Nasser, to be elected as a communist general secretary? Of course not. So why should we agree to have a Secretary-General who obediently carries out the will of the United States and its allies? Therefore, it is necessary to create a general secretariat of three people.

G.A. Nasser replies that the Secretary-General's activities are determined, firstly, by the authority granted to him. In the Congo, the Secretary-General acted under the powers given to him by the Security Council. Secondly, his activities also depend on the individuals responsible for implementing the decisions. For instance, in the Congo, UAR troops refused to shoot at Congolese soldiers when the U.N. command ordered them to seize the airfield in Leopoldville. Thus, Nasser emphasizes, selecting the right people to implement U.N. decisions is crucial. In the Congo, U.N. personnel mostly acted in favor of Western countries. The UAR government, for its part, declared that it would withdraw its troops from the Congo if they were used to seize the airfield and radio station in Leopoldville.

N.S. Khrushchev says that this is the right decision. Hammarskjöld in the Congo acts under the State Department's direction to further U.S. interests.

G.A. Nasser replies that the U.N. is undoubtedly acting against Lumumba's government in the Congo. They are trying to isolate him in order to overthrow the government he leads.

N.S. Khrushchev agrees with this and says that this is lawlessness. The U.N. opposes a legitimate government elected by law. After all, it was Lumumba who requested the U.N. to send troops to maintain order in this country. And now these troops are opposing the same government that invited them to the country. This is a predatory policy, the policy of Americans who recognize only force. But why should we submit to this predatory policy, especially since we have enough strength to resist it? At the same time, we are not at all encroaching on American interests. Hammarskjöld is obliged to act not only in the interests of the imperialist circles of the United States and its allies but also in the interests of neutral countries and socialist countries. Nobody has given him the authority to address issues in the narrow interests of any of the three existing groups of states. The U.N. Secretary-General must combine and reflect the interests of all these groups of states. At the same time, emphasizes N.S. Khrushchev, I am not speaking out against Hammarskjöld personally at all. He is far from being the worst possible candidate for the post of the U.N. Secretary-General. I spoke out against a system that does not accurately reflect the existing global situation. Currently, America has the opportunity to carry out whatever it wants through the U.N. while guiding the hand of the Secretary-General of this international organization. So let's do what we can to change this unfair situation. And for this there is one way out - to elect three general secretaries, each representing one of the three groups of states in the world. Then you, representatives of neutral countries, would choose your general secretary, we would choose ours, and the imperialist monopolistic states would choose their own secretary general. By the way, if they had nominated Hammarskjöld then, the Soviet government would not have objected to him at all.

At this time the guests are served cognac, and N.S. Khrushchev makes a humorous remark about the waiter's inexperience, saying that the waiter doesn't seem to know that Arabs only drink in private while sitting in front of a mirror.

G.A. Nasser, laughing, says that in this case, each Arab present should be given their own mirror.

N.S. Khrushchev responds to him jokingly that what is needed here is not a mirror, but a separate room for each.

N.S. Khrushchev continues that he apparently hit the imperialists in the ninth rib with his speech. Well, it's okay, he notes, let them get used to it.

The imperialists do not want disarmament, he continues, and therefore, they are holding onto the question of reorganizing the secretariat. If they refuse to resolve the issue of disarmament, we are ready to continue to wait while maintaining our armed forces. We have created a strong army, and we are capable of maintaining it.

G.A. Nasser says that both British Foreign Minister Hume and Secretary of State Herter unanimously opposed N.S. Khrushchev's proposal regarding the organization of a general secretariat consisting of three people.

N.S. Khrushchev notes that the imperialists desire the Soviet Union and other socialist states to agree to disarmament, disband their armed forces, destroy their weapons, and establish international armed forces under the command of the imperialists. It is evident to any rational person that such an agreement will not materialize. As Russians say, we are not foolish. We had foolish people before, but we expelled them. Now, let the State Department find their own fools.

G.A. Nasser notes that the UAR were able to experience firsthand the international armed forces of the U.N. after they were deployed in Egyptian territory following the aggression of England, France, and Israel. During this time, the Egyptian government attempted to send their aircraft to an airfield in the Sinai region, which was occupied by the U.N. However, the U.N. command refused to allow this, arguing that the airfield no longer belonged to the Egyptian government, but to the U.N. In response to this, the UAR government had to deploy a battalion of its soldiers to the airfield, and only then did the U.N. command allow the Egyptian planes to land. The problem is, Nasser emphasizes, that Lumumba did not have a battalion of soldiers to deploy.

N.S. Khrushchev expresses his agreement with the words of Nasser.

G.A. Nasser goes on to say that similarly, the Egyptian government had attempted to send its governor to the Gaza area, which was also under the occupation of the U.N. troops. This time again, the U.N. command refused to allow the Egyptian governor to enter the area. Then, the Egyptian government announced its intention to send the governor along with a detachment of Egyptian troops, and the U.N. command was again forced to comply.

N.S. Khrushchev says that this is another evidence of the predatory policy being pursued by Hammarskjöld in the name of the U.N. If, along with Hammarskjöld, there were representatives from neutral and socialist states in the U.N. General Secretariat, they would never have allowed such a situation.

Imperialists, continues N.S. Khrushchev, simply became insolent. In 1955, for instance, while I was in England, I had a conversation with Eden and Lloyd. Then Eden said that if conditions arise in the Middle East in which England is deprived of oil sources, then England will fight because England will perish without oil. I then told Eden: "Negotiate a commercial agreement for oil supplies then. If you try to impose your will by force, the Soviet Union will intervene and will not allow it."

G.A. Nasser notices that Eden mentioned this conversation in his memoirs.

N.S. Khrushchev says that following their conversation - and Eden could not write about this in his memoirs, since he was unaware of it - the Soviet delegation in England concluded that the British were attempting to threaten the Soviet Union, and a decision was made to leave England if the British continue to behave in the same impudent manner. However, the British government changed their tone the next day when they realized that their actions were being rebuffed.

The imperialists have a robber morality, emphasizes N.S. Khrushchev. If they see that they are capable of strangling someone, they will definitely strangle him. However, if they realize that they do not have enough power to do so, they begin to respect him.

G.A. Nasser, as an example of how imperialist states treat countries that refuse to submit to their will, says that at one point, both England and the United States promised to finance the construction of the Aswan High Dam and then abandoned their proposals.

N.S. Khrushchev says that during the aggression by England, France, and Israel against Egypt, the Soviet government, at his suggestion, sent messages to the governments of England and France warning them against the consequences of their aggression. At the same time, the Soviet government, in a message addressed to U.S. President Eisenhower, proposed to the United States that they jointly oppose the aggression from England and France. Having received this message, Eisenhower was horrified: how could the United States oppose its allies? The Soviet government was aware that the United States would never take joint action with the Soviet government against its friends and sent this message to expose the United States, which had recently spoken against aggression in Egypt.

Later, when the imperialists attempted to seize Syria, the Soviet Union took certain steps toward Turkey since it was through Turkey that the imperialists intended to act against Syria. As a result, the Turks literally destroyed their entire general staff because the Soviet government indicated exactly which military units were to take part in the aggression. All this was clearly indicated on the map of the Turkish General Staff.

G.A. Nasser notes that the imperialists are still mobilizing their efforts in the Middle East, mainly using Jordan and Israel and, of course, cooperating with Turkey and Iran. N.S. Khrushchev replies that these days the Turks will no longer undertake any adventures in this area. However, Israel and Jordan could be used by the imperialists for their own purposes.

In general, a new situation has emerged: the UAR has become stronger than before, and the international situation is less favorable for aggressive forces than it was in the past. The socialist camp has become much more robust than it was during the period of aggression against Egypt: at that time, the Soviet Union did not have ballistic missiles, but now they possess these missiles, and they can reach any point in the United States from the Soviet Union's territory. It has been proven by recent tests of Soviet ballistic missiles, one of which accurately hit the target area near Pearl Harbor. The U.S. itself confirmed the accuracy of hits from these missiles as they had sent their ships and planes to the target area in advance. Thereby they only confirmed the truth of our words and once again proved that we always tell the truth. So, concludes N.S. Khrushchev, it is evident that the structure of the U.N. Secretariat needs to be changed.

A.A. Gromyko jokingly notes that they now need to convince the Foreign Minister of UAR, Fawzi, of this.

N.S. Khrushchev adds that if Hammarskjöld, Fawzi and Gromyko were nominated for the post of General Secretary, the Soviet government would be happy to vote for these candidates.

Fawzi notes that the imperialist states will never agree to the candidacy of A.A. Gromyko and his own because they know that they are long-time friends and allies.

N.S. Khrushchev replies that currently the Americans no longer have the previous obedient majority in the U.N. The current majority belongs to Asian, African, and socialist countries.

G.A. Nasser notes that the problem now has arisen for newly independent African countries. Many of these countries are still under French domination, and it will take them time to achieve full independence.

N.S. Khrushchev emphasizes that he fully agrees with these words of Nasser, and says that he heard how, during their speeches at the General Assembly, representatives of these states thanked their colonizers for granting them independence. Apparently, these people had not yet overcome their slave mentality and still continued to bend their backs out of habit before the colonizers.

G.A. Nasser says that in this regard, it is necessary to encourage the aspirations of countries seeking true independence in every possible way. The independent nations of Africa are particularly important in this aspect as they can influence the colonized countries. For instance, Sekou Toure has a significant impact throughout West Africa. His success, therefore, encourages others to follow his example. His failure is everybody's failure. The independent nations of Africa hoped that Lumumba would become a similar factor in Africa and that his success would also motivate others to strive for independence. This is why the imperialists deployed all their resources to fight against Lumumba.

Two years ago, the French colonies in Africa voted in a plebiscite to remain in the French community, but the example of Guinea led them to demand more for themselves - independence.

N.S. Khrushchev says that the process of liberating the people of Africa has already begun and it cannot be stopped. If some leaders in African countries continue to follow France's lead, then the time will come when the people of these countries themselves expel these leaders and elect true patriots of their countries, or force them to change their policies. In any case, the struggle cannot stop halfway, and the

African people will continue to fight until they achieve complete victory. Therefore, all peace-loving countries must provide moral and material support to these nations.

G.A. Nasser says that there was a time when Egypt was the target of attacks, but it eventually achieved its independence. However, the imperialists then mobilized the reactionary leaders of other Middle Eastern countries such as Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Sudan, and so on, against the young republic. Now the situation, of course, has improved. However, the imperialists continue to put pressure on the countries in this region. In particular, they exerted strong pressure on the Prime Minister of Lebanon in order to force him to refuse to attend the U.N. General Assembly.

N.S. Khrushchev notes that we are all witnesses to the awakening of the people of Africa. In this regard, he says that he was pleased with President Nkrumah's speech at the General Assembly.

This speech does not reflect our position completely, but it was undoubtedly the best of all the speeches made at the Assembly, for Nkrumah spoke directly and bluntly against the colonizers.

Tito also spoke out against colonialism, however – and this is what I advised him – in a vague way, so that the United States would not know his true stance. I suggested to him that he spoke in such a way that his words could be interpreted in one or the other way and, obviously, only he himself would know what he wanted to convey.

Further N.S. Khrushchev says that he wishes to share his opinion with Nasser on an issue that he will face during his speech at the U.N. President Eisenhower came out to the podium of the General Assembly literally from some sort of a dog kennel near the chairman's seat. Tito followed his example, and unfortunately, Nkrumah was convinced to do the same. I was also asked to follow this procedure, but I firmly declined to crawl into this hole.

N.S. Khrushchev kindly advises Nasser not to agree to such a procedure but instead to go to the podium of the General Assembly by rising from his seat in the meeting room and walking across the entire hall. This, notes N.S. Khrushchev, would give you greater weight in the eyes of all African and Asian peoples. However, N.S. Khrushchev makes a reservation, this, of course, is your business, you are the president, and I am just a prime minister, so if you like this dog hole, that is your business.

Hammarskjöld came up with this procedure in order to somehow distinguish the American president. Herter advised him to do so.

G.A. Nasser says that if you are sitting with your delegation, then there is no need to enter the podium from a side exit.

N.S. Khrushchev, laughing, says that it turned out that Tito was first seated with his delegation, then taken out of the Assembly hall and brought in from somewhere in the back.

Fawzi notes that the U.N. previously followed a different and, in his opinion, better procedure, when heads of state were escorted to the podium across the Assembly hall.

N.S. Khrushchev replies that the procedure was altered because the Soviet Union representative had threatened to create a scandal if the U.S. President was escorted through the entire hall. As a result, Hammarskjöld changed the procedure and attempted to force me to follow Eisenhower's lead. It's a shame that Nkrumah also fell for this trick.

G.A. Nasser jokingly asks whether N.S. Khrushchev feels sorry for him and Tito.

N.S. Khrushchev replies that Nkrumah is a young and still inexperienced politician, while Tito is experienced and knows what holes to crawl or not to crawl through.

G.A. Nasser bids farewell to N.S. Khrushchev and expresses his hope to meet him again.

N.S. Khrushchev says he is always willing to meet G.A. Nasser and bids him farewell warmly, too.

Foreign Minister Fawzi and other members of the UAR delegation were present at the conversation with Nasser.

On the Soviet side, the conversation was attended by Foreign Minister, A.A. Gromyko, and the USSR Ambassador to the USA, M.A. Menshikov.

The conversation was recorded by V. Sukhodrev.