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KHRUSHCHEV AND IRAQI-SOVIET RELATIONS

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For more than a year before the Kuwait crisis began, Iraqi-Soviet relations had been progressively deteriorating. They reached a new low in the summer of this year, when Problems of Peace and Socialism (June issue), Pravda, Trud, and other Soviet propaganda media were castigating the Kassem government for harrassing, imprisoning and obstructing communists who had acquired influential positions in Iraq since the murder of Nuri-es-Said.

Kassem's claim to Kuwait brought a temporary measure of opportunist agreement between Moscow and Baghdad in that both countries could and did join in a chorus of opposition to British "imperialism," which consisted of the despatch of troops, at the Sheikh's request, to protect Kuwait against possible Iraqi attack.

But Pravda's report (14 July 1961) of the celebrations of Iraq's anniversary of the revolution shows that this year the only member of the Presidium to attend the annual Iraqi reception in Moscow was N. A. Mukhitdinov, who certainly does not possess the influence or prestige of A. I. Mikoyan, who went to represent the USSR in 1960. More significant however, is the fact that in 1961 for the first time since Kassem came to power, neither Khrushchev nor the Chairmen of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, the official head of state,¹ has seen fit to publish the usual congratulatory message to Iraq's military dictator. Is it possible that one was never sent, or should the reader assume that Kassem would not agree to its publication? Whatever the reason, it seems that Moscow-Baghdad relations must still be undergoing some real political strain at present, for such a routine diplomatic courtesy to have been omitted.

r.r.g.

¹ In 1960 and at present this post is held by L. Brezhnev. In 1959 it was held by K. Voroshilov.

NOT TO BE MICROFICED

RUSSIA AND THE ARAB WORLD

By Geoffrey Wheeler
The World Today
July 1961

Russia's direct relations with the Arab world are of very recent origin, much more recent than those, for instance, of Britain, France, or even Germany. On the other hand, her association with the Muslim world in general is far older and more intimate than that of any other European State. In the first place, the Mongols, who dominated Russian lands from the middle of the thirteenth to the end of the fifteenth century, were early converted to Islam. After the end of the Mongol domination in 1480, Russia proceeded to annex the Muslim Khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan, and these have been an integral part of Russia since the sixteenth century. Most of Transcaucasia and the whole of Turkestan had been under Arab domination in the eighth and ninth centuries and although the Arabs themselves had long ago disappeared at the time of the Russian conquests, these regions remained Muslim. By the end of the nineteenth century, the southern fringe of the Russian Empire from the Crimea to outer Mongolia was, with the exception of Georgia and Armenia, almost exclusively peopled by Muslims, whose number, including those of the Volga region, amounted to nearly 20 million. Since the end of the seventeenth century, Russia's frontiers marched with those of the two most important Muslim States, Turkey and Persia.

Before the first World War, almost the entire Arab world was included in the Ottoman Empire, with which Russia had close, but mostly hostile, relations. Two of Russia's most important aspirations were concerned with the Turkish Straits -- the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles -- and with the eastern Mediterranean, and these two aspirations could only be realized by the complete neutralization, if not the liquidation, of Turkish power. The countries of Western and Central Europe, on the other hand, were concerned with blocking Russia's ambitions and were therefore interested in bolstering up the decaying Turkish Empire. The West, and particularly Britain, had fairly close cultural connections with the Arabs, especially with Egypt, which for practical purposes can be regarded as an Arab country. Britain and France were to some extent aware of nationalist stirrings among the Arabs. Russia's cultural connections with the Arabs were confined to the Levant and she never seems to have thought of trying to disrupt Turkey by encouraging Arab nationalism. There were some remarkable Russian Arabists such as Krachkovskiy, but there was in Russia an almost complete absence of expertise on Arab affairs and no counterpart of the British Levant Consular Service. The Arabs for their part were very conscious of British and French power but almost completely unaware of Russia's existence.

Up to the Revolution, Russia was prevented from realizing her ambitions in the Middle East, partly by her own political

and economic backwardness and partly by the concerted opposition of the Western Powers. At the beginning of the first World War, she seemed to be very near gaining at least one of her objectives: Istanbul and the Straits were promised to her by the Sykes-Picot Agreement of May 1916. But this of course came to nothing. With the Revolution, the break-up of the Turkish Empire, and the rise of Arab nationalism, Russia's interest in the Arab world increased rather than subsided. But until her entry into the second World War, the Soviet Union's attempts to establish her influence in the Middle East were no more successful than those of Tsarist Russia. This was partly due to Western opposition and military occupation, partly to the rise of Middle East nationalism, and partly to Soviet ineptitude and miscalculation. The extent of the Soviet Union's continued interest in the Middle East can be gauged by the fact that in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Agreement of 1940, the area to the south of Batum and Baku, in the general direction of the Persian Gulf, was recognized by both parties as the center of the territorial ambitions of the Soviet Union. In 1941, Russian influence on and in Turkey and Persia was less than it had been in 1914, and the Arab world hardly regarded the USSR as a great Power. By 1945, however, as a result of her alliance with Britain, Soviet missions had been opened in Cairo, Beirut, Damascus, and Baghdad, and the Soviet Union had obtained a firm foothold in the Arab world.

Up to 1947, the means by which the Soviet Government tried to further its policies in the Middle East were subversion and revolution. Although Soviet writers claim in retrospect that Soviet moral support and the spread of Communist ideology were largely responsible for the rapid rise of Arab nationalism, this is not at all in accordance with the facts. Small Communist Parties had, it is true, been formed in some of the Arab countries, notably in Syria, but these had had little effect on Arab nationalist movements which had everywhere advanced with their own impetus. Indeed, a careful examination of Soviet writing shows that before 1955 neither the Soviet Government nor the Communist Party made any formal or outright statement in support of Arab nationalist aims. Pan-Arabism and Arab unity were, on the contrary, officially described as ideologies of the national bourgeois intelligentsia which had first been exploited by Britain against Turkey in the first World War. Later, just before the second World War, plans for an Arab Federation and for Greater Syria were described by the Russians as mere devices for promoting British interests. The article on Arab culture in the second edition of The Great Soviet Encyclopaedia (1950) lays little or no emphasis on its unity and it is in general written in a disparaging tone.

Students of Soviet foreign policy are aware of a constant conflict between ideology and realism and that often, and more particularly recently, realism wins the day. Soviet policy towards the Arab world is an interesting example of this. In both Tsarist and Soviet Middle East policies, the neutralization, if not the liquidation, of Turkey and Persia has always been a cardinal point. After the second World War, between 1945 and 1947, Russia concentrated pressure on both these countries,

but both, partly owing to Western support, were able to resist her. The turning-point was probably the failure of the Azerbaydzhan separatist movement in 1946.¹ Soviet instigation of this movement was without doubt a very serious miscalculation. As a result, the Soviet Government, if not Stalin himself, evidently realized that, at any rate for the time being, Persia and Turkey presented a front which could not be broken by any means short of war and that they would have to be by-passed. It was this realization which led the Soviet Government to change its attitude to the Arab countries on the one hand, and to Afghanistan and India on the other.

The new policy began to take shape after Stalin's death in 1953, perhaps even before, but it did not become manifest until 1955, when the broad outlines of Soviet policy towards the "uncommitted" countries of Africa and Asia emerged. The year 1955 saw the foundation of the Baghdad Pact, with what appeared to most of the Arab States as strong militarist implications; of the Bandung Conference, with its affirmation of the five principles of peaceful coexistence; and of great advances by Nasser's Pan-Arab nationalist ideology, with its increasingly anti-Western impetus. The necessary correlation of Soviet policy and ideology was outlined at the Twentieth Party Congress in February 1956.

Perhaps a word should be said here about the broad aims of Soviet policy in the Middle East. There had not been general agreement on this matter in the West. In the Eisenhower Doctrine announced in 1958, the Soviet objective in the Middle East was described as the establishment there of international Communism, as if this were an end in itself. Such a view presupposes that Soviet policy is nowadays informed more by the ideology of Communism than by what the Soviet Union considers to be her national interest. This is a debatable matter, but it is perhaps important to remember that although many things have changed in Russia since the Revolution, there remain certain immutable factors, such as geography, climate, and national character. For reasons of national security, national prestige, and national economy, Russia has for the past 150 years wished to supplant the West as the political, economic, and cultural mentor of the Middle East countries, as well as of other Asian countries lying on her borders. The present Russian Government is always prepared to use Communism as the deciding factor in the formulation of Soviet policy, whether in Asia or elsewhere.

After 1955, the tone of writing by Soviet authorities on Arab affairs displayed a marked change. Already at the end of 1955 they were speaking of the "growth of national consciousness" in Arab countries and of the solidarity shown by them in each other's causes; and they were expressing for the first time recognition of the fact that the leadership of the so-called national liberation movements in the Arab countries was in the hands of the national bourgeoisie. They continued to emphasize,

¹ See "The Azerbaijan Problem," The World Today, February 1946.

however, that the ultimate leader of these movements was the proletariat, "the sole revolutionary class consistent to the end." The high-watermark of Soviet enthusiasm for Arab nationalism and Arab unity was reached in 1957 by V. B. Lutskiy, the author of the disparaging article on Arab culture in the Soviet Encyclopaedia mentioned earlier. He now declared that "the Arab peoples have community of language and culture, community of historic destinies and of territory," and that "they are also united by community of political interest which, while not constituting the definition of a nation, immeasurably strengthens national links."² He added that Arab unity had now been translated into living reality and that the Soviet people with all their heart wished for the Arabs the strengthening of that unity.

It is at least permissible to suppose that Russia's ultimate aim is still what it was over a century ago -- the establishment of Russian, or rather, Soviet, political, economic, and cultural influence in the eastern Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf. Most people will probably agree that this aim has been in the minds of Soviet leaders ever since the Revolution, but that they have often changed their views on the means by which it could best be attained. The means at present advocated by the Soviet Government amount to the abandonment of earlier methods of subversion and violent revolution in favor of moral and material support for all elements, including the bourgeoisie, propertied classes, and clergy, in what is called "movements for national liberation" directed against the West. These methods, although superficially less alarming, are likely to prove more dangerous in the long run. Moreover, while in the eyes of the Middle East they seem to contrast favorably with the military preparations of which the West is constantly accused, it is often forgotten that the Soviet Union has no need of military pacts with Middle East countries. The present technique of peaceful penetration could almost overnight be exchanged for direct action.

The years of 1956 and 1957 were in many ways profitable ones for Soviet policy. The failure of the Suez venture was widely considered by the Arabs to be the result of Soviet intervention, and the Soviet Union began to appear as the undoubted defender of Middle East rights. Western propaganda about the Soviet arms build-up in Egypt and Syria and about the possible dispatch of Soviet volunteers merely reinforced Arab convictions about Soviet readiness to fight their battles for them if the need should arise, not only against the West but against Israel. During 1957 and the first half of 1958 the opinion was widespread that, except for Iraq and Jordan, the Arab countries were lost to the West and that Soviet influence would now spread apace. The creation of the United Arab Republic, the disturbances in Lebanon, and finally even the coup d'état in Iraq were all thought of as victories for Communism. In fact, however, the Soviet Government was very soon to be assailed by misgivings on the subject of Arab nationalism.

² Sovetskaya Etnografiya No. 1, 1957.

The ideological limitations of the rapprochement between the Soviet Union and the Arab countries began to appear more sharply after the establishment of the United Arab Republic in February 1958. Soviet welcome for the new republic was not unqualified. Its creation was greeted as an anti-imperialist move, but it was pointed out that the Arab unity movement could be used for purposes contrary to the interests of the people. Nasser's campaign against Communism and his attitude towards Iraq after the coup d'état were decisive in modifying the Soviet attitude to Arab nationalism. Soviet dissatisfaction with the UAR does not mean, however, that the Soviet Government regards the situation in Iraq with equanimity. So far from being a source of comfort to the Soviet Union, the activities of the Iraq Communist Party, or rather Parties, have been a cause of acute embarrassment. It would be different if the Iraq frontier touched directly on the USSR; but as it does not, the establishment of a Communist Government in a country situated as Iraq is situated might well precipitate a war in the Middle East, an event which the Soviet Government is at present most anxious to avoid.

It is probably true to say that the West has gravely underestimated the importance of Middle Eastern, and particularly Arab, nationalism. But it is probably equally true to say that the Russians in the beginning of their latest Middle East drive gravely overestimated the extent to which they could exploit this nationalism in their own interests in the same way as they have done with the Muslim peoples of Transcaucasia and Central Asia.

After the Twentieth Party Congress of 1956 there was a clear tendency to lay more emphasis on nationalist movements supported by all classes and less on the role played by local Communist Parties. But as disillusionment with Arab nationalism grew, and particularly after the repressive measures taken against the Communist Party in the UAR in 1958, the importance of local Communist Parties as the firmest and most consistent champions of national unity and the people's cause had to be reaffirmed and this was done in forthright terms at the Twenty-first Party Congress in January and February 1959.

As an indication of how far the Soviet Union had moved away from the idea of Pan-Arab unity it may be interesting to quote from a speech delivered by Khrushchev in March 1959:³

It is said that Arab nationalism supposedly stands outside the interests of separate Arab States, and outside the interests of different classes of the population of the Arab countries. Undoubtedly, the interests of the majority of Arabs are indivisible in the struggle against the colonial yoke. But after a country has freed itself from foreign domination the interests of the people cannot

3 Izvestiya, 17 March 1959.

be ignored. for the interests of all the Arabs cannot coincide.. Therefore attempts under the flag of nationalism to ignore the interests of separate classes of the population and the interests of the working people are futile.

With this speech an episode in the history of Soviet-Arab relations may be said to have come to an end. The Soviet Government seems to have given up, at any rate for the present, the idea of dealing with the Arabs as a whole. It is, however, evidently intent on entering into closer relations with the individual States of the Arab world.

In dealing with the United Arab Republic, despite the anti-Communist line taken up and maintained by the UAR Government, the Soviet Union has gone ahead with her plans for economic and technical aid. At the beginning of 1960 Izvestiya's Cairo correspondent said that the Soviet Union could "leave the settlement of ideological controversies to history,"⁴ and since then there has been no direct comment in the Soviet press about anti-Communist measures in the UAR. At the same time, Soviet writers strongly criticize the notion often expressed in Arab nationalist circles that the Arabs, having defeated Western imperialism, have no need to veer towards the East ideologically and that Arabs naturally are and must remain anti-Communist. The Soviet press has quite recently also expressed indignation at certain unfavorable reflections, both on Soviet Communism as a system and on the motives of Soviet aid to the UAR, which have appeared in the UAR press; but it maintains that these are not representative of UAR opinion or of Nasser's own attitude.

The idea gaining ground among the Arabs, and one which is not entirely unacceptable to the West, namely that they should derive the maximum material benefit from both East and West without allowing themselves to submit to or acknowledge the mentorship of either, is one which the Soviet Union finds thoroughly objectionable. The earlier attitude towards Nasser's Revolution was one of almost unqualified flattery and approval; but there has lately been a tendency in Soviet writing to question the reality and efficacy of Egyptian so-called democratic reforms. There has, however, been no criticism of the development of State capitalism in the UAR. In the Arab countries, as elsewhere in Asia and Africa, this is regarded as "progressive" in the sense that it weakens the position of foreign capital. The established Communist doctrine that State capitalism is a stage on the road to "socialist transformation" of the economy is never specifically mentioned.

The embarrassment caused to the Soviet Government by the excessive activity of the Communist Party of Iraq has already been mentioned. Here too the Soviet attitude has in general been one of non-interference. But criticism of the Iraq Government's anti-Communist measures has been stronger and has lasted longer than in the case of the UAR. Nevertheless, Soviet writing continues to represent the Soviet Union's relations with

Iraq as close and friendly and the policy of technical and economic aid is proceeding unabated. On the subject of oil, the Soviet Government was at first inclined to commend the Iraq Government's policy towards foreign oil companies. Quite recently, at the beginning of this year in fact, there has been a significant change in this attitude. In a long article called "The Oil Policy of the Iraqi Republic" in the important periodical Problemy Vostokovedeniya⁵ the author strongly criticized the Iraq Government for its lack of resolution and consistency in defending the people's interests against the exploitation of the foreign oil companies. Since the article quotes extensively from the views expressed by the Communist newspaper Ittihad ash-Sha'b's writing on the subject, it is clear that the article is a new and overt expression of Soviet support for Communist pressure on the Iraq Government. It is not yet clear whether this support springs from a new Soviet estimate of the strength of the Communist movement in Iraq, or from the ever-present need to assure the Soviet people of the power and prestige of Communist Parties everywhere. It would seem that so long as Persia remains relatively stable and in the Western camp, the Soviet Union will not attempt any direct interference or subversion in Iraq. The fact remains, however, that this article does introduce a new note of critical appraisal.

As was mentioned earlier, the Levant is the only part of the Arab world with which Russia has any traditional cultural connection. This fact was perhaps an additional, underlying -- although never expressed -- reason for her dislike of Syria's union with Egypt. Since the Revolution she had devoted more attention to Syria than to any other Arab country and it is significant that Syria was the first country dealt with in a series of manuals on Middle East countries which the Soviet Union started to publish in 1958. She is now debarred from dealing with Syria as a separate country. Her interest in Lebanon, however, remains close, if cautious. Soviet writers in general limit themselves to advocating progressive dissociation of the Lebanon from Western influence. They sharply criticize what they call "the Arab nationalist extremists" who are agitating for the inclusion of the Lebanon in the UAR "without taking into account its national peculiarities and democratic traditions." Lebanese abstention from the anti-Communist attitude of the UAR has been noted with approval.

The only other Arab country with which the Soviet Union has any close relations is the Yemen. Here Soviet technical aid has been on a considerable scale, particularly in rebuilding the Port of Hudaydah. Although Soviet writers continually emphasize Soviet friendship with the Yemen, they also criticize her backward "feudal" condition. They have, however, refrained from reporting the growth of workers' movements, in contrast to their treatment of other Arab countries, such as Saudi Arabia.

With Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the Persian Gulf States the USSR has no diplomatic or economic relations. But Soviet

⁵ No. 1, 1961.

specialists on Arab affairs pay a good deal of attention to them and from their writings it is easy to discern the official attitude. For instance, in 1957, the Soviet Government approved Jordan's rapprochement with Egypt, followed as it was by the Nasser Government's decision to establish diplomatic relations with the USSR. But for British intervention, it was suggested, at the beginning of 1958, a union with the UAR might have come about. But, since Nasser's anti-Communist campaign at the end of 1958, Soviet writers have stopped thinking of the "anti-imperialist struggle" in Jordan in terms of the Arab unity movement. Opposition to the present regime in Jordan, however, continues to receive Soviet support.

The Soviet attitude towards Saudi Arabia is in general sympathetic. The absence of Saudi-Soviet diplomatic relations is deplored and the country is regarded rather as a victim of American imperialism than as a willing collaborator with it. The operations of the Aramco Oil Company are an object of constant Soviet attack.

As to the Arab States of North Africa and the Sudan, the Soviet tendency is to regard these countries as African rather than Arab, particularly since the waning of Soviet enthusiasm for Arab unity.

One might sum up the present Soviet attitude towards the Arab world in one word as realistic. While the Soviet Government must continue to deplore any display of anti-Communism and continued association with the West on the part of the Arab countries, its attitude is not irrevocably affected by these considerations; it is rather the attitude of the Arab countries toward the Soviet Union which is the deciding factor. Zhukov, one of the leading Soviet writers on foreign affairs, recently wrote an important article in Pravda⁶ about the foundations of Soviet solidarity with the "bourgeois" States of Asia and Africa. He said that to sneer at the "bourgeois nationalism" of such States would amount to "sectarianism of a most dangerous kind leading to self-isolation." The use of this word "self-isolation" may well express a genuine Soviet fear that, by putting ideological aims first rather than second, the Soviet Union could jeopardize the friendly contacts with Arab countries which she has been so successful in establishing during the past ten years.

Postscript

THE RECENT SOVIET-UAR DISPUTE

During May and June of this year a dispute of proportions unprecedented in Soviet-UAR relations arose between Moscow and Cairo, each side accusing the other's propaganda machine of deliberately seeking to poison relations. However, while being conducted at the highest propaganda level, the dispute appears to have had no visible effect on inter-State relations.

⁶ 26 August 1960.

On 20 May Trud, quoting the Lebanese paper An-Nida, reported the death of Riyadh at-Turk, a member of the Syrian Communist Party, in prison in Damascus, "as a result of savage torture." The report was broadcast by Moscow radio. On 22 May, according to Cairo radio, the UAR Deputy Foreign Minister drew the attention of the Soviet Ambassador in Cairo to the "false report" about Riyadh at-Turk published in "biased newspapers"; Riyadh at-Turk was alive and in good health; "it is better for Moscow radio to scrutinize the reports it receives from a biased press."

On 31 May Pravda published a long and indignant article taking issue with UAR journalists who had criticized Soviet Communism and had cast aspersions on Soviet aid to the UAR. On the latter subject, it complained that Fikri Abazah in Al-Masawwar had published an open letter to Mr. Khrushchev asserting that the UAR had had a high political price to pay for its loans from the Soviet Union, and that the USSR hoped that such assistance would "automatically lead to Communism." To this Pravda replied that Communist Parties in all countries were independent agents and were "the creation of the peoples themselves." On the subject of Soviet Communism, Pravda said that Kamal Hamdi Abu Khayr in Al-Ahram had attacked the Soviet order as depriving the individual of the right to property. Pravda replied that in the Soviet Union the means of production belonged to the people, who governed the State through their elected representatives; Soviet socialism was genuine democracy.

The "socialism" of Abu Khayr -- as he puts it, "our socialist society" -- is as far from socialism as the sky is from the earth. The order which he champions and which he calls "socialism" is like as two peas to capitalism which is doomed by history -- a society in which exploiters rule and people make speeches about democracy, while for their political beliefs progressive people languish in torture-chambers. Such "socialism" is acceptable to any capitalist or monopolist.

On 4 June Cairo finally replied to what it called "the organized campaign directed against the UAR by official Soviet propaganda machines." It is only possible to select a few of the points brought up by the Cairo and Damascus press and radio in the course of a massive attack which was comparable in scale to earlier campaigns of which the Western Powers were the target. It was asserted that the Soviet campaign against the UAR had never ceased since the UAR was set up and the Syrian Communist Party was banned; that the UAR had hitherto kept silent, hoping that better counsels would prevail, but "this concentrated attack...has become attempted aggression based on foreign forces"; that Soviet "dreams of world domination by Communism" could not be realized against the opposition of the peoples; and that Soviet propaganda had interpreted the UAR's policy of non-alignment in an "opportunist" manner, trying to turn it to its own ends. The coincidence of the Soviet campaign with the Cairo preparatory conference of non-aligned States did not escape notice; Cairo radio said that the Communists were "incensed" at the arrangements for the full conference (which is to be held in Yugoslavia).

It also asserted that the matter was not one of "theoretical differences with Communist concepts"; it expressed sympathy with Yugoslavia in "the bitter attack to which the Yugoslav Communist Party was subjected"; the plain fact was that "there are people in Moscow determined to use beliefs as a means for political domination."

During the first half of June Moscow made no direct reply to the UAR attacks. However, Pravda in its issue of 31 May had published a report that the Secretary-General of the Lebanese Communist Party, Farajallah al-Hilu, had died in a Syrian prison as a result of torture; and for the next ten days Soviet newspapers published reports of Soviet and other protests at al-Hilu's death. (According to Cairo statements, no such person as al-Hilu was imprisoned in the UAR, and the story of his death was put out in order to distract attention from the failure of the fabrication about the death of Riyadh at-Turk. On 13 June Trud finally retracted, with a bad grace, the report of at-Turk's death.)

On 17 June Pravda published a reply to the UAR campaign, in which it complained that the sense of its original article had been "distorted." It denounced some of the more extreme Cairo attacks on Soviet policy, and defended the Soviet Union's right to speak up on behalf of imprisoned "patriots" and Communists anywhere in the world. In conclusion it declared that the Soviet Union valued Soviet-Arab friendship and strove to strengthen it; "one must suppose that the United Arab Republic also is striving for this."

Whether or not this episode is now concluded, it must have provided salutary lessons for the leaders of both the Soviet Union and the UAR. It must now be apparent to Moscow that the whole complexion of one large aspect of Soviet policy is viewed with repugnance in the UAR. To Cairo observers it must be clearer than ever that Moscow only supports neutral groupings which serve its own purposes. Now that the dispute has been fought out at the propaganda level, it remains for the UAR and its "non-aligned" colleagues to take up their positions at a "summit" meeting which -- to judge by Moscow's silence on the matter -- is not at all to Soviet liking.

D.L.M.

CHINA AND KUWAIT

July 5, 1961

Kuwait obtained its independence on June 19, 1961. On June 29, 1961, Chou En-lai sent a belated message of congratulation to the Ruler of Kuwait saying:

"On the occasion of the proclamation of independence of Kuwait I have the honor on behalf of the Government and people of the CPR to extend hearty congratulations to the Government and people of Kuwait. May the people of Kuwait achieve further successes in the cause of opposing imperialism and colonialism, safeguarding national independence and building their country. May your country attain prosperity and its people enjoy happiness."

(NCNA, June 29, 1961 at 20:15 GMT)

Though it is normal for China to mark the Day of Independence of all newly emerging countries, such as Ghana, Nigeria, with a suitable message of good wishes and goodwill, it is unusual for there to be a ten-day time-lag in the sending of such a message. Therefore it seems significant that this particular message should be despatched four days after the announcement by Iraq on June 25 that it claimed Kuwait.

The Chinese were comparatively friendly towards Iraq in 1960 and the Iraqi attitude to China was equally cordial. Major General Abdul Karim Kassem, at the opening of the first Communist Chinese Industrial Exhibition in Baghdad said the Chinese people had brought their country to its present greatness by throwing out imperialism and Iraq would follow the same path: "We shall surely overthrow imperialism and advance so far that we can offer help to other Arab countries," he said. (November 5, 1960.)

During the early months of 1961, however, the Chinese cooled off. At the end of February and beginning of March NCNA reported that responsible Iraqis were campaigning for clemency for the "Iraqi patriots" who had helped suppress the rebellion in 1959. On March 15, eleven prominent Chinese lawyers sent a cable to the Iraqi Premier appealing to him to defend human rights and justice by annulling sentence passed against Iraqi nationalists. (Peking radio, March 6; NCNA, March 4). On March 19 NCNA again reported petitions had been sent to Kassem by the Iraqi people from all spheres of life asking him to revoke the death sentences passed on the same group of Iraqi patriots.

On May 9, NCNA reported that Ahmen Saleh al Abdi, Military Governor, had banned the offices of the Iraqi Council of Peace Partisans. It followed up this report with another, on May 14, that WFTU had protested against the repression of the Iraqi trade unions. However, on June 13, NCNA noted that the Iraqi

Peace Council recently adopted a resolution supporting the struggles against "imperialism" in Laos, Algeria, Angola, Cuba, Congo, Iran, S. Vietnam and South Korea.

It would appear that the recent moves by the Iraqi Government against the "front organizations" in their country and the indigenous movements utilized by international communism have caused the Chinese to regard Iraq with some suspicion. The timing of Chou En-lai's message could therefore be interpreted as constituting a warning to Iraq not to proceed any further with its claim to Kuwait.

NCNA and Peking Radio (July 2) quoted the Iraqi Foreign Ministry statement of June 26 that "British imperialism succeeded in separating Kuwait from Iraq by force as World War I afforded it an opportunity to carry out its plan by dominating Iraq and its destiny and separating Kuwait from her with all powers and influence... Kuwait is an inseparable part of Iraq." However, a People's Daily editorial of July 4 was less forthright. It stated: "The Kuwait question is, indeed, a complicated one. There are two sides to this question: one is the Kuwait people's demand for liberation from the colonial rule of imperialism...; the other is the existence of different views among the Arab countries on the question of Kuwait's sovereignty. The people of Kuwait have long suffered imperialist oppression and plunder; they are entitled to independence and freedom... Any conflict among the Arab countries can only be to the advantage of imperialist intervention and aggression... But at any rate it is entirely an affair among the Arab countries, an internal affair in the Arab world which should and can only be settled by the Arab countries through peaceful negotiation. Imperialism has no right to interfere."