

February 9, 1959

**Record of a Conversation between N. S. Khrushchev
and the Ambassador of India in the USSR K.P.S.
Menon**

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Summary:

Menon and Khrushchev talk about the measures taken to fight epidemics and develop the pharmaceutical industry in India. Khrushchev tells Menon about the activity of anti-party groups in the Soviet Union and Bulganin's arrogance.

Credits:

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Russian

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Translation - English

[handwritten at the top of the first page] *Distribute to members and candidate members of the CPSU CC Presidium and Cdes. Gromyko and Kuznetsov*

RECORD OF A CONVERSATION [between] N. S. KHRUSHCHEV AND THE AMBASSADOR OF INDIA IN THE USSR K. P. S. MENON

9 February 1959*

[handwritten at the bottom of the first page] **the record of the conversation was not reviewed by N. S. Khrushchev*

After mutual greetings Menon, accompanied by Abraham, a Second Secretary of the Embassy, delivered to N. S. Khrushchev the text of a letter of Prime Minister Nehru, a reply to N. S. Khrushchev's message concerning the question of the Soviet Union giving aid in the fight against epidemic diseases. At this point Menon briefly presented the substance of Nehru's letter, especially stressing that the government of India was quite grateful to the government of the Soviet Union for the offer of aid (a translation of the letter is appended to the record of the conversation).

N. S. Khrushchev expressed gratitude and told Menon that he was familiar with the letter and had charged the USSR Ministry of Health with dealing the questions raised in the letter of the Prime Minister.

Menon then said that he and other officials of the Embassy have closely followed the work of the 21st Party Congress and read the speeches at the Congress carefully, especially the report and closing speech of N. S. Khrushchev. It was especially pleasant for them to read the words from N. S. Khrushchev's closing speech devoted to friendship between the Soviet Union and India. These statements were quite timely because sometimes people become familiar with an article appearing in the Soviet Union or India, and begin to express various assumptions that Soviet-Indian relations have become cooler.

N. S. Khrushchev noted that, as he guessed, the Ambassador obviously has the article of Yudin in mind.

Menon replied that some circles in India have exaggerated the importance of this article.

N. S. Khrushchev said that the author laid out his private thoughts in this article. However, continued N. S. Khrushchev, we think that the discussion of questions touched upon in the article is completely permissible and should not serve as an excuse for any conjectures regarding a cooling or reconsideration of Soviet-Indian relations.

Menon said that Prime Minister Nehru fully understands this.

N. S. Khrushchev said further that even inside the CPSU there exist different points of view on several questions, which is completely natural; there is no automatic mechanism in thinking, and this is good.

Menon replied that he completely agreed with this.

Replying to Menon's statement about the work of the 21st CPSU Congress N. S. Khrushchev said that the Congress went well.

Menon agreed with this and said that the Congress defined the goals which inspire the Soviet people.

N. S. Khrushchev said that the future inspires the Soviet people because the prospects are excellent. The seven-year plan was drafted without overstraining [their] strength, and therefore it will not only be fulfilled, but probably overfulfilled.

Menon said that, as he found out from the newspapers, one of the neighbors of India has already benefitted from the Congress.

N. S. Khrushchev replied that the agreement with the PRC which [you] are talking about, was discussed long ago and it was decided to make use of Zhou Enlai's presence in Moscow to sign it. Thus, it is simply a coincidence. But in reality according to this agreement the Soviet Union gives much additional aid to the PRC.

Menon said that the plans for the economic development of India are being

successfully accomplished. The construction of a combine in Bhilai is being completed, and also a large new machinebuilding plant. Soviet specialists in the field of the pharmaceutical industry have already submitted their report and now he, Menon, has turned to the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs with a request to help design and build enterprises to produce medicines in India.

N. S. Khrushchev said that he understood the interest of the government of India in solving this problem because at the present time India is completely dependent on Britain for medicines.

Menon agreed with this and added that the Indians have had to pay more for even the simplest medicines.

N. S. Khrushchev said that Prime Minister Nehru, whose activity evokes admiration in the Soviet Union, understands the economic needs of India well.

Menon said that there were influential elements in India which opposed India developing its own pharmaceutical industry, and therefore Prime Minister Nehru was forced to take firm measures to pursue his policy in this area.

N. S. Khrushchev said that he does not exclude someone received bribes from those who make a profit from India's dependence in the field of the production of medicine.

Menon said that is completely possible.

He said further that, at the instruction of his government, he had turned to the Soviet authorities with a request to give aid in the construction of a refinery in Barauni. Menon expressed the hope that the Soviet government would make a favorable decision on this question, which has great importance for India.

N. S. Khrushchev asked what is the amount of which he is speaking.

Menon replied that this is about 200 million rubles.

N. S. Khrushchev said that if his memory does not fail him this question has still not been considered in the government.

Menon said that he was heading to India on Friday in connection with the upcoming trip of K. Ye. Voroshilov. Menon expressed satisfaction that N. A. Mukhitdinov was coming with K. Ye. Voroshilov.

N. S. Khrushchev said he would just like to inform Menon that K. Ye. Voroshilov has become seriously ill. During the Congress he came down with influenza with inflammation of the lungs and a high temperature. His situation is very serious. Even in the best case he will have to stay in bed for no less than a month. Therefore he will unquestionably not be able to go to India at the scheduled time.

Menon expressed regret concerning the illness of K. Ye. Voroshilov and said that later it will be too hot in India for such a trip.

N. S. Khrushchev said that evidently [we] should come to agreement about the published report that, because of the state of K. Ye. Voroshilov's health, he would not be able to visit India at the planned time and that the trip would be postponed to the next opportunity. The diplomats will have to work out the exact wording, that is, the Ambassador and representatives of the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Menon asked permission to now touch on a question concerning the domestic policy of the Soviet Union. This concerns the struggle against the anti-Party group. He, Menon, like the majority of such people abroad, is completely convinced that the defeat of the anti-Party group ought to be welcomed. He deeply believes in N. S. Khrushchev as the representative of an enlightened direction in Soviet policy. It was thought that the members of the anti-Party group had been neutralized, that they had "been defanged", and that they were finished. However, at the Congress it was criticized so much that this caused many to be confused. Menon expressed the hope that he was not being untactful in touching on this question.

N. S. Khrushchev replied that the members of the anti-Party group actually represent no one, and furthermore they abandoned their positions themselves. But this is the procedure in the Party - at Congresses events which took place since the previous Congress are approved or criticized. He, N. S. Khrushchev, as the reader of the report, had to give an assessment of the activity of the anti-Party group, after which the delegates subjected the members of the anti-Party group to sharp criticism, thereby demonstrating the solidarity of the Party on the basis of the decisions of the 20th

Congress.

Menon said that he could only repeat that the defeat of the anti-Party group is considered a positive phenomenon.

N. S. Khrushchev said that Menon is right, of course. If the anti-Party group had received any support then it would have been a very dangerous matter. In fact this group had no foundation in either domestic or foreign policy. Their only policy was to stand in place; however, all members of the group were barren of ideas.

In addition, this group was very motley in its composition, and even on the main questions which provoked disputes they did not all hold to a common opinion. But the fact that they acted and suffered such a severe defeat shows that they weren't smart enough. They thought that, having a majority in the CC Presidium, seven against four, ensured them victory. But if this is a majority in arithmetic, it doesn't have to be a majority in politics. That's what happened: the majority turned into an absolute minority. He, N. S. Khrushchev, warned the members of the anti-Party group and, in particular, Bulganin, that the matter would end that way. But they did not want to listen.

Menon said that it caused regret that Bulganin joined the anti-Party group. Probably this was chiefly the result of his weakness.

N. S. Khrushchev said that this was the result of weakness, but also that the other members of the anti-Party group used Bulganin's vanity.

In particular, continued N. S. Khrushchev, they used the fact that when Tito was in Moscow Bulganin called him a real Bolshevik- Leninist in one of his speeches. We condemned Bulganin for this statement because we understood that Tito is Tito and he might use Bulganin's statement in his favor. But we didn't condemn him publicly, but only internally: we distributed a document to Party organizations and fraternal Parties with an assessment of Bulganin's statement. British agents stole this document from the Hungarians and in the final account it got to the Yugoslavs. They turned to us for explanations; we confirmed this fact and even sent the Yugoslavs the document we are talking about. All this, of course, put Bulganin in an awkward position, his vanity was wounded, and the other members of the anti-Party group played on it.

In addition, when we were with him in Finland I criticized his behavior several times. For example, when we visited one Finnish peasant Bulganin looked at his plot and said that a good command post could be equipped here. This outraged me, and I told him directly that we had come to Finland as friends, on a mission of friendship, and not to see where best to create command posts.

There were also other cases when I was forced to criticize Bulganin. This wounded his vanity. Of course, each person has vanity, but some can control it, and others not. Bulganin evidently could not control his vanity, and the other members of the anti-Party group played on this.

So you see, said N. S. Khrushchev in conclusion, I revealed an intra-Party secret to you.

Menon said jokingly that on the question of condemning the anti-Party group he holds the same positions as any CPSU member.

N. S. Khrushchev said that actually the condemnation of the anti-Party group should give satisfaction to all who favor peaceful coexistence who are not Communists, because the members of the anti-Party group represented a serious tendency for Soviet foreign policy.

N. S. Khrushchev continued, essentially we initially had almost no differences with Bulganin. Bulganin took Party positions on such questions as developing the virgin lands and reorganizing the management of industry. But, of course, when the other members of the anti-Party group pulled him to their side, playing on his vanity, he took responsibility for this and for all the conduct of the anti-Party group.

Events have shown that the anti-Party group did not enjoy any support in the country. So now even members of this group are ashamed of their behavior. Even Molotov, at a meeting which was held in Ulan Bator in connection with the 21st Party Congress, declared that he regrets his position. Molotov is an honest man, but he is a big conservative and an extremely inflexible person.

Menon said that he had also formed the same impression of Molotov.

Menon thanks N. S. Khrushchev for the explanation. The conversation ended with this.

The conversation was recorded by O. Troyanovsky