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DATE: August 18, 1972
SUBJECT : Reported Reconciliation Among Syrian Communists
REF : BEIRUT A-187, July 14

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The Syrian Communist Party's Central Committee announced on August 10 its unanimous approval of a Moscow-backed plan to heal the long-standing breach between the SCP's feuding "traditionalists" and "dissident" wings and assure Party unity in the future. The statement extolled the USSR's role in helping to bring about agreement on the plan, calling it an "historic indication of support for Syria's national progressive regime, as well as for the economic, social and political measures it has taken, for the Syrian national progressive front, and for the IPC nationalization in Iraq and Syria." It appears that the Soviets played a crucial role in gaining the restoration of at least a semblance of SCP unity, but it may prove short-lived -- given the depth of bitterness and of the personal/ideological divisions that have caused SCP feuding in the past.

Attachment: 0

TASS Statement on Talks with Syrian Communists, July 27.

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An SCP delegation headed by Khalid Bakdash, and including both his supporter Yusuf Feisal and "dissident" leaders Daniel Nimeh, Zahir 'Abd al Samad, Murad Yusuf and Riad Turk, was invited to Moscow July 21-25 for talks with Soviet officials (including Andrei Kirilenko and Boris Ponomarev) aimed at ending the personal and ideological differences that have rent the SCP in recent months. Although details of the agreement worked out during the visit have not been made public, a joint SCP-CP/USSR communique published by TASS on July 27 indicated that efforts were made at Moscow to "strengthen the SCP's ideological, political and organizational unity." Informed speculation has it that these efforts involved Russian recommendations that SCP should (a) reinstate all members of Party committees elected at the Third SCP Congress in November 1967, (b) withdraw accusations of "deviationism" and hostility toward the USSR levelled by Bakdash against the dissident wing in recent months, (c) dissolve all committees formed by either faction since last April, when the conflict between them widened into an open breach, and (d) form a four-member "reconciliation" committee to examine the causes of the split and recommend further measures to prevent its recurrence.

Although the SCP Central Committee expressed complete satisfaction over the results of the delegation's "historic" visit to Moscow and asserted its confidence in the maintenance of future Party unity, we are somewhat skeptical about the degree to which the Party's serious organizational and ideological differences (the latter, as noted REFALR, involve radically different views on such subjects as Arab unity, Arab nationalism, a peaceful settlement of the ME conflict, and the existence of Israel) have really been overcome. In our view, these differences are so deeply-rooted that it may only be a question of time before they surface again, perhaps in more acute form.

In any event, the Soviets appear to have pressed SCP leaders hard in Moscow to accept the unity plan, perhaps motivated by the fear that continued Syrian Communist feuding -- added to the repercussions of Russia's latest troubles in Egypt -- could harm Soviet relations with Asad and/or further damage the role of the SCP in the Syrian body politic. (Asad may already have been displeased by Bakdash warning him against imitating Sadat's expulsion of Soviet advisers and perhaps against joining the Egyptian-Libyan merger.) In so doing, the Soviets may have risked antagonizing Asad anyhow, since the latter in his August 10 interview with Beirut's al Anwar (summarized in Beirut 8604) made clear that his dealings with the SCP are internal matters in which the USSR should not interfere. Asked about Soviet efforts to reconcile the warring factions within the SCP, Asad replied: "I have no knowledge of that. It is not Russia's business to interfere in the affairs of any Syrian party. Such interference, when it occurs, is not consistent with our friendship for Russia."

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TASS STATEMENT ON TALKS WITH SYRIAN COMMUNISTS
(July 27)

On July 21 and 25, a meeting was held between Andre Kirilinko, a member of the Political Bureau of the Soviet Communist Party, and a Secretary of the Party's Central Committee, Boris Ponomarev, a nominee for membership of the Political Bureau and a Secretary of the Central Committee and Rostislav Oleanovsky, deputy chairman of the international section at the Central Committee, and a delegation of the Syrian Communist Party which is visiting Moscow on the invitation of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party. The delegation included Khaled Bakdash, the Party's Secretary-General, and Yussef Feisal, Daniel Nemei and Zohair Abdel Samad, members of the Political Bureau and the Central Committee of the Syrian Communist Party, Riad el-Turk, member of the Political Bureau, Murad Yussef, secretary of the Central Committee and Wassel Feisal, member of the Central Committee.

(Soviet Efforts.) During the talks, which were held in a warm and cordial atmosphere, representatives of the Soviet Communist Party acquainted the Syrian comrades with the urgent issues of the activity of the Soviet Communist Party, and the efforts of the Soviet Communists and the entire Soviet people, which are aimed at implementing the resolutions of the 24th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, in the field of communist construction. They also acquainted them with the measures taken by the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party for realizing the peace program adopted by the Congress. The Soviet representatives also talked about the preparations which are going on in the Soviet Union to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Soviet Union.

(Syrian Efforts.) The delegation of the Syrian Communist Party acquainted them with the activity of the Syrian communists and the principal tasks which they are realizing in the current period. The Syrian comrades talked about the progressive, social and economic changes which are going on in the country, on the initiative of the Arab Socialist Baath Party, and the measures taken in the recent period for spreading democracy in the social-political life. These measures were the creation of the progressive national front, with the participation of the Communist Party, the set up of the People's Council (Parliament), elections for local administration councils and other measures aimed at raising the level of the political activity of the toiling masses.

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(Backing for Damascus.) The Syrian comrades voiced strong backing for the anti-imperialist foreign policy, and the domestic measures taken by the progressive regime in the Syrian Arab Republic. The Syrian communists hold that these measures help create the necessary circumstances for re-organizing the Syrian society on democratic, progressive lines and ensuring the potential for building the socialist society in the future.

(Unity of Syrian Communists.) The delegation of the Soviet Communist Party also acquainted itself with the ideological and organizational work achieved by the Syrian Communist Party, and which is aimed at strengthening the unity of the Syrian Communist Party.

Representatives of the Soviet Communist Party highly regarded the measures achieved in Syria for building a new, free and democratic society. The unity of the anti-imperialist forces which is emerging in Syria, within the framework of the national, progressive front, is the guarantee that the Syrian Arab Republic will march successfully along the road of strengthening national independence and social progress.

Representatives of the Soviet Communist Party hailed the efforts of the Syrian comrades to strengthen the ideological, political and organizational unity of the Syrian Communist Party, which is the important regiment in the progressive forces of the country.

(Arab-Israeli Conflict.) Views were exchanged on the Middle East situation. The two sides firmly condemned the continued imperialist aggression on the part of Israel against the Arab countries. They voiced their conviction that a just and firm peace cannot be achieved in the Middle East unless the Arab lands occupied by Israel are liberated and the legitimate rights of the Arab Palestinian people are ensured.

(Arab-Soviet Friendship.) The two delegations emphasized the extreme importance of the friendship between the Soviet Union and Syria for the development of the national liberation movement of the Arab countries, opposing imperialist intrigues and liquidating the consequences of the Israeli aggression. Any attempts to blow up Arab-Soviet friendship would be aimed at breaking the ranks of the Arab revolutionary strugglers and would only serve the interests of imperialism and reaction.

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The representatives of the Soviet and Syrian communists emphasized the importance of the unity and fusion of the Arab states and peoples and all progressive forces in the Arab world for confronting the Israeli aggression and liquidating its consequences, and for defeating the intrigues of world imperialism and reaction which are aimed at forcing the liberation movement of the Arab peoples to retreat.

(IPC Nationalization.) The two sides highly regarded the actions taken by the Iraqi Government in nationalizing the Iraq Petroleum Company, and by the Syrian Government in nationalizing the property of that company on Syrian territory. These nationalist actions by the two progressive Arab countries are steps on the way toward complete ownership by the Arab countries of their national wealth, in line with the interests of their peoples.

The delegations of the Soviet and Syrian communist parties emphasized the extreme importance of the relations of brotherly friendship between the two parties, which are based on the principles of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism. The delegations of the two parties voiced their strong determination to promote the relations of friendship and cooperation between the peoples of the Soviet Union and the Syrian Arab Republic.

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