

July 3, 1961

Record of Conversation between N.S. Khrushchev and Pham Van Dong

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Summary:

Pham informs Khrushchev of the various independence movements in Asia, such as the politics of Laos, and in Vietnam. He then debriefs Khrushchev about the relations between Vietnamese intelligentsia and the Communist Party. With regards to Communists in China, the two parties discuss the failure of the communes project.

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SECRET № 1

RECORD OF A CONVERSATION* BETWEEN. N. S. KHRUSHCHEV AND PHAM VAN DONG
3 July 1961

*[Handwritten at the bottom of the first page] "The record of the conversation was not reviewed by Cde. N. S. Khrushchev"

On 3 July 1961 N. S. Khrushchev received Pham Van Dong, Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and had a conversation with him.

A. L. Orlov, Deputy USSR Minister of Foreign Affairs; S. A. Tovmasyan, Soviet Ambassador in the DRV, I. N. Medvedev deputy chief of a CPSU CC department, and V. I. Likhachev, Deputy Chief of the USSR MFA YuVA [Southeast Asian Department] took part in the conversation from the Soviet side.

Le Thanh Nghi, Deputy Prime Minister; Le Van Giyen [sic; proper spelling of name unknown], Deputy Chairman of DRV Gosplan, and Nguyen Van Kinh, Ambassador of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the Soviet Union took part from the Vietnamese side.

Pham Van Dong familiarized N. S. Khrushchev with the main problems of North and South Vietnam, and also the problems associated with Laos. He expressed a desire to meet with Soviet leaders separately to present the situation in South Vietnam in expanded form.

Speaking of the domestic situation in the DRV Pham Van Dong told of the upcoming plenums and meetings of the CC of the Vietnamese Worker's Party. A CC plenum will be convened in July 1961 at which questions of the development of agriculture and cooperatives will be raised. Great importance is being attached to this plenum; its preparation was begun at the end of 1960. The plenum will be devoted to the solution of the main problems of agriculture and the cooperative movement. It is planned to convene a CC plenum at the end of 1961 to discuss the problems of industry and capital construction. One more CC conference will deal with the discussion of the most important tasks of the five-year plan and the fulfillment of the decisions of the Party Congress. A CC plenum will be convened at the beginning of 1962 to discuss the target figures and tasks of the five-year plan.

As concerns the problems of South Vietnam, in the opinion of the Vietnamese side, the situation there is developing favorably. The decisions of the 15th CC plenum held in May 1959 exerted a great influence on the situation in South Vietnam. After this plenum the liberation movement in South Vietnam developed broadly and rapidly. The concept of liberation forces in South Vietnam includes Party cadre as well as mass organizations and the armed forces. Pham Van Dong showed N. S. Khrushchev a map of South Vietnam with the disposition of the liberation forces. These forces are large, but distributed unevenly. These forces are still poorly developed in the large cities, in the central part of South Vietnam, and in the areas of strategic roads. The task ahead is to strengthen these forces both politically and militarily, and wage warfare skillfully, awaiting a favorable moment. In spite of the fact that these forces are large, the Vietnamese Communists do not underestimate the enemy's forces. They approach an analysis of the situation sensibly, without impulsiveness and haste. When a favorable moment is created and sufficient forces are accumulated then the question of an uprising and taking power will be raised. This government will be national democratic and observe neutrality in the field of foreign policy.

In reply to N. S. Khrushchev's question about the Party's ties with the intelligentsia of South Vietnam Pham Van Dong replied that this problem is one of the biggest ones which the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam has to solve. There are ties with the intelligentsia, but they are insufficiently strong. Most of them are against the US and Ngo Dinh Diem, but still not for the Communists. Most of the intelligentsia are pro-French. Therefore the Party is forced to pursue a flexible policy with respect to France to draw the intelligentsia to our side. It is necessary to solve the problem of isolating the US and Ngo Dinh Diem from France.

As concerns the situation in Laos, it is very complex and requires waging a lengthy

war since the existing correlation of forces does not allow a solution of the problem to be achieved. The DRV is fighting for the creation of a peace-loving, independent, united, and neutral Laos together with the Pathet Lao and Souvanna Phouma. The Vietnamese government is especially concerned about the creation of a united Laos, which would be a positive factor in the development of the revolutionary movement in Laos. If the US manages to seize Southern Laos then they will be able to create a powerful military region together with Thailand and South Vietnam presenting a threat to the DRV and to the liberation movement in South Vietnam.

The government of the DRV is giving aid to the government of Souvanna Phouma and the Pathet Lao forces. The military aid is mainly given to the Pathet Lao forces, but to protect the sending of this aid it is necessary to indicate that the aid is given to the entire government of Laos. Aid in the economic field is mainly given to the government of Souvanna Phouma. Not long ago Souvanna Phouma raised the question of new aspects of the aid to Laos, first of all about the duration of the aid, that is, aid in the construction of roads, buildings, in the development of the economy, the supply of goods, the construction of a railroad with the aid of the USSR, and also in geological prospecting work. The government of the DRV is studying questions associated with aid to Laos right now. The DRV government will be informed of the decisions made.

The government of the DRV would regard it favorably if the USSR and the PRC took on themselves part of the aid to Laos. Since the end of 1960 the DRV has given Laos very much aid, but this has had a negative effect on the fulfillment of the economic development plans of Vietnam. Therefore the government of the DRV asks the USSR to take on a reasonable part in this aid. This question is raised in general terms right now, but it will be raised specifically after the adoption of a corresponding decision by the government of the DRV.

N. S. Khrushchev noted that he completely agreed with Pham Van dong's opinion that the Western countries will do everything to hold on to Laos. This is the struggle of the progressive and reactionary. We cannot come to agreement with the West since our interests are antithetical. Each side intends for the internal forces in Laos to develop in the direction it desires. The Americans think that the pro-American forces will be strengthened in Laos, but we think otherwise. The Laotian people will decide this question themselves. The Americans dream of combining the forces of Thailand, South Vietnam, and Laos. They created the SEATO bloc with this very goal. But life has upset their calculations. The Americans will hardly be able to unite these forces if they cannot even cope with the liberation movement in South Vietnam. The situation for the liberation movement in Southeast Asia is developing quite favorably right now.

In accordance with the general trend of Soviet policy we consider it our duty to help progressive forces fighting for independence against colonialism. Therefore we are giving reasonable economic aid to Laos and are ready to give it further. We are ready to study the decisions of the DRV government concerning aid to Laos and discuss the question of what part of the aid being furnished we can take upon ourselves. But it is necessary to take into consideration that our capabilities are considerably less than the demand. The whole world turns to us for aid, but we cannot undermine our economy, for we are obligated to wage a proper economic competition with the capitalist world. We understand the needs of the colonial peoples who have suffered the resulting centuries-old oppression and we think that, first of all, the domestic forces of the countries, that is, the people themselves, should be mobilized to overcome these difficulties. It is not necessary to create in young countries the opinion that the socialist countries will give them everything. Such an opinion would be incorrect and dangerous since we will not be able to satisfy all the requests, and then they would accuse us of refusing to help them.

Our role, which we have already shown [entered above by hand: played] and will show [play] in the future is to clearly show what the former colonial peoples can achieve, that is, to outperform the capitalist countries in the area of the economy. Of course, we should give reasonable economic aid to young countries. There is complete understanding on this question between the DRV and the USSR. In the future we will have even greater opportunities to give economic aid to other countries.

Vietnam is gaining great importance right now. It is in a favorable geographic position and is attracting other countries by the force of its example in the development of

socialism. The entire socialist camp stands behind Vietnam, and the USSR, China and Vietnam are "open" for it. The wave of the liberation movement should go ever further from Vietnam and sweep over other countries. A clear example of the influence of Vietnam is both the map shown today as well as the Pathet Lao and Kong Le. The influence of Vietnam will spread further to Thailand and Cambodia. Therefore Sihanouk will evidently will look back at America more often just like Souvanna Phouma. These are unnecessary people, but they cannot be pushed away. On the contrary, they need to be drawn to your side, but understand that they might withdraw from the fight. Kong Le began the fight with the exclusive support of our side and this pushed him in our direction. Kong Le plans to come to the Soviet Union. However, in a conversation with N. S. Khrushchev Souphanouvong noted that this question needed to be discussed so as not to weaken the forces of the headquarters of the army of Laos. There is a fear that the policy of the headquarters might change during his absence. The Vietnamese comrades should decide [entered above by hand: discuss] the question of the advisability of Kong Le's trip to the USSR.

The Soviet government thinks that things are going well with the Vietnamese, and we are pleased with your successes. The enormous forces of the US are on the side of Ngo Dinh Diem, but they cannot cope with the liberation movement inside the country and this is a good sign.

The most acute question for the USSR at the present time is the Berlin question and its intensity will obviously grow. The Soviet point of view has already been sufficiently stated. However Right now the speech by N. S. Khrushchev at the graduation of officers of military academies is being prepared. This speech contains no new provisions but the polemics with the Americans will be continued. This will reinforce our and attack the others' positions. The imperialist camp is weak right now and will hardly unleash a war because of Vietnam. However, it will demonstrate intransigence.

The domestic situation of the USSR is very good at the present time. It is characterized by a unity of the Party, the good state of the economy, a steady growth of prosperity, and the cohesion of the people around the CPSU. We are of the opinion that this situation will be good from now on. We are preparing for the 22nd Congress and have good reason to think that the Congress will take place at the highest level.

Relations between Parties inside the socialist camp are also good, with the exception of relations with the Albanians. There will evidently be a further aggravation here. In fact, the Albanians are taking the most hostile positions right now However, in the press they announce themselves to be true friends of the USSR and are thereby deceiving their own people. Such a situation cannot last long. The future will show how events will develop.

Relations with China have become better. Things are going well on this question, it is true, and there are difficulties and differences right now; however, we understand them and provide explanations for these difficulties. They think that these difficulties have objective causes, for example, a drought. We are of the opinion that these causes are chiefly of an objective order. It is understandable that they might not openly admit this, but it is pleasant that the Chinese realize these difficulties and are correcting them. In agriculture, the Chinese have already abandoned the communes, while preserving their appearance, but giving them another content. Right now they are starting to call them brigades. The Chinese are also moving away from moral factors, switching to material incentives, but the main thing is that these are Leninist positions. This pleases us, but it is clear to everyone that many years will be needed to correct the difficulties. The Chinese themselves realize this. After all, it is easier to undermine people's incentives to work than to restore them. They will understand a call to work less and eat more than the other way around, especially as the Chinese came out with an appeal: eat as much as you want, and work [as much] as you can. Now it will be very difficult for the people to return. After all, a peasant thinks that all this was given to him by the Party but then the Party is taking all this away. Such a policy has strange consequences, and China is going through these consequences right now. At the 22nd Congress we very consciously concentrated special attention on the principle of material incentive. We also speak about this principle in the CPSU program. They can criticize us, and point out to us that, they say, there is already Communism in China, but even in a program for 20 years we do not say we will build

Communism during this period. However, it is easy to announce Communism, but more difficult to build it. Material benefits are necessary to do this. Lenin said that Communism is Soviet power plus electrification of the entire country. How can one understand the substance of Lenin's formula? Soviet power is the power of the people, of the working class, of the dictatorship of the working class. This means that the people take power and can build Communism. Thus, this is a condition for the construction of Communism, but it is still not Communism itself. The second part of the formula assumes the mechanization of all processes in production, high labor productivity, the creation of an enormous quantity of material benefits, and the satisfaction of the people's needs. When drafting the program we understood that we would still not be able to create this in 20 years. Of course, the growth of the economy will be huge but this is still not Communism. Whereas previously there was one pair of pants for every two people now each person has them, but this is still not Communism. We need to work still more, that is how we understand Lenin. We will declare this at the Congress.

The Chinese comrades are offended by us for our not having supported the communes. But we could not do this. This would not have been comradesly. If my comrade does something and I praise this, then I am obligated to do the same thing. If I praise him, but I don't do it myself, it means I am insincere. We are sincere friends of China and said that we cannot create communes. We already tried to do this and are against this. However, in 1958 Mao Zedong did not listen to us and said that the Chinese would succeed with the communes. We said, well, go ahead and try. Here he tried and what happened? A broken nose, the people suffered, and positions of socialism were weakened. But until 1958 China was developing such that it was breathtaking with pride. This is not only a defeat of China it is a defeat of the entire socialist camp, for the enemies of Communism received an opportunity to demonize our theory. Before 1958 India was spinning like a goldfish in a frying pan since China was going ahead. Now India feels differently, but this is not to our advantage. It is not to our advantage because India is developing along a capitalist path, but China is a socialist country. It means this defeat is not only of China, it hits the entire socialist camp. That is why we were so persistent and principles in the disputes with the Chinese.

At the celebration of the anniversary of the creation of the Communist Party of China Mao Zedong repeated all the old slogans: about communes, about the Great Leap Forward, about the three banners, about the wind from the East, and about all flowers. But right now the Chinese are putting another content in these concepts, and they have told us about this. This is good. We remain loyal to the principles of Marxism-Leninism and will methodically put them into effect. It is necessary to develop productive forces, to not get carried away, not jump over stages, not to fantasize, and not to romanticize [vydumyvat'] Communism. Communism is abundance, but up to now it is a mockery of Communism. If the peoples of the West look at "Chinese Communism" they will rise up against it. They will say that they lived better under capitalism. But after all, Communism is the highest phase of the development of society. It means it should provide more material and cultural blessings to the peoples. Whom will we lead if we show such an example of Communism? We will only push everyone away from us. The American capitalists say that their unemployed live better than the workers of Chinese communes. And this is to some degree correct. The US Communist Party is very weak, but the Marxists there are no worse than us. But the US is the richest country and this creates the most difficult conditions for the development of Communism. It was easier for Russians and Chinese to organize the workers, but in the US there is a higher level of organization of the bourgeoisie there, there exists a system of graft, and corrupt people who receive enormous amounts of money are in the leadership of the trade unions.

You cannot pass off what you want for reality. Even 20 years ago we were thinking of building Communism in the USSR. But right now, when our level [Translator's note: that is, standard of living] is several times higher than in China, we only dream of Communism. The Germans' level is higher, and they can say that this is primitive Communism. Who will support us then? This would be a disservice to the Communist movement. It is necessary to work, to raise everything higher, to create wealth. In 20 years we will be close to a Communist society, but this will still not be Communism, but only an approach to it. The Soviet people will receive many benefits for free. All

children will be in nurseries, kindergartens, and boarding schools free of charge. Education and medical services are already given free of charge. The distribution of benefits through public funds will constantly grow. By the end of the 20 years all workers will receive a free lunch; however, pocket money will still exist. Nevertheless, the proportion of public funds in the distribution will be higher, and the distribution of material benefits among members of the public will be equalized. Children will be in equal conditions from nurseries to boarding schools. This is a big thing. However, the wage level will be equal and material incentive will remain. The cultural level will rise, spirits [*moral'nye sily*] will rise, but the state and the army will be preserved. We no longer have a dictatorship of the working class. It is recorded so in the program. The dictatorship of the working class is in effect when there are classes. We don't have classes right now, but there is a monolithic society, and this is recorded in the program. This situation has great importance for a correct understanding of the development of the Revolution. We are satisfied with the draft of the Party program. However, we are not insured against mistakes, we might plunge into subjectivism. Advise us on what mistakes we are making, we will discuss [them], express gratitude, and correct [them]. We still have a great many shortcomings, few apartments, food, and clothing; however, our life is not bad and therefore the people support the Party. The people's needs are developing and we are obligated to meet them. We cannot say to them that these are bourgeois frills, for then our enemies will then say that this is Communist poverty.

The program talks in detail about the attitude toward work in a Communist society. In speaking of Communism, the classics of Marxism-Leninism pointed out that all needs will be met in it, but they will work as far as possible. We express our attitude more definitely in the draft program. What is it to work when possible? After all, bums might understand this as providing an opportunity to wander the whole world and for others to work for them. In our opinion, a Communist society presupposes great discipline. This will be the most organized society. Automation, where much depends on the person, will receive much development. If one person does not go to work, then all production will stop. It means that he should go to work not at his will, but to see it as his public duty. This is also discipline, but not discipline in the capitalist understanding, but internal discipline. People should instill in themselves the desire for work. Pressure will have to be exerted on whoever does not want to work. We think that this will be necessary. This pressure will be different at different levels of development. It is also necessary to talk about this.

Communism is not a formless bunch of people, but an organized society where each member [inserted above by hand: of society] receives a benefit and, as a member, makes his contribution to the creation of these benefits.

This is all said in the draft program of the Party. Moral and material factors, the factors of social influence, appear in it again. It is difficult to build Communism. We have no classes, but there are murderers and robbers. We take the strictest measures against them, and some we shoot. These difficulties are vestiges of the past. These vestiges are being passed through a generation, and the people born after the October revolution are not guaranteed against them. These vestiges do not cease to be active with the disappearance of the system which gave rise to them. At first, under Communism we will have to aggressively fight the vestiges of the past.

This is how we are preparing for the Party Congress.

Pham Van Dong thanked N. S. Khrushchev for the interesting report.

N. S. Khrushchev stressed that such meetings and conversations have great importance since they help [us] understand one another better. Because of the fact that the Chinese are accusing us of having moved away from Marxism-Leninism and we [accuse] them of understanding nothing in Marxism-Leninism, things are not becoming easier and our forces are not uniting. It means it is necessary to meet more often, to express the truth, and firmly keep to the principles of Marxism-Leninism. On the other hand, it is necessary to display patience toward some features of countries and peoples. There cannot be stereotypes in building socialism and Communism.

At the end of the conversation N. S. Khrushchev suggested that Pham Van Dong familiarize himself with the draft of the CPSU program, and also suggested that he spend his vacation in the Soviet Union.

A. I. Glukhov, attaché of the USSR MFA Translation Bureau, recorded the conversation.

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[Glukhov's signature]