

September 12, 1964

**Record of a Conversation between Chairman of the
USSR Council of Ministers N.S. Khrushchev and
President of India S. Radhakrishnan**

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Summary:

Khrushchev and Indian President Radhakrishnan discuss regional tensions, including cooperation with Nepal, the situation in Kashmir, and the spread of socialism in Southeast Asia. Radhakrishnan expresses concern over Chinese aggression and reaffirms India's commitment to peaceful solutions. Khrushchev downplays China's influence, criticizing Mao Zedong's leadership and emphasizing the unreliability of Chinese policy. Both leaders affirm the importance of continued Soviet-Indian cooperation amid regional challenges.

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RECORD of a conversation

between Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers N. S. Khrushchev and President of India S. RADHAKRISHNAN

12 September 1964*

*The record of the conversation was not distributed and not examined by N. S. Khrushchev.

After an exchange of greetings S. Radhakrishnan said: yesterday I left the reception early to have a good rest. I don't know about you, but I went home right away.

N. S. Khrushchev Me, too.

S. Radhakrishnan, showing samples of the ore, artificial protein, etc. about which N. S. Khrushchev told him in the previous conversation, said that everything is in its place right now.

N. S. Khrushchev noted that these samples show what human genius can achieve.

S. Radhakrishnan noted that Bernard Shaw said that we can easily remake what surrounds us, but it is not easy for us to change our preconceptions.

N. S. Khrushchev This is a wise adage. Crudely speaking, we have experienced this firsthand. We have changed our social system, and created a new social basis, but our consciousness lags. It is relatively easy to change forms of social existence, but much more difficult to overcome all preconceptions, everything that we call the vestiges of capitalism.

S. Radhakrishnan Yesterday on the way from the airport into Moscow I mentioned Nepal. I think that we ought to cooperate before the influence of others takes hold in Nepal. It is necessary for the progress of Nepal to be achieved with our aid. As concerns Indonesia and Malaysia these problems are a source of concern for us. In order to eliminate British influence in Malaysia it is evidently necessary to eliminate foreign influence in Indonesia. On the whole we do not want the influence of foreign powers to grow in this region. Matters are the same in Indochina.

In Laos a difficult situation has been created right now, and we want the Co-Chairmen to continue their functions in the expectation of results of the Conference of the 14 Powers.

As concerns your aid, we know that its amount is very great, and we also count on it continuing in the future. We are counting on us receiving your aid for the period of the fourth five-year plan which we are developing right now, and think that it will continue during this entire five-year plan and be just as generous.

We firmly believe that a strong united India will exert a substantial influence on the establishment of peace in the Orient.

When I was in China in 1957 I saw very many Soviet specialists there, even in the music school there were specialists from the Soviet Union. Right now China is disappointed that it has not managed to achieve such progress as it wanted and that it has been refused help in the creation of an atomic weapon. The recall of the bulk of the Soviet specialists has obviously very strongly influenced the progress of China. But when a person is in a desperate situation he resorts to desperate measures. Therefore the Chinese are directing attention to the foreign front, organizing clashes between Chinese and Malaysians in Singapore, and using everything to expand their influence. The same can also be said of Vietnam. I think that the Americans themselves will strive to leave Vietnam as soon as circumstances permit. The Vietnamese are convinced nationalists. Ten or 15 years ago Ho Chi Minh was striving to be in the sphere of French influence, but then the opportunities were lost and the country began to look in the direction of China. But neither he nor his people are pro-Chinese. Still long before this I talked with Ho Chi Minh and understood that he is striving not to be tied to China, that is, not to be in such a situation as right now, but the circumstances have changed.

As concerns progress in the direction of socialism then all the liberated countries are aiming toward socialism, and the days of capitalism and feudalism are numbered.

Marx once said that revolutionary armed conflict is not the only path to socialism and that one ought to use all democratic institutions for progress on the path of socialist development.

We in India have deprived 600 princes of [their] political status and they have come to terms with the present order. They are gone. We eliminated the "zamindari" agricultural system, that is, large landowners, it is also gone. We are trying to reduce the number of large capitalist groups through high taxes. Not long ago we decided to create commissions to examine the activity of monopoly capital in India. We are trying to liquidate monopolies in the private sector and increase the number of enterprises in the state sector. Not long ago in Congress we discussed these questions and in general devoted much time to increasing the people's standard of living, but socialist tendencies need to be encouraged to do this.

With the exception of a minority all our country is devoted to the ideas of a socialist reform of society, and we always stress this when speaking before our people. This is already the approved policy of the government, and the people of India support it. Unfortunately, the same as you, we need to spend considerable sums for weapons and an increase of our military potential.

Now we will touch on the Kashmir problem. Right now one-third of Kashmir is in Pakistan. This is so-called "Azad" or "free Kashmir". The President of Pakistan Ayub Khan gave another third to China along with an adjacent road, and only one-third of Kashmir belongs to us. This is the valley of Srinagar and some more regions.

When in India Zhou Enlai admitted theoretically that the aforementioned road is part of Kashmir, to which we have a sovereign right. In 1870 the British Governor-General of India May[o] asked permission of the Kashmir Maharaja for a topographic survey of the road, which showed that this territory was considered Indian even by the British. I told Zhou Enlai about this, but he replied, "Don't tell me about 1870. Right now it's 1950". Then I said, "I feel that you will quickly betray us". And so it happened.

There are our misfortunes. I want to assure you, Mr. Chairman, that we are trying to solve all these problems by peaceful means, if this is possible. Our entire country is agitated because of the situation with Kashmir. Any attempts to decide these questions by non-peaceful means will be met appropriately.

We are deeply grateful to you for your firm support to the position of India on the Kashmir question in the Security Council. The entire country thinks that we are much indebted to you.

Wherever you go everywhere there are disturbances and strife, but these disturbances, I have no doubt, will be overcome thanks to your foreign policy and peace will be restored in these countries.

N. S. Khrushchev I understand your concern and the thoughts you expressed. We, too, are concerned about what, so to speak, frankly speaking, is being exhibited in Chinese policy right now. In China right now nationalistic and chauvinistic ambitions are awakening which drown out what the PRC was based on, its very basis - socialism and Marxist-Leninist philosophy.

Regarding the countries which you named - Vietnam, Indonesia, Laos, and Cambodia, you correctly think (and we do, too), that these countries are exhibiting concern about their national existence.

If one speaks of Vietnam and the role of Cde. Ho Chi Minh, one can say that he has lost his influence in Vietnam as concerns the development of state policy. Moreover, North Vietnam is in a difficult position which was created as a result of the American intervention in South Vietnam. North Vietnam feels it alone cannot cope if an invasion follows and it ought to look at the only strong country in this region which might help it. This is China, of course. It might give specific aid since North Vietnam borders China. In addition, Ho Chi Minh ought to keep in mind that there is a large number of Chinese in Vietnam, and this fact also influences the policy of Vietnam. In addition, the Party and government leadership of the DRV has many people of semi-Chinese origin. If one speaks of Ho Chi Minh and his influence on the development of government policy then one ought to say that he himself understands the situation correctly, that he assesses it correctly, but he is no longer a decisive political force.

Speaking of Indonesia, it needs to be noted that there are also a lot of Chinese there,

and this group occupies strong positions in commerce and finance. But compared to Vietnam the situation in Indonesia is different. There is no dominant influence of Chinese there, but nevertheless they put strong pressure on the formulation of policy. In my opinion, in Laos there are many fewer Chinese. But the natural class stratification which occurs there is occurring in such a direction that two groups are created, the right and the left. China is helping the leftist forces like we have given aid in their struggle against reactionaries. Right now we are no longer giving any aid, although previously we gave aid to equipping Souvanna Phouma. Right now Souvanna Phouma has already lost his positions of a neutral figure and leader. He is already tending to the right. There are two forces there right now, the right and the left. You have touched on the question of our role of Co-Chairman in Laos. The situation right now is very unclear right now and we want to be freed from this uncertainty. We took the functions of Co-Chairman on ourselves when there were three real political forces in Laos, but right now there are only two there. Therefore right now both the rightists and the leftists want to dump all the responsibility on us at a time when we do not have the strength to influence this, the course of events there. What functions of a Co-Chairman can we talk about? But we expect results [from] the meeting of the three princes in Paris. However, as yet they have not achieved anything and they hardly will.

Possibly we will wait for some time, and will then lay down the functions of Co-Chairman.

Now about the situation in India, about your misfortunes.

It is hard to rely on China for anything, but right now it will hardly resume its aggression in India. However, it is very unpleasant that the situation remains so uncertain regarding this conflict and the situation on the border. It seemed to us that it is necessary to search for a solution through negotiations. I understand that it is not so easy to hold negotiations with the Chinese. We are experiencing this in negotiations on the border question. We also hold such negotiations with them, but without [any] special results. The Chinese actually agreed with the border line with small reservations. For the most part the border line on Chinese maps coincides with the border line on our maps, but we cannot agree with them since we cannot hand over to them some parts of our territory which they claim. But this is not the main thing, the main thing is their original position from which they proceed in a final determination of the border line. They want us to declare that the existing border is unjust, that it was imposed on China as a result of unjust treaties between the Tsarist governments and China. We also cannot agree with this since we do not recognize China has the legal right to these territories. Of course, we recognize that the Tsarist government pursued an imperialistic policy with the goal of expanding its territory. But the Chinese emperors, too, were not saints, for those lands which were seized by Russia were previously seized by China itself, and are not Chinese lands. Both the Russian Tsars and the Chinese emperors alike pursued a policy of territorial seizures. If it is necessary to record this situation in the preamble of the Border Treaty, then evidently it is necessary to record that the Russians seized some territories which were seized before this by the Chinese. That is, the territories which the Chinese seized earlier were not settled by the Chinese; other peoples lived and [still] live there. Kazakhs, Kirgiz, Uyghurs, Tajiks, and others live there. Why, for example, does China consider the Uyghurs Chinese? Kazakhs live in China, but there not many of them there, but we have a whole Kazakh Republic. We have a Kirgiz Republic, and a Republic of Tajiks. And these are independent republics according to our Constitution; they have the full right to leave the Soviet Union. So if one speaks of the fate of these peoples this way then first of all one needs to ask these peoples themselves how they want to organize their lives: whether they want to live in China or they want to remain and live in the republics in the Soviet Union. We could agree to such a resolution of the question if the Chinese first agreed to ask their Kazakhs and others. Let's give the peoples the opportunity to decide how they want to live and not fight because of this question, not to mention the peoples themselves. Because you think for yourself: the Kirgiz in our country have their own state; the Kirgiz in China do not have either a government or a parliament. There is not a single Chinese in Kirgizia. What moral right do the Chinese have to demand that Kirgizia become their territory? Not that our Constitution gives each republic the right to leave the Union.

The Far East. Manchuria was not Chinese, it is an independent country. Therefore the border dispute in the Far East has no historical basis. There is not a single Chinese there. Russian people live there.

The Chinese basically recognize this border. However, they want to have their own preamble in the Border Treaty with a political formula to which we cannot agree.

We could basically agree directly about the territorial question, that is, about where the border line runs.

The negotiations have not been broken off right now, although our delegation has left Peking for home. But we, like they, as we understood them, think that this is simply a break in the negotiations. We are not losing hope in the opportunity to come to agreement.

Concerning Mongolia. Mao Zedong says right now that we have occupied Mongolia. If we talk about it then mention of it will not be in favor of China since the one who seized Mongolia is China. For half of Mongolia is right now in China, and the Mongolian state has its capital, Ulan Bator, its parliament, and its government.

In a word, the dispute which China began on a Marxist-Leninist basis has been turned by them into something completely different, and now the rotten wrong side of their arguments and their political orientation is evident.

Mao lives by the concepts of the Middle Ages. It is completely obvious that this person has become senile [inserted by hand: having lost the capability for realistic thinking] and we feel this very well since we were ourselves liberated from such "genius". We were hampered by such genius, Stalin; under him it was simply impossible to develop a policy which would be of use to the people.

Mao lives by the fact that there is an enormous population in China and its number is unknown. No one knows how many people are there. They say, 650-750 million. One cannot think that way that if there are more of you then you are the smartest nation. One cannot talk that way with neighbors from that position. The time has long passed when the size of the population was the deciding factor. In a conversation with Mao Zedong in 1959 the injustice of his position was made blindingly clear to me when he began to count how many divisions the USSR could assemble, how many divisions China and the other socialist countries could assemble, and how many divisions imperialism could assemble. Then he counted the forces of China and the Soviet Union on one side. I then told him, "Cdr. Mao, you are counting incorrectly. This total was correct when people decided their questions with a war, and were armed with spears and daggers. Then it was correct and even then not always. But in our time, in an age of technical progress and science, this arithmetic is entirely unsuitable. For the atomic bomb is a quite "democratic" means of destruction. It can destroy five, 500, or five million people. As such, one bomb can wipe out all the divisions which China can assemble. That was then. But later we created a 100-megaton bomb. Our scientists said that one cannot use this bomb, let's say, in West Germany, since our troops in the GDR would suffer from it. We know this weapon, we actually have it. But Mao thinks: how many divisions, how many people can he assemble. This is a foolish [entered by hand: an absurd] philosophy.

The Americans are not distinguished by wisdom in their foreign policy, but they are forced to admit that although, in their words, they can destroy the Russians three or four times, the Russians can destroy them once. We will remain "enlightened barbarians" and do not want to destroy our enemy more than once since if they are destroyed once they will no longer cause harm.

It is possible the Chinese will soon have their own atomic bomb. But this in no way changes the situation in the world. It does not bring any changes. Their economy is too weak so that they would require decades to actually have an atomic weapon in such quantities to be dangerous. But then they will not be able to cope with other things since the others things will also not stand still.

However, this enormous population of China makes an impression on some politicians. But this is a temporary shock of fright.

Here I have told you how relations are developing between us and "the fraternal Chinese people".

S. Radhakrishnan What is the "fraternal" people about?

N. S. Khrushchev I knew that you would react that way when I said that. But the Chinese people themselves do not have any relation to this. Stalin also thought that he was pursuing a policy our people needed but the Soviet people threw Stalin's body out of the Mausoleum. This is the most terrible condemnation. He who puts a monument to himself in his lifetime should know that such monuments are a precarious thing. Monuments embellish a person when the people themselves erect [it] after the person's death. Let's see how the Chinese people assess Mao Zedong. I am confident that the Chinese people will correctly assess him. The people cannot be deceived. They can be frightened, but cannot be deceived.

Regarding Pakistan. I don't know whether everything has been used to find a solution acceptable both to India and Pakistan. For it is well known that a shoe in the wrong size might be easy to replace, but never neighbors. Therefore everything needs to be done to resolve relations.

I want to inform you that we have agreed that President Ayub Khan will come to us in June of next year. We will do everything for our part for him to correctly understand our policy with respect to India during his stay here, and you have no reason to worry in connection with this visit, rather on the contrary.

Humanity lives and suffers various diseases. Among them are also terrible ones like plague, cholera, etc. There was cholera in Donbass in 1910. My father was sick with cholera, but survived, although many miners died from it. But I was not at all sick. If one speaks of "the Chinese disease" then people will also survive this disease. For peoples of all the countries we have mentioned want to have a fuller rice bowl. There should not be disputes between peoples.

We understand your concern about your relations with Nepal, India's neighbor. We have very good relations with Nepal, with the King of Nepal, and we think that India and the USSR have common goals with respect to Nepal.

We pursue no goals in Nepal, nor indeed in other countries. We are completely satisfied with what we have [entered by hand: within the bounds] of our own borders, and we have unlimited capabilities for development.

Undoubtedly peoples make history, but personality also plays its role in history. Jawaharlal Nehru, who unfortunately is no longer with us, was such a bright personality in history. He stood like a granite rock. He was respected and loved by some and, in any event, recognized by others. When such a rock falls a period of uncertainty and instability comes in policy until an equilibrium is established and foundations of political power are clarified. This is natural and unavoidable.

We ourselves experienced such a situation after the death of Stalin. Then in the West many looked at us and thought: "How will these pushovers [*sosunki*] behave, what policy will they pursue there?" As one of the most experienced politicians Churchill then suggested holding a meeting with the new Soviet leaders, as he said, until they changed their minds. But no such meeting was held. And Churchill said that this was a lost time.

We were glad to be freed from Stalin. We have radically changed the situation in our country since. But this has not weakened the government and influence of the Communist Party; on the contrary, it is immeasurably grown.

I would like for the policy which Nehru formulated and pursued to be strengthened and developed under the new government. Right now all countries look closely at India and the policies of the government. However, possibly I am speaking too frankly. Perhaps I [speak] too frankly inasmuch as I am a poor diplomat.

S. Radhakrishnan But you speak so correctly.

N. S. Khrushchev But I say what I think. They say, for a diplomat a tongue is given to conceal his thoughts. It seems to me, to think this way is to consider all others fools and yourself smart.

We have good economic relations with you, and we are ready to develop them, and not to freeze [them] at the current level. We want to strengthen your country. We have agreed to everything which you have requested about weapons. This in itself says that we consider you our friends. Inasmuch as right now we have not been able to abandon weapons and wars it is necessary for countries to have weapons.

In the area of economic relations we have agreed to finance a number of sites in India

and we will hold to our commitments. We have agreed to build a new works in Bokaro [Steel City] and we plan to accomplish this.

S. Radhakrishnan Thank you very much. We are striving with all our strength to solve our difficulties with Pakistan and China peacefully, as you suggest.

If China accepts the Colombo Proposal we will agree with it. Our foreign policy formulated by J. Nehru will remain as before.

N. S. Khrushchev May I express some critical comments? Rather, even not criticism, but an expression of our understanding of a number of questions.

S. Radhakrishnan Go ahead.

N. S. Khrushchev I would not begin to persist and be sure to insist that China accept the Colombo Proposal as a preliminary condition for holding negotiations. It is hard for China to do this. This is sort of an ultimatum. Perhaps it's worth negotiating. It seems to me that the Chinese would like to hold negotiations with you. Possibly at these negotiations the Chinese would accept the same terms which you are offering right now.

S. Radhakrishnan This is not an ultimatum.

N. S. Khrushchev Maybe it's not an ultimatum, but think for yourself: some third country or countries have developed the terms on which your negotiations should begin. It is difficult for the Chinese to accept this.

S. Radhakrishnan The Chinese have said that they will treat the Colombo Proposal favorably.

N. S. Khrushchev Yes, in general they regard this favorably. But this isn't the problem. It is not for me to defend the Chinese right now, and not for me to act in the role of their defender. I am simply expressing what I think. It is worth going to negotiations. Possibly right now it is more to the advantage Chinese to settle relations with you against the background of their conflict with the Soviet Union. For an easy resolution of border questions between China and Burma and between China and Pakistan occurred right against the background of the border conflict with India. But right now our dispute with China can be a very good background to resolve your border conflict. In any event, this is my opinion, and it does not obligate you in any way.

S. Radhakrishnan The late J. Nehru twice suggested to the Chinese doing just one thing in a Congress convention and in Parliament - to replace the military personnel at the border posts in Ladakh with civilians. The Chinese should give some sign that they want negotiations. We need some sign that they are ready for them.

N. S. Khrushchev I should repeat that it is not for me right now to defend the Chinese. My first cordial clash with Mao occurred in 1959 just with respect to the Indo-Chinese border conflict. I told him, "It's wrong, why did you do this?". He started to explain to me that the Indians attacked Chinese territory. I said to him frankly, "I don't believe, I don't believe [it]". ["] Be that as it may, India attacked China, there are dead Indians lying on the border"

S. Radhakrishnan Thank you very much for the conversation. I am deeply grateful to you for the hospitality. It seems that [we] should go and lay a wreath at the Mausoleum.

N. S. Khrushchev Thank you. I was very glad to see you.

The conversation lasted one hour and 30 minutes.

Present at the conversation from the Indian side were: State Minister of Foreign Affairs of India Lakshmi Menon, Secretary of the President S. Datt, Chief of the Historical Archives Directorate of the Indian MFA Dr. Gopal, Ambassador of India in the USSR T. N. Kaul, and 1st Secretary of the Embassy of India P. [Jain]; from the Soviet side: Minister of Foreign Affairs A. A. Gromyko; Chief of the OYuA [South Asia Department] V. I. Likhachev, and [Soviet] Ambassador in India I. A. Benediktov.

The conversation was recorded by:

[signature] Yu. Vinogradov

[signature] A. Nikiforov

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13 September 1964