

**May 15, 1958**

**Protocol Record of a Conversation between N. S.  
Khrushchev and the Indian Ambassador to the  
Soviet Union K. Menon**

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**Summary:**

Khrushchev and Menon discuss Nehru's illness, the deterioration of Yugoslav-Soviet relations, and the importance of socialist theory in the Soviet political context.

**Credits:**

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SecretPROTOCOL OF A CONVERSATION [Between] N. S. KHRUSHCHEV AND THE  
AMBASSADOR OF INDIA IN THE USSR K. MENON

15 May 1958

N. S. Khrushchev informs the Ambassador at the beginning of the conversation that a third artificial Earth satellite weighing 1327 kg has been launched.

K. Menon expressed his admiration at the successes of Soviet science. Then the Ambassador said that he had come to deliver a message from Prime Minister of India Nehru, which is a reply to the 10 May letter of the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers. Prime Minister Nehru was deeply touched by the attention of the Head of the Soviet government.

N. S. Khrushchev told the Ambassador that we were somewhat concerned when we found out that that situation which had developed had apparently forced Prime Minister Nehru to retire. His statement about his intention to retire was taken with concern inasmuch this would be a big blow for all the friends of India.

K. Menon asked permission to give [Khrushchev] his book, which has come out in Russian, as a gift. It describes a journey through the Himalayas, Karakum, and the Pamir, which he made on horseback several years ago. This journey from India to China took 125 days.

The Ambassador said further that he is very sorry about the worsening of relations between the CPSU and the Yugoslav Communists. Three years ago he was delighted at those efforts which were undertaken by the CPSU and the Soviet government to normalize relations with Yugoslavia, the boldness and even the magnanimity which was displayed when the Soviet delegation went to Belgrade. He, the Ambassador, understood that the efforts in this direction were most of all made by the First Secretary of the CPSU CC. The Ambassador expressed the hope that the worsening was temporary.

N. S. Khrushchev told the Ambassador that right now it is much harder to improve relations than it was three years ago. Previously various extraneous superficial elements existed. For our part, we have already done everything to cleanse our relations of these elements and make them clean. Right now it is not a question of a difference in views on the main questions of Marxist-Leninist theory, it is a question of the need for a commonality of views with respect to the main principles of Marxism-Leninism. Therefore it is hard to improve relations between the Parties right now. Of course, we do not think that our relations will worsen to the degree they were after 1948. We will try to improve our relations through government channels. We hope that the common ground will remain between us on questions of the struggle for peace. Our policy on these questions is steady. We do not think that Yugoslavia will change its position in this respect, although it is hard for us to vouch for this, of course. As concerns relations between Parties they have already been spoiled to the degree that it is impossible to spoil them more.

K. Menon said that in India they think that the positions of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia are very similar on such very important questions of international policy as the attitude toward the hydrogen bomb, a summit conference, and neocolonialism, just like those of India.

N. S. Khrushchev replied to the Ambassador that we were very satisfied when we found a common language with India and Yugoslavia on these questions. We will hope that such a situation will not change. At the same time it is impossible to say that a worsening of relations through Party channels will not affect relations through government channels. It would be another matter if it were a question of a capitalist country. But the Yugoslavs call themselves socialists, Marxist-Leninists, and now we have already been forced to fight for the purity of the ideas of Marxism-Leninism, cleansing them of any distortions and perversions. The Ambassador does not sympathize with Communist ideas but we are Communists and the question of Communist theory is a matter of life for us. The matter has reached the point that Tito insulted us in his speech at a congress. He thanked the United States for

economic aid and bowed low to the American monopolists. As concerns the USSR Tito said only that relations between the USSR and Yugoslavia are developing on a mutually-advantageous basis in the economic sphere.

The United States actually gave Yugoslavia aid, but they gave them wheat and other surplus stock which they either needed to give to someone or throw into the sea or burn in furnaces. They never give such aid which would help the development of industry, for it is not to their advantage to create a new competitor. From the point of view of the capitalists, such a policy is, of course, correct.

As concerns our aid, we give loans for which equipment is delivered to build factories and mills. We agreed to build a factory in Yugoslavia to produce aluminum, doing this from the heart, helping the Yugoslavs like our brothers. Was this to the advantage of the Soviet Union? Of course not. It would have been much more advantageous to build this plant at home and then sell its production to Yugoslavia. But Tito bows to the ground before the imperialists and spits in our faces, saying that our relations are developing on a mutually-advantageous basis. The atmosphere is so heated that evidently we will actually have to build our relations with Yugoslavia on a mutually-advantageous basis. In giving such aid the Soviet Union seeks no advantage, as it also does not seek an advantage in relations with India when building a metallurgical works there. In addition, the Yugoslavs have taken some steps contrary to friendly relations with the Soviet Union. We have been forced to also take into consideration public opinion in our country and the opinion of the Communist Parties.

All this is reported to the Ambassador confidentially. Right now they write in the Western press about a crisis in the CPSU, about how differences exist in it about the question of the attitude toward Yugoslavia. They write that Suslov spoke against Khrushchev. All this is nonsense. The unity of the Party remains unshakeable. Of course, the worsening of relations with Yugoslavia is a fact for me; it is possibly the most unpleasant inasmuch as I have always tried to do everything possible to improve these relations. But our conscience is clear. We have done everything possible from our side. In the final account we are stronger than Yugoslavia, we are absolutely independent and accept [*priznaem*] no imperialists. The truth is, the Yugoslavs also consider themselves absolutely independent. All the members of the UN are considered independent, but in fact more than half of these countries look at the US and try to guess what Dulles is thinking so as not to make a mistake when voting.

K. Menon said that of course he does not believe what they write in the Western press with respect to the CPSU. In the West they write all the time about various crises in the Soviet Union. As concerns what independence some member countries of the UN have, the Philippines are a good example; their interference in the affairs of Indonesia is on the orders of the US.

N. S. Khrushchev told the Ambassador that the greeting given Nixon in the countries of Latin America is a very good example. This "guest" was forced to hide behind the security detail of government troops. The peoples of these countries want independence.

We also very much regret the worsening of our relations with Yugoslavia because we know of the good and close relations existing between Yugoslavia and India. But we hope that they will understand us correctly in India and allow us Communists to settle accounts among ourselves.

K. Menon said that this is more like a family quarrel here, of course.

N. S. Khrushchev replied to Menon that regrettably this is more than a family quarrel. Rankovic said in his speech that too much attention was devoted to practical questions to the detriment of theory, meaning the USSR and to some degree me personally, accusing us of pragmatism. We think that for the Communist Parties in the socialist countries the main thing right now is in questions of practice. As the peasants say, you don't put theory in soup, and you can't sew pants out of it. Theory has given us the opportunity to win power and to build a socialist state. But the people need to be fed well and have their cultural level raised. The task of practice is just to find ways and to mobilize all the forces for such a development of the productive forces which will provide a constant increase of the material standard.

K. Menon said that in India they are delighted there at what is being done in the Soviet Union in recent years.

N. S. Khrushchev explained further to the Ambassador that if one offers Communist theory to people who do not have a glass of milk or shoes they will not accept it. They will ask why it was necessary to make a revolution 40 years ago and build socialism if there is nothing to eat and nothing to wear. But this is already a question of theory.

Take the question of the development of the chemical industry which was considered at the CC Plenum. This is a question of both practice and theory. In fact, we have set out to build new factories and mills to ensure such a level of prosperity which will be higher than in the most developed capitalist countries. This is already a theoretical question, for it will demonstrate to the entire world the correctness of Marxist-Leninist theory, which has allowed turning poor Russia as it was 40 years ago into a country with the highest standard of living.

When we started to create socialism Britain, France, and the United States organized an intervention against us. The United States is helping socialist Yugoslavia with its wheat right now. It is worth thinking about this. It is obvious that Yugoslav socialism has another flavor. Right now we are satisfied with our own deeds. Let them show their own capabilities, and we will show ours.

K. Menon stressed that he raised this question exclusively at his own initiative and that the government of India has nothing to do with this.

N. S. Khrushchev replied to the Ambassador that I believe him, knowing his friendly attitude toward the Soviet Union, and that for this very reason I told him confidentially what I would hardly tell another ambassador.

K. Menon said in conclusion that he admires those efforts which were made by the Soviet government in recent years to improve relations with all countries of the world and especially with Yugoslavia, and expressed gratitude for the conversation.

The conversation lasted 40 minutes. Present at the conversation were Ahuja, 1st Secretary of the Embassy of India in Moscow and Yu. Pavlov, 3rd Secretary of the 2nd European Department.

The conversation was recorded by Yu. Pavlov