

August 23, 1957

**Record of a Conversation between N.S. Khrushchev
with DRV President Ho Chi Minh in Crimea**

Citation:

"Record of a Conversation between N.S. Khrushchev with DRV President Ho Chi Minh in Crimea", August 23, 1957, Wilson Center Digital Archive, RGANI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 555, ll. 80-88. Contributed by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg.
<https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/208969>

Summary:

Ho Chi Minh reports on his trip to Europe, explains his impressions of various leaders in the Socialist bloc, and discusses Tito's politics in Yugoslavia with Khrushchev. They also discuss economic development and the Geneva Accords.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Blavatnik Family Foundation

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

SECRET only copy

**RECORD OF A CONVERSATION of N. S. Khrushchev WITH DRV PRESIDENT HO CHI MINH IN CRIMEA
23 AUGUST 1957**

after mutual greetings Ho Chi Minh presented his impressions of a trip throughout the European countries of people's democracy. He said that on the basis of his personal observations and from conversations with comrades on site he was convinced that everywhere the people were working with enthusiasm. Touching on Hungary, Ho Chi Minh noted that the CC of the Socialist Worker's Party completely controls the situation in the country and spoke favorably of Cdes. Kadar and Marosan. The situation in Poland is more complex, where there are many difficulties, especially in work with young people. As is well-known, the youth organizations in Poland were disbanded. The influence of reaction has increased among young people. Those of peasant ancestry now comprise the majority of working youth in the cities. The fact stands out that many of them drink and engage in hooliganism. The workers are constantly demanding a wage increase, when doing so comparing their standard of living with the standard of living of workers in Britain and America. There are difficulties connected with the activity of reactionary elements in the peasant party and with the subversive activity of the Catholic Church and vacillations of the intellectuals. Nevertheless responsible comrades in Poland noted that the situation in the country began to improve after the 9th plenum of the PUWP CC.

Before visiting Yugoslavia, continued Ho Chi Minh, the Soviet comrades recommended that I not engage in a discussion with the Yugoslavs about particular questions. On the whole Tito's positions changed for the better after the conference with the Soviet comrades in Bucharest. However, he is exhibiting great dissatisfaction with respect to Albania. He also considers the concept of "the socialist camp" too narrow, and doesn't like the word "camp" at all. During a face-to-face discussion with Tito he displayed great openness; however, saying little in the presence of other people. As before he continues to think that the positions he stated in Pula are correct.

In the other countries such as the GDR, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Albania the people and the Parties are completely united. In these countries the leading role of the CPSU and the Soviet Union are stressed everywhere.

If one compares the standard of living in these countries, continued Ho Chi Minh, with the standard of living in Vietnam then, of course, their standard of living is far higher. It is important for us to note that fraternal sympathies for Vietnam are displayed everywhere in these countries.

In Ho Chi Minh's opinion, in general the situation is good in the socialist countries of Europe with the exception of the difficulties observed in Poland, the differences with Yugoslavia, and the disputes and discontent in relations between Albania and Yugoslavia. In all these countries not only Party members but ordinary workers are thankful for everything that the USSR has done for them, and for those sacrifices which it has made to help them.

This trip, Ho Chi Minh said in conclusion, was of great interest to him inasmuch as he saw with his own eyes what he had previously read or heard. The senior comrades in the countries he visited noted that mutual fraternal visits are very useful. A Bulgarian government delegation will soon go to China, Korea, and the DRV. They are also expecting a Yugoslav government delegation in the DRV.

Khrushchev briefly informed Ho Chi Minh about the discussions with Tito in Bucharest. He said that an agreement had been reached there about the SKYu's participation in the meeting of the Communist Parties of the socialist countries which is timed to the 40th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution. Tito himself agreed that the conference in Bucharest had given better results than any other previous meetings.

As regards Tito in Pula, continued Khrushchev, at the first meeting with him in Bucharest he tried to insist on positions expressed in this speech. He used the term

“Stalinists”, but we told him directly that we are Leninists, and we don’t use the term “Stalinists”. But, if attacks are made on us and they call us “Stalinists” then we will defend ourselves and rebuff attempts to distort our policy. Such a position will increase our differences, leading to an ideological war. Tito said further than the leaderships in Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Albania have “Stalinists”, but we did not agree with him, pointing out that he does not know the situation in the Communist Parties of these countries well and is incorrectly informed. We have declared that we categorically reject such epithets against the leaders of fraternal Communist Parties. Khrushchev said further, I do not think that we have completely won over Tito, but in any event he understood that if he continues such attacks we will defend ourselves. Oh the whole, the conversation was interesting, and when agreement was reached on all questions then Tito proposed publishing a communiqué, although our meeting was private. Tito’s proposal to publish a communiqué demonstrated that he wanted to demonstrate to us a lack of fear of the Western powers and at the same time to make a gesture that he seriously desires a rapprochement with the USSR.

Afterwards we and the Yugoslavs appointed our representatives to work out and coordinate a communiqué. Our representatives were Cdes. Kuusinen and Ponomarev, and from the Yugoslav side, Kardelj, Rankovic, Vlahovic, and Micunovic. However, although agreement had already been reached on all questions, the Yugoslavs did not want to note this agreement. Tito turned to me about this, and I, Khrushchev pointed out, frankly told him that I didn’t understand the situation that had been created. It turns out that the Yugoslav side agreed with us in word, but when it was a matter of drawing up a communiqué recording the agreement that had been reached, it did not agree to sign it. This could only lead to a new aggravation in relations between us. Khrushchev mentioned in this connection that at one time during a meeting in Moscow information was compiled where it was indicated on what questions they had come to agreement, but not which ones. It turned out that this information had fallen into the hands of enemies, but the result was a statement in Pula and the aggravation of mutual relations associated with it.

I asked Tito, continued Khrushchev, does he or does he not want a communiqué to be adopted[?] He was told that we well understand the difficulties which the Yugoslavs were experiencing in connection with the economic aid they receive from the US, and it was noted that we do not insist on the publication of such a communiqué if it would cause any material damage to Yugoslavia. We suggested that Tito sign the draft communiqués drawn up by us and the Yugoslavs and put our drafts in safes on condition that the Yugoslavs commit themselves to present their position on agreed questions through the press, in statements, and other channels. If the Yugoslav side agreed with them then we were ready to also accept the Yugoslav draft of a communiqué for publication especially as essentially it was not very substantive and its adoption changed nothing. Tito agreed with this and we accepted the Yugoslav text for publication, submitting some improvements there. At the same time we signed our draft of a communiqué, which was secret.

We also spoke of the need to consider the difference which exist between us inside our Parties, and not bring them out [in the open], so they are not used by enemies of the socialist countries. Khrushchev continued, Tito then mentioned to me the statement in Czechoslovakia where I said that he isn’t embellishing the aid to Yugoslavia received from the imperialists. I replied to Tito that what I said will be correctly understood by the masses because such socialism which Dulles and Eisenhower like is probably a special socialism. Tito responded that before long Yugoslavia will get rid of this aid. I told Tito that this is good, but that the main thing is something else. One can get aid from the imperialists, pulling as much as possible from them, including field guns, if this serves to strengthen the forces of socialism, but when this aid is given to be used against the socialist camp then we will fight against this with all our might.

As concerns Hungary, Khrushchev continued further, then the situation there is improving and trust in the government of Cde. Kadar strengthens with each day. When visiting the GDR we also had an opportunity to be convinced that the situation there is good.

In Poland it’s a different situation. Enemies are making use of the difficulties which exist there. Moreover, the PUWP CC and Gomulka personally are not at all clearly

pursuing a policy of strengthening socialism, as a result of which revisionist elements in Poland often have the upper hand. Steadfast Party cadre are being persecuted.

The economic situation in Poland is very difficult, they need loans. Two months ago Cyrankiewicz sent a letter to Bulganin over his signature with a request to give Poland a gold loan of 300,000,000 rubles. We gave a reply that we could not do this right now. We refused to grant such a loan inasmuch as we know that it would have been wasted. As is well known, the Polish government has increased worker's wages, bought food abroad, and is spending money for all sorts of unproductive purposes. The Polish comrades verbally abuse us while getting money from the USSR. If they consider their path to socialism correct, and ours incorrect, then why then are they turning to us for money, although we are going along an incorrect path from their point of view? After the 8th PWUP CC plenum they engaged predominantly in starting to criticize us, but they don't criticize the Americans, although those offered them an absolutely insignificant loan. We have survived without any outside aid, let them try to get by with their own resources.

Khrushchev said, next Sunday Gomulka will come to me for a conversation. It is known that he will turn [to us] about a loan. I have a difficult discussion coming. It is necessary to be polite, without insulting him, and show that in the current state of affairs we cannot offer Poland a loan, although we understand perfectly well that Poland needs one. We consider that an exchange of opinions with Gomulka will be useful. It is necessary for Gomulka to take steps to step up the fight against domestic reactionaries. If the counterrevolution in Hungary had that advantage that there exists a border with the West then the situation in Poland would be more advantageous since they border the GDR in the west. But the situation there might be very serious if steps are not taken. However, undoubtedly the Polish working class has gone through a big school of political struggle and is able to inflict a defeat on the forces of reaction.

Ho Chi Minh says that we had formed the impression that Zawadzki is concerned about the situation that has formed. Gomulka is a good speaker, but he does not have enough energy. Cyrankiewicz sort of makes the impression of a social democrat; as a Communist he makes a poor impression. Moreover, the American magazine Life published an article in which it says that Cyrankiewicz's wife is a spy.

Khrushchev said that this is not excluded. He cited the following fact as an example: once Gomulka and Cyrankiewicz came to him incognito for talks. However, the whole world soon knew about these talks. During Cde. Mikoyan's stay in Warsaw information about the talks he was holding also became known abroad. When the CPSU CC June plenum made decisions I asked our ambassador in Poland not to disclose them to other PWUP CC Politburo members since they contained secret points.

Ho Chi Minh asked, was an investigation made in connection with the disclosure of information about the talks[?]

Khrushchev replied that such an investigation was made. When it was done it turned out that such information was disclosed by PUWP CC Politburo member Morawski, who is anti-Soviet. He, Khrushchev, does not know whether the Polish comrades have adopted any disciplinary measures with respect to Morawski.

Then Ho Chi Minh noted that, regarding Yugoslavia, it is necessary to take into account the considerable role of the hatred which exists between the leaders of Yugoslavia and Albania, and Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. He cited as an example the fact that when the Yugoslav leaders refused to let the Albanian representatives through to meet with him, Ho Chi Minh, during his stay in Brioni.

Khrushchev agreed, and said that Kardelj, Rankovic, and also Zhivkov and Hoxha were in the USSR before his departure for the GDR. It was decided to hold a general dinner in their honor. They did not warn the Yugoslavs about this beforehand for a lack of time, and they were offended; I thought that this we did this intentionally and that thereby the goal was pursued of compromising them in the eyes of the Americans.

Ho Chi Minh said further that during [his] stay in Yugoslavia he signed a joint communiqué with the Yugoslavs. When this was done a sort of flexible wording was adopted. We agreed to exclude from the Yugoslav draft wording unacceptable to us

about the development of atomic energy and about aid to underdeveloped countries, but the wording about the fight against imperialism [was excluded] from the Vietnamese draft. Ho Chi Minh continued, in Berlin the German comrades asked me why Yugoslavia recognized the Federal Republic of Germany, but had not yet recognized the GDR? This can hardly be called a socialist position.

Khrushchev noted that earlier Tito said that Yugoslavia was ready to recognize the GDR, but then the events in Hungary followed and this question remained undecided. However, according to a report of Tito, the question of Yugoslavia's recognition of the GDR is a matter of the near future.

Ho Chi Minh pointed out that, in Tito's words, Yugoslavia will recognize the GDR as soon as the question of the payment of the debt indemnity of \$60,000,000 to West Germany is settled. Tito said that this question will be settled in the near future.

Ho Chi Minh continued, all the socialist countries of Europe gave the DRV aid in connection with the flooding. The USSR gave the greatest aid. Such aid has not only material, but also great moral importance for the DRV. He, Ho Chi Minh, expresses deep cordial gratitude to the CPSU CC and the Government of the Soviet Union in the name of the Vietnamese people.

Ho Chi Minh said further, the Bulgarian comrades informed him that there is speculation that the Americans will raise the question of accepting South Vietnam as a UN [member] at the upcoming UN General Assembly session. They asked in this connection as to whether to also raise the question of accepting North Vietnam in the UN. The posing of this question has both positive and negative sides inasmuch as, on the one hand, it would increase the number of votes of the socialist countries in the UN but, on the other, it would mean recognition of the division of Vietnam. That is why we have not given a reply to this question and said that we will discuss this. We would like to know the opinion of the Soviet comrades about this.

Khrushchev said that, as is apparent, the conditions are not yet ripe for the solution of such a question. He does not know if the Americans will raise the question of the admission of South Vietnam at the upcoming General Assembly session. In any case, we will object to the admission of South Vietnam to the UN if North Vietnam is not also admitted, while the US will unquestionably object to the admission of the DRV to the UN. Inasmuch as the question is still not ripe then no special concern ought to be displayed.

Ho Chi Minh said that he would like to know Khrushchev's opinion about the proposals expressed to the chairmen of the Geneva Conference to raise the question of a second Geneva Conference on Vietnam.

Khrushchev said that it is necessary to think about this question. In his opinion, at the present time the convening of a new Geneva Conference is excluded because the West will not agree to this. However, it might be advantageous to mobilize public opinion around this question, especially as the position of North Vietnam is very strong and Ho Chi Minh is the President of all Vietnam. However, it is not excluded that a new conference might morally undermine the successes achieved at the 1954 Geneva Conference. Therefore, right now it is necessary to first consolidate positions inside the country, reduce expenses for the army, and to mobilize all resources for the economic development of the DRV in order to increase the standard of living in North Vietnam. Khrushchev mentions that the GDR is faced with a similar task right now, although it is at a different stage of development. The Vietnamese comrades have achieved historical victories in the fight with the imperialist colonizers. With a correct domestic and foreign policy the Vietnamese comrades will undoubtedly achieve new victories in peaceful economic development. To do this it is necessary to devote maximum attention to the development of the productive forces of the country and questions of economics.

Ho Chi Minh said that right now in Vietnam the main task is the development of agriculture.

Khrushchev agrees with this and asks about the natural resources of Vietnam and the level of development of industry.

Ho Chi Minh said that there is high-quality coal, tin, and zinc in Vietnam and they produce cement, a textile works operates in Nam Dinh, and two tea processing facilities and a match factory. The coal is exported to France and Japan. However, the

level of industrial development is still very low.

Khrushchev recommends developing the export of coal inasmuch as such exports are a good source of obtaining foreign hard currency. He asked about the food situation in Vietnam.

Ho Chi Minh replied that the harvest was good the past two years inasmuch as there were no floods or drought. However, flooding occurred this summer, and right now a drought has come, which threatens the loss of the autumn rice harvest. He said that the economy of the DRV is gradually developing with the aid of the fraternal countries, primarily the USSR and China, However, there are also great difficulties, especially as a result of a shortage of skilled cadre.

At the end of the conversation Khrushchev informed Ho Chi Minh that a report will be published in the Soviet press in the next few days about tests in the USSR of an intercontinental ballistic missile and hydrogen bombs. He stressed that it is more advantageous to publish information about these tests inasmuch as American propaganda is trying to lull public opinion in the US, showing that America is far from the USSR and that it is supposedly hard to hit from the air. Khrushchev noted that the publication of the report about the new tests will sober the ruling circles of the US and reach the American people. It is known that the Americans plan to build such a rocket only by 1960.

Ho Chi Minh said that he wouldn't like to disrupt N. S. Khrushchev's vacation and expresses the hope that the replies to the questions he raised earlier will be given by senior comrades in Moscow.

Khrushchev said that the replies to these questions will be given in Moscow, in the CPSU CC by Cde. Suslov and other comrades.

Ho Chi Minh thanks Khrushchev and says goodbye.

The conversation lasted two hours. Soviet Ambassador in the DRV M. V. Zimyanin was present.

Recorded by: [signature]
(Martynov)

1-lr/MM
yuvam/1215
2 November 1957