

December 3, 1959

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

Citation:

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Summary:

N. S. Khrushchev meets with Krishna Menon, the Indian Ambassador to the USSR, to discuss recent developments in the Chinese-Indian border conflict. Menon explains India's response to Zhou Enlai's proposal for troop withdrawals, emphasizing India's alternative suggestion for resolving the dispute and informing Khrushchev of the steps taken by the Indian government. Khrushchev reaffirms the Soviet Union's neutral stance in the conflict, urging both China and India to resolve the issue independently without external interference. The meeting also touches on the strong and friendly Soviet-Indian relations, Indian gratitude for Soviet aid, and Khrushchev's updates on global diplomatic developments, including correspondence with U.S. President Eisenhower about a potential summit. This document summary was generated by an artificial intelligence language model and was reviewed by a Wilson Center staff member.

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RECORD OF A CONVERSATION between N. S. KHRUSHCHEV and Krishna MENON*, Ambassador of India in the USSR

**Cde. Khrushchev has not read this record*

Budapest, 3 December 1959

N. S. Khrushchev received Indian Ambassador Menon, who is also the Ambassador of India in Hungary, at 2000 today at his request. Menon said that he had just arrived in Budapest from Moscow to present [his] credentials. At the same time he brought a message of Prime Minister of India Nehru to the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers which he would like to deliver to N. S. Khrushchev personally.

Menon passed N. S. Khrushchev Nehru's letter, a reply to congratulations on the occasion of his birthday. The letter also contains a high appreciation of the efforts of the Soviet Union to ensure peace in the entire world, etc. (the text of the letter was sent to Moscow).

Then Menon told N. S. Khrushchev that he would like to inform him of the recent steps of the government of India in connection with the Chinese-Indian border conflict. As is well-known, in a letter to J. Nehru, the Prime Minister of India, Zhou Enlai, the Premier of the State Council of China, proposed withdrawing Chinese and Indian military units 20 kilometers correspondingly from the so-called McMahon Line in the East, and in the West from the line up to which each side exerts actual control, until resolution of the border conflict. The government of India has closely studied this proposal of China. For its part, it is making a somewhat different proposal. The government of India suggests China withdraw all troops from the region of Ladakh on the Chinese-Indian border where the conflict occurred, and in the remaining part of the border refrain from patrolling border territories with military units. In the opinion of the government of India a withdrawal of troops by 20 kilometers from the McMahon Line could not ensure security on the Chinese-Indian border since the terrain in this region, especially on the Indian side, is quite rugged (mountains, canyons, rivers), in view of which it does not seem possible to accurately determine the line of withdrawal of the troops. This proposal was discussed in the Indian Parliament; however, it encountered opposition [from] part of the deputies. In particular, the government was accused of "creating a no-man's land on Indian territory". However, the government held its ground and this proposal was adopted by a majority of the Indian Parliament.

Krishna Menon said that the government of India hoped that its position would encounter understanding from the Soviet government.

N. S. Khrushchev replied to Menon that the attitude of the Soviet government toward the Chinese-Indian border conflict is well-known to both sides. The Soviet government thinks that China and India should settle border questions without outside help. Therefore we support neither the Chinese nor the Indian position inasmuch as our support to a single point of view would mean aid to this side. It seems more advisable to us to remain neutral in this conflict. At the same time we think that it would be stupid to stir up the border conflict between China and India. This would not bring any benefit to either side, or to the cause of peace.

Menon said in reply to this that they understand the position of the Soviet government in the Chinese-Indian border conflict. He only had the goal of informing the Soviet government of the recent steps of the Indian government on this question, without seeking support of the Indian position.

Menon then stressed that Soviet-Indian relations are developing quite successfully, on an exceptionally friendly basis. India highly appreciates the aid which the Soviet Union is giving it in industrial development, prospecting for oil, and in all other spheres. They will warmly welcome the arrival of K. Ye. Voroshilov, Chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet, in India.

At the end of the conversation N. S. Khrushchev informed K. Menon about some questions of the contemporary international situation, and also, confidentially, concerning President Eisenhower's letter regarding a meeting of heads of

governments and his visit to the USSR.

Present at the conversation were Massand [sic], Counsellor of the Indian government, and B. V. Gorbachev, First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy.

The conversation was recorded by B. Gorbachev.