

July 26, 1962

**Transcript of the Conversation Between N.S.
Khrushchev and the Ambassador of the Syrian Arab
Republic to the USSR, Rafik Asha**

Citation:

"Transcript of the Conversation Between N.S. Khrushchev and the Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic to the USSR, Rafik Asha", July 26, 1962, Wilson Center Digital Archive, RGANI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 577, ll. 44-46. Contributed by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Angela Greenfield. <https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/300933>

Summary:

On July 26, 1962, N.S. Khrushchev met with Syrian Ambassador Rafik Asha for a farewell conversation before Asha's departure to assume a higher post in Syria. Asha expressed deep appreciation for his time in the USSR and reaffirmed his commitment to strengthening Soviet-Syrian relations. The discussion covered Syria's internal challenges, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the dissolution of the Syrian-Egyptian union, with Khrushchev emphasizing continued Soviet support for Syria's independence and stability.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Blavatnik Family Foundation

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

[Handwritten: "Disseminated"]

TRANSCRIPT OF THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN N.S. KHRUSHCHEV AND THE
AMBASSADOR OF THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC TO THE USSR, RAFIK ASHA

26 July 1962[*]

On 26 July of this year, N.S. Khrushchev received the ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic to the USSR at his request due to the ambassador's upcoming departure from the USSR to Syria, and had a conversation with him. Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, S.G. Lapin, was present during the conversation.

After exchanging greetings, Rafik Asha expresses his heartfelt gratitude to N.S. Khrushchev for the honor and the opportunity to pay a farewell visit. He says that it is very difficult for him to leave Moscow, where he had only been for 8 months, and that he is very angry with his government for transferring him so quickly to a new, although even a higher post (the post of Secretary General of the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs - practically the First Deputy Minister). The ambassador notes that he is very upset that he served in the United States for 17 years, but only 8 months in the Soviet Union, for which he had developed a strong affection. Rafik Asha says that in his new high post he will use every opportunity to help further strengthen the happily established friendly relations between the USSR and Syria. He says that despite his short stay in Moscow, he developed a strong affection towards the Soviet country and the Soviet people, that in the USSR he was treated with attention and hospitality, and that the leadership of the USSR Foreign Ministry provided him with the necessary assistance in everything. The ambassador expresses his deep respect for N.S. Khrushchev and calls him a great peace fighter. He says that he closely followed all of N.S. Khrushchev's speeches. He wishes N.S. Khrushchev good health and a long life for the benefit of all mankind. He requests to be considered a sincere friend of the Soviet Union.

Next, the ambassador expresses his admiration for the significant progress made by the Soviet people in all areas of their lives. He says that, unfortunately, he did not have time to visit any other place in the USSR besides Moscow, however, even based on his impressions of Moscow and a seven-day visit to the Exhibition of Achievements, he was able to appreciate the rapid pace of development in the Soviet Union. Rafik Asha further notes that his country is currently facing a number of difficulties both internally and externally. However, in the past few weeks, the Syrian government, overcoming these challenges, has been able to control the situation in the country. On behalf of his government and himself, the ambassador expresses gratitude to N.S. Khrushchev for the position that the USSR government had and continues to have in support of Syria, and for all the good that Cde. Khrushchev has done for the Syrian people, and also expresses hope that the Soviet-Syrian friendship will continue to strengthen.

N.S. Khrushchev thanks the ambassador for his kind wishes and for understanding the Soviet policy accurately and says that the Soviet government will continue to stand on the position of strengthening friendship with the people and the government of Syria, on the position of strengthening peace throughout the world. Khrushchev expresses regret that Syria has experienced several significant challenges. The Soviet government has repeatedly conveyed its understanding of the Syrian problem and the consequences of the Syrian-Egyptian unification to both Syrian statesmen and Egyptian leaders, including President Nasser, therefore, there is no need to discuss this issue again in detail. We can only say that life itself made its own adjustments. The unification brought about several challenges that Syria has not yet been able to completely overcome, and much effort remains to be made in Syria to overcome these challenges. In a word, says N.S. Khrushchev, the Syrian-Egyptian marriage was not a marriage of love, but rather of convenience. Both the groom and the bride showed carelessness: the groom had certain expectations, and the bride had others that did not coincide with the groom's expectations. That is why this marriage fell apart so quickly, unable to withstand even the short test of time; it fell apart, one might say, after the first wedding night.

N.S. Khrushchev wishes success to the people and the government of Syria, emphasizing that the Soviet Union has always been sympathetic to the Syrian

people's struggle for independence. He expresses disappointment that the ambassador did not stay long in the USSR and did not have time to travel around the country, and invites him, if he is able and willing, to tour the republics of the Soviet Union, especially the Central Asian republics where many Muslims live. In the West, says Cde. Khrushchev, some people call these republics colonies of Russia. However, when you visit these "colonies", you will witness for yourself that the people of these republics have a higher standard of living compared to some of the colonizers.

The tremendous progress achieved by these republics, which were the most underdeveloped regions of the Russian Empire before the October Revolution, is evidence of what people can accomplish if they are provided with opportunities to advance their economy and culture. This is a true validation of Lenin's national policy. Additionally, N.S. Khrushchev mentions a village relatively close to the city of Batumi, which is divided in half by the Soviet-Turkish border. Interestingly, the Soviet half of the village is illuminated with electric lighting when it gets dark, while the Turkish half remains in darkness, just like it was half a century ago.

N.S. Khrushchev wishes the ambassador good health and success in his new work and wishes for the Syrian Republic to prosper as an independent state.

Rafik Asha warmly thanks N.S. Khrushchev for his kind words and also for the invitation to tour the Soviet Union when possible.

The conversation lasted about 25 minutes.

Written down by V. Chestnoy

[*] *[Handwritten: "The transcript was not reviewed by Cde. N.S. Khrushchev."]*