

July 5, 1961

**Record of a Conversation between N. S. Khrushchev
and Chen Yi, Deputy Premier of the State Council of
the People's Republic of China**

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Summary:

Chen asks Khrushchev to go over the pressing international issues and he presents the USSR's stances on the situation in Laos, South Korea, and Cuba. Khrushchev also raises problems in GDR and difficulties in negotiations with Western powers with regards to the German question. Khrushchev also mentions Soviet plans to launch a spaceship and resume nuclear testing. The two leaders also discuss the challenges of agricultural development.

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Record of a conversation between N. S. Khrushchev and Chen Yi, Deputy Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, concerning International questions, disarmament, and the cessation of the testing of nuclear weapons, and the domestic situation in the USSRa

a The title of the document was partially used.

5 July 1961

Top Secret

After a breakfast in honor of Chen Yi held in the Kremlin in the name of the Soviet Government Chen Yi was invited to the Reception House in Lenin Hills, where N. S. Khrushchev had a conversation with him.

Chen Yib requests N. S. Khrushchev give an assessment of the most important international questions.

b Underlined from here on in the typescript.

N. S. Khrushchev notes that a full understanding of the positions of one another on the Laotian question exists between the PRC and the USSR. We have reliable information that the King of Laos has agreed to appoint Souvanna Phouma prime minister. Of course, the King might reconsider this decision inasmuch as the situation in this country has still not stabilized, but has not yet given such agreement. We consider the position of our governments good and right now we will fight for an acceptable composition of the Laotian government. This is the main thing. It is necessary to seek for the Pathet Lao troops not to be disbanded. The question will be decided by the correlation of forces in the country.

In the Laotian question we rely on the Chinese and Vietnamese comrades, not because we want to avoid this question, but because this question is closer to them and they know it better.

Then N. S. Khrushchev expressed the opinion that the positions of India and Sihanouk on the Laotian question are actually America's position. [K.] Menon was not giving his own views, but what the Americans imposed on him. It is quite clear to us that Kennedy has turned to Nehru in connection with the Laotian question, and Nehru has given corresponding instructions to [K.] Menon. In our opinion, India and Sihanouk are afraid of strengthening the leftist forces in Laos, and are afraid for Thailand and Cambodia. They want to contain the development of events, which are not unfolding in their favor. It is possible that we will have an aggravation of relations with India and Cambodia on these grounds, but we are not afraid of this. Of course, we do not want to provoke them to this aggravation in order not to drive them away from us. But if aggravation is feared it means to subordinate ourselves to their policy, but we won't do this.

Switching to events in South Korea, N. S. Khrushchev noted that a quite interesting situation has developed there. In some newspapers they write that the recent coup in South Korea was the handiwork of the Americans. But the Americans had nothing to do with it since the overthrown [government] turned out to be a pro-American government. Why would the US need to overthrow such a government? The situation in South Korea continues to remain very unstable, but the situation in South Vietnam is still worse for our opponents. The situation for us in these regions is good.

As concerns Japan, we know that Ikeda begged Kennedy to weaken the regime on Okinawa, trying to gain some rights for the Japanese administration⁶⁹. The

Americans rudely refused him. We need to use this factor.

Then N. S. Khrushchev familiarized Chen Yi with the Soviet position on the German question. We consider the positions of our opponents very weak, and our positions strong both from the point of view of a legal argument as well as from the point of view of the geographical position of West Berlin. This is causing strong worry in the West. During the Vienna meeting Kennedy asked me why, he said, did the Soviet Union need to raise the German question this way, you already have such a good situation, [your] economy and science are on a rise, and you have put a man in space, why do you [need] Berlin?

We will continue our policy on the Berlin question, intending to sign a peace treaty with the GDR by the end of the year. The Western countries have begun to frighten us through the press that they will declare a mobilization, etc. For our part we have also done something. N. S. Khrushchev reported that on 8 July he will evidently make a speech to graduates of military academies. I think that it will be to our advantage to talk in this speech about an increase of appropriations for defense. We will also declare that we will suspend the implementation of the decree reducing the strength of the armed forces by 1,200,000 men. This will be in response to Kennedy's statement (in reality, we increased the appropriations for defense even before his speech, but we will announce this only just now) and also with the goal of countering De Gaulle's statement about transferring one division to Europe from Algeria.

On the whole the tone of the statement will be moderate. We will appeal to the common sense of the Western leaders, turning to Kennedy, De Gaulle, Macmillan, and even Adenauer.

Might a war arise as a result of an aggravation of the Berlin question? We think that a war will not arise, but do not finally exclude this (about a five percent [chance]). We are taking some risk upon ourselves, but you don't get anything without risk. You cannot beg our opponents for anything, you can only wring [it] out.

Chen Yi That's correct, good.

N. S. Khrushchev Only idiots might decide on a war. N. S. Khrushchev said, recently I talked with the British Ambassador and asked him how many atomic bombs needed to be exploded to liquidate Britain. The Ambassador replied, six bombs. Then I informed him that several dozen atomic bombs have been prepared for them in the USSR. The Western leaders know that if they get involved in a war then in one day we will blow up Europe in one salvo. Nothing will remain of Britain, West Germany, and France. If De Gaulle is thinking of solving the question by moving one division from Algeria, he has either lost his mind or is talking nonsense, for even if one does not consider atomic weapons, all the same we have many, many more troops than the Western power.

N. S. Khrushchev stressed that we do not want a war. It would be stupid to think that we will toss atomic bombs and they wouldn't. War would bring enormous losses, and it is necessary to do everything to avoid it. We will test whose nerves are stronger.

Chen Yi I don't imagine what an atomic war is.

N. S. Khrushchev Japan, waging a war against Russia in 1905, was on the verge of defeat and ready to ask the Russian Tsar about ending the war. But the Tsar got ahead of the Japanese, offering them half of Sakhalin. Another example: during the war in Indochina when we and the Chinese comrades were developing a map of the regions which were to be ceded to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, we did not include Hanoi in it. At that time Ho Chi Minh told Zhou Enlai that the Vietnamese

comrades could not resist any more and wanted to retreat to the Chinese border so that China would also get involved in the war. But we could not fight then. At the same time we knew that if it was hard for Ho Chi Minh, it was even harder for France. We decided to say nothing to Ho Chi Minh, let him hold out to the end, but when we went to Geneva the battle in Dien Bien Phu had occurred and Mendes-France himself offered us a map providing serious concessions in favor of the democratic forces. There is the same situation in Europe right now. Our enemies are scaring us, but it is difficult for them.

In a recent conversation with Soviet journalists Kennedy lamented the difficult situation in which he had found himself. If he makes concessions on the Berlin question after the events in Cuba and in Laos, then Congress would, he said, arrest him. He said all this in order for us to moderate our position. The President's position is actually serious. America is in a state of megalomania, thinking that it is the richest and strongest country which can command everyone and force everyone to work for it. Some Americans understand that this time has passed for the US, but such sentiments are still strong there. The Pentagon, West Germany, and De Gaulle are even more warlike. (This cannot be said of Macmillan). The competition with them will be quite intense. However, we think that if they are not crazy they will not launch a war. They have no hope of winning it, and they themselves say that we will die together in this war, but they have no desire to die, for no one is threatening West Berlin. Therefore during the months remaining in the year we will continue to pursue the tactic of alternating pressure and relaxation in order to "weaken" this question. The Western leaders are working out some proposals for us and preparing for negotiations. We have long been for negotiations because refusing them would mean an ultimatum.

c The words "he said" were entered in ink above the line.

Italian Premier Fanfani unexpectedly requested he come to us for a visit. He will arrive in the USSR in the near future and then go to West Germany. We have no questions for Italy, and good economic relations are developing between our countries, but according to the rules of protocol it is not he, but we who should pay a visit to Italy (in return for the visit of President Gronchi to the USSR). We asked Togliatti's opinion, and he replied that a visit to the USSR by Fanfani would be to the Italian Communist Party's advantage. It is necessary to take into account that Fanfani was recently in the US and was seen by Kennedy, and after the trip to the USSR he will head to West Germany. It is possible that Kennedy gave Fanfani some kind of mission [porucheniya].

Then N. S. Khrushchev switched to the situation in the GDR. N. S. Khrushchev said that the situation there is serious. The economic plan is not being fulfilled. The GDR planned to overtake West Germany in [its] standard of living in 1962, but nothing came of this. Cases of residents fleeing to West Germany, especially intellectuals and skilled workers have become more frequent, since the level of pay there is high. Ulbricht proposed holding a meeting of representatives of the Communist Parties of the European countries which are Warsaw Pact members, and we have agreed to such a meeting. Evidently political and especially economic questions are troubling him. He wants to outline the economic and political situation which has developed in the country, and will probably ask for economic aid. We have given the German comrades everything that we could, we have no surplus, but will obviously have to help since in the GDR the front line of the socialist camp passes in the west. Maybe it would be useful for the Chinese comrades to attend the conference. We have no secrets from them, we are interested in them knowing everything. According to preliminary information the meeting will be held on 3 August of this year, but the final date has not yet been set. The initiative for the meeting belongs to Ulbricht, and he is sending the invitations, not we. The conference will be closed. Representatives of Parties, not governments, will take part in it70.

Then N. S. Khrushchev noted that our international position is very good. If one analyzes the "German crisis", as they say in the West, then we caused it, it depends on us and was caused in our interests. Without this crisis we can not solve the German problem, for it is impossible to expect that the Western leaders would call us on the telephone and ask that their troops be kicked out of West Berlin themselves. Our economy is good, the domestic political situation is excellent, and we have good relations with the socialist countries. All this is a favorable background for an offensive in the international arena.

Switching to the problem of disarmament N. S. Khrushchev explained that the USSR has decided to tie two questions (disarmament and the cessation of nuclear tests) into one, since agreement to sign an accord about halting tests would mean giving the Western powers an opportunity to put monitoring posts in the USSR and engage in intelligence. We are posing the question this way - there will be disarmament and there will also be a halt to nuclear tests. The Western countries fear disarmament. "You're strangling us without weapons", they say. It is to our advantage to expose them on this question. The struggle for disarmament is to the advantage of the socialist countries. This is an easy to understand and clear slogan. People want disarmament, and if the Western countries agree, we will immediately sign such an agreement.

Then N. S. Khrushchev informed Chen Yi that in the CPSU CC Presidium a decision had been made to conduct nuclear weapons testing. Scientists still have not reported to us [for] when they are being prepared; evidently it will be in a month and a half or two⁷¹. Before the test we will announce it and make a declaration in which we will explain our motives and cast the responsibility on the imperialists. This step will arouse a wave of discontent, and pacifists and intellectuals will be shocked. We are taking this step in the interests of our countries, in the struggle to solve the German question. This will be a good means of pressure on the West. The test will give us a bomb equivalent in power to 1.5 million tons of TNT, that is, the bomb will be of the same weight, but 1.5 times more effective or, while maintaining the previous effectiveness but lightening the weight, it will be able to deliver a bomb several thousands of kilometers further. Why should we abandon such a test - because pacifists do not like it? What is the moral? This is stupidity, we would be turned into pacifist ourselves! Of course, all this should be kept strictly secret.

N. S. Khrushchev informed Chen Yi about a decision to launch one more manned spacecraft at the end of July or the beginning of August. The spacecraft will fly for days and then land. Film cameras and other equipment will be on board, and the pilot will make radio transmissions. We will announce this spacecraft after launch. This fact will also produce a psychological effect on people's minds. Possibly we will come up with something else for the Party congress and by the end of the year (for the moment of the signing of the peace treaty with the GDR). The time has come for us to mock the imperialists. And we will thereby switch, N. S. Khrushchev noted jokingly, to the position of the Chinese comrades that the imperialists are paper tigers, although we are not taking the authorship away from them.

d The word "then" was entered in ink above the line.

Chen Yi expressed deep gratitude for the information and the assessment of the international situation. "I will report everything accurately to the CPC CC and Mao Zedong", he said. I think that everything you said is completely correct and there is nothing with which we would not agree. We fully support all you presented. Actually, Chen Yi said further, we need to increase pressure on the imperialists, but if they seek negotiations we should also exhibit flexibility. As the Chinese leadership thinks, the Americans and the French cannot advance any positive concepts on the Laotian question.

We consider all the measures concerning disarmament, the German problem, the Laotian question, and the resumption of nuclear tests of which you spoke, Cde. Khrushchev, to be well-timed and advisable. The Chinese comrades have always considered and consider the edge in military terms to be on the side of the Soviet Union and the entire socialist camp. The forces of imperialism are weakening, and the national liberation movement is developing rapidly; all this speaks of the growth of our forces. We all think, said Chen Yi, that a world war cannot arise, but who will answer for crazy people[?]. In his opinion, the imperialists can be forced to agree with us if not on all, then at least on some, main questions. He promised that he himself and the people accompanying him would keep all the information received strictly secret.

"We will report to the CPC CC about the initiative of the comrades from the GDR", Chen Yi continued. Inasmuch there will be a meeting between the fraternal Parties, and especially considering the difficult situation in the GDR, the CPC CC take a favorable attitude toward such a proposal and will send its delegation. However difficult it is for us ourselves, Chen Yi noted, an opportunity needs to be found to help the GDR". When he said Chen Yi stipulated that both in the past, right now, and in the future the duty to give aid rests on the shoulders of the Soviet Union.

N. S. Khrushchev I'm so happy!

Chen Yi When the question of West Berlin is decided this burden will possibly be lightened. And we Chinese also rely on your aid, you are our elder brothers, and we are not, added Chen Yi.

N. S. Khrushchev Let's choose "elder brothers" in turn. We resembled older brothers, as did you.

Chen Yi We are not able, we will not be able to take such a place. Then Chen Yi further stressed that he is very glad to hear that the Soviet comrades share the point of view of the Chinese comrades on the Laotian question. Chen Yi noted the good collaboration between our delegations in Geneva and supported A. A. Gromyko's statement that if we managed to get the DRV after the 1954 Geneva Conference, then we should get Laos in 1961. Of course, in no event can we accept an agreement infringing on the interests of the Pathet Lao. The Laotian people have endured much suffering and ought to gain independence. It is necessary to be ready the fact that we will offend Sihanouk, and that Burma will have a grudge against us, but when Laos completely belongs to us these countries will end up on our side all the same. Then Chen Yi said that he also thinks that the situation in Cambodia and Southeast Asia will not be stable. This was caused by the policy of imperialism

N. S. Khrushchev It is not for us to seek stability.

Chen Yi shared views that, in his opinion, there is a possibility on the basis of the Soviet proposals to push the neutrals to make their own proposals in order for the Western countries to make concessions and come to agreement. Chen Yi said further that the neutral countries realize that they cannot be deprived of the support from the socialist countries; they won't go far without this support. At the same time they fear the socialist countries.

Chen Yi asked N. S. Khrushchev to say what steps were advisable to take on the Laotian question in the future: whether to connect it with other problems to continue the policy of pressure or to separate [it] from the other problems. Concerning other problems, to continue the policy of pressure, but on the Laotian question to take some steps and solve it. The Geneva Conference, continued Chen Yi, has already lasted eight weeks, and during this time the Pathet Lao have managed to strengthen

their forces; the delay was to their advantage. If the Western countries shift from the delay to a recess in the Conference, then we will place the responsibility for the recess on them. In this case we will also not suffer damage. In Chen Yi's opinion, a resumption of the war in Laos is also not bad for us, although of course we will not go for this at our own initiative. In brief, the Chinese comrades think that our prospects on the Laotian question are good from all points of view.

Chen Yi repeated that one of the methods in our further actions can be upholding Soviet proposals, and the mobilization of the neutrals. When this is going on the representatives of the West will obviously take a wait-and-see position, hoping for a situation to their advantage after the creation of a coalition government. Another method, in Chen Yi's words, is to find a compromise proposal which would be made by neutrals. Chen Yi noted especially that both methods are acceptable, and the question of which of them to choose entirely depends on our common decision.

N. S. Khrushchev In our opinion, it would hardly be correct to tie a solution to the Laotian question to a solution to the German problem. The German question is quite clear; here we have strong positions, both moral and legal. Let's solve the Laotian question, proceeding from the situation in Laos and in this region of Southeast Asia. This is not capitulation, but a game in which we can win much. We also have strong positions in this game, but it's not worth tying to the Berlin question. If we solve the Laotian question sooner, then this will also help us solve the Berlin question. Kennedy is looking for arguments to show the Pentagon that one can come to agreement with the Communists. He himself is not warlike and not experienced, but he will not solve the main problems if other forces exert pressure on him. Of course, he does not resist this pressure, since they have one direction in policy, but in aggressiveness there are more powerful forces.

[We] ought to seek a solution to the Laotian question which is to the Laotian people's advantage. We rely here on you and Ho Chi Minh, you have great experience and you know this question better. Many Chinese live in Laos. We rely on the Chinese comrades. We are inclined [to the belief] that one can come to an agreement on the Laotian question, but let them think how to do that. N. S. Khrushchev noted jokingly that if they decide this question well we will praise them, but if badly, we will criticize.

Then N. S. Khrushchev informed Chen Yi about the situation in Cuba. Recent events have been well reflected in Cuba. The subversive activity [diversiya] has strengthened Cuba. We gave Cuba great assistance. When the intervention began we sent weapons there - aircraft, tanks, and artillery. Right now Castro has considerably more weapons than before the intervention. There's a serious economic situation in Cuba right now. The Americans have stopped selling Cuba edible fats. Then the Cubans asked us to help, and this made a strong impression in Cuba. We decided to help, although we do not have enough fats (we decided to buy fats abroad), and informed Castro [so] that he can announce this at a rally.

The Cubans reported that Castro wants to come to us and other socialist countries (including China) for a period of about two months. We expressed doubt of the correctness of this step, not to Castro but to the Cuban Communist Party. After all Castro will leave Cuba for two months, but he is a big mobilizing force in his country. What will this trip give him? He won't solve any problems, we will do everything for them and without him, and our sympathies for Cuba need not be aroused. In addition, there are people who still hope that Castro will not be a communist; their hopes will disappear after this (Chen Yi agreed, noting that it is better to preserve these hopes). Then N. S. Khrushchev said that obvious [we] ought not demonstrate that Castro belongs to the socialist camp. He is located far from us, and it is hard to help him. We advised that Castro not do this. However, the Cuban Communists did not express support for such a point of view.

N. S. Khrushchev said that during the meeting with Kennedy he (N. S. Khrushchev) showed the President that Castro was not a Communist, that the Americans are making a Communist of him with their policy since Castro sees that only Communists can help him.

Summarizing the exchange of opinions on international questions, N. S. Khrushchev said that everything is developing very well. One could draw the conclusion that we have a complete unity of views and a common approach to the solution of these questions. Chen Yi replied that he agreed with N. S. Khrushchev.

After this N. S. Khrushchev dwelt on the domestic situation.

The situation in the USSR is very good. The seven-year plan is being fulfilled (although not by all enterprises) and even overfulfilled. We have seen that we have found ourselves with greater reserves than were taken into consideration in the seven-year plan. Right now we are fine-tuning the seven-year plan, the specifications have already been done, but the decisions for them have still not been made. For example, we recalculated the steel production numbers, and we are planning not 86-92 million tons for 1965, as it was earlier, but 98-100 million tons.

Things have turned out not very well in agriculture. Through our fault a conceit arose and we shouted "hooray" at the good growth of production, but the organizational work slackened, and for this we were treading water. We gathered a plenum⁷², at which we gave a good dressing-down to a number of people, and held conferences by republic. We were absolutely convinced that we will go forward in this field, too. The weakest link in the socialist countries is agriculture, the poorest organization, the worst personnel are in agriculture, and therefore agriculture demands special attention. We did many stupid things, but we think that there won't be any more of them. We attach great importance to material stimuli and additional payment. In the past two years these factors were lessened, material bonuses stopped, and work was disorganized. Right now we are correcting these mistakes. This year the prospect for the harvest are good, more machines have been supplied, and there is more money for agriculture and irrigation. The growth of prosperity depends on the growth of production* of agricultural products.

□□□□ The word "production" was entered in ink above the line.

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Then N. S. Khrushchev presented the main provisions of the draft CPSU Program which will be published on 30 July of this year. When he did this he noted that much will be done to democratize Party life in order to exclude the possibility of usurpation of power as occurred in Stalin's time. Zhukov⁷³, too, wanted to seize power. If [we] had not been warned of this in time, he would of course not have seized power, but he could have created difficulties. Zhukov showed himself to be an adventurist. We want to create such institutions which would stand watch for democracy in the Party.

Stalin so positioned himself that in the event of an objection to him he could supposedly kill any worker in the interests of the Party. If he had lived longer he would have killed Mikoyan and Molotov, for at the plenum before the 19th Congress he hinted that they were spies⁷⁴.

When differences have appeared among us in the Presidium they have not caused any upheaval of the Party and have not required the elimination of the dissenters: Kaganovich is in Moscow on pension, Bulganin is also on pension and is sick right now, and Malenkov is director of a power station. Molotov is in Vienna, Voroshilov is a member of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, Saburov is director of a factory, and Pervukhin is an ambassador⁷⁵. But according to Stalin's laws all of them would have

been shot.

The Party has become stronger. Even in the first years of the Revolution Lenin allowed debates [diskussii]; for example, he conducted a sharp debate with Trotsky.

Right now old cadre are dying, but we do not have a question about personnel. If we leave, hundreds of the same [people] might come who will pursue the Party line. Stalin often said to Molotov: "I will die, what will do you? You are afraid of capitalism, they'll strangle you like kittens". Right now we have a considerably better situation than under Stalin. He shackled us, but now we consult with the people, and this bears fruit. From here we draw conclusions about the further democratization of Party life.

We understand that not all Parties can do this. Other Parties need to wait; they still have internal difficulties, and cadre are being raised. This is our opinion, and we think that other Parties will understand us.

We are writing a new regulation about the dictatorship of the proletariat as we Marxist-Leninists understand it; in the USSR it has exhausted itself, [so] we don't have it. We don't have classes, but the dictatorship of the proletariat presumes the preservation of the dominant position of a working class to suppress the classes hostile to it. And our working class is not that which existed before the October Revolution. We don't have the forces with respect to which suppression needs to be done inside the country. We have remaining the state and the army, that is, also the means of suppression, but they are mainly directed outward. This is written in the Program. It also contains many other new regulations.

Chen Yi thanks N. S. Khrushchev for the information. He will pass along all the information to the CPC CC. Chen Yi called the achievements of the Soviet people in building Communism great. As concerns agriculture, said Chen Yi, this problem is easier for you to solve than for us. You have more steel and mechanization. It is much harder for us, we work mainly with [our] hands. [Whether] rains come or not, there are difficulties all the same. We still need to accumulate the experience of socialist development, and to learn from mistakes. Liu Shaoqi spoke about this in a report at the festive meeting on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the CPC.

N. S. Khrushchev The difficulties with which the Chinese comrades are faced are incomparably greater than ours. He thanks Chen Yi and the CPC CC for having stayed in Moscow at our request for two days between Geneva and Peking. He asks that greetings be passed to all the comrades from the CPC CC Politburo, in particular Cdes. Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai, and Zhu De. We are glad, said N. S. Khrushchev, for meetings with the Chinese comrades to exchange opinions, to better know one another, and to combine our efforts in the common struggle.

Present at the conversation from the Chinese side were Ji Pengfei, Deputy PRC Foreign Minister; Liu Xiao, PRC Ambassador in the USSR; Qiao Guanhua, Assistant to the Minister; [Feng] Xiu'an, Deputy General Secretary of the State Council; Wu [Leng]xi, Director of the Xinhua Agency; Xun Fu, senior official of the CPC CC; Yu Peiwen, senior official of the PRC MFA Protocol Department; Pu Shouchang, Secretary of the Office of the Premier of the State Council; Li Xueran, official of the staff of the State Council; and Zhang Dake, interpreter of the PRC Embassy.

[Present] at the conversation from the Soviet side were Cdes. F. R. Kozlov, A. N. Kosygin, A. I. Mikoyan, A. A. Gromyko, USSR Minister of Foreign Affairs, and I. I. Tugarinov, member of the Collegium of the USSR MFA.

The conversation was recorded by I. Rogachev.

Note: I. I. Tugarinov was familiarized with the document".

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