

## **November 24, 1962**

### **Record of Conversation between N.S. Khrushchev and Ambassador of India T. Kaul**

#### **Citation:**

"Record of Conversation between N.S. Khrushchev and Ambassador of India T. Kaul", November 24, 1962, Wilson Center Digital Archive, RGANI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 564, ll. 32-48. Contributed by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg.  
<https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/300881>

#### **Summary:**

Khrushchev and Indian Ambassador T. N. Kaul met again to discuss the ongoing Sino-Indian conflict. Kaul reiterated India's request for Soviet military support, emphasizing the threat posed by China despite the recent Chinese ceasefire proposal. Khrushchev reaffirmed the Soviet Union's commitment to a peaceful resolution and warned against escalating militarization but confirmed that the USSR would proceed with the planned construction of an aircraft plant in India and the delivery of MiG-21 aircraft. The conversation also addressed Soviet-Chinese relations, with Khrushchev denying any military aid to China and expressing regret over the conflict between two countries friendly to the USSR. Both sides agreed on the importance of negotiations while acknowledging ongoing challenges to achieving a lasting settlement.

#### **Credits:**

This document was made possible with support from Blavatnik Family Foundation

#### **Original Language:**

Russian

#### **Contents:**

Translation - English

[handwritten: distributed]

RECORD OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN N. S. KHRUSHCHEV  
AND AMBASSADOR OF INDIA T. N. KAUL  
24 November 1962\*

\* The record of the conversation was not reviewed by N. S. Khrushchev

[Translator's note: there is some illegible handwriting in the upper left-hand corner of the first page, possibly referencing a "page 10"]

After mutual greetings Kaul congratulated N. S. Khrushchev on the successful conclusion of the CPSU CC Plenum. We read your speech and the speeches of the other participants of the Plenum, he continued, and the concern expressed in them for peaceful development, the development of the economy of the Soviet Union, the further strengthening of the principles of peaceful coexistence, and respect for the policy of non-alignment with blocs made a great impression. This gives us, and indeed the entire world, new hope for the maintenance and strengthening of peace. N. S. Khrushchev thanked Kaul for the correct understanding of the importance of the Plenum which had been held and the policy of the Soviet Union. We attach great importance to this Plenum, he said. Right now we in the Soviet Union are undergoing a period of a great expansion of the entire economy, a period of exceptional consolidation of the people and the Communist Party. And now it is necessary to place our forces more correctly in order to better use the existing capabilities. At the present time conditions have become ripe for two sectors of our economy, industry and agriculture, to gain Party development. In our conditions of a socialist state we should not only manage factories well and have educated personnel, but also involve the popular masses in the management of production so that they understand the goals of our government and Party and take part in their realization.

We have divided agriculture and industry as a result of the measures taken by the Plenum. Now agriculture will have its own sphere, both material and organizational. Industry will also have its material and non-material [*dukhovnaya*], that is, Party, basis. These measures lead not to a combination of these two aspects of production, but to their parallel development.

Right now we attach enormous significance to the vertically-centralized organization of scientific and design institutions. Up to now we have had too many institutions of such a kind working in parallel. One can point to the situation with the production of radios as one of the most graphic examples. For previously each factory had its own design bureau and, along with good products, much rubbish was produced, simply speaking. Now we will have one design bureau to design radios. This is completely justified since with the modern level of technology only one actually modern receiver can be designed whereas all the others are worse.

All these measures will provide an opportunity to free up thousands of highly-skilled people, who can be better used in the economy. The matter only gains from this.

A decision of the Plenum created a special Party-State Control Committee of the CPSU CC and USSR Council of Ministers. This essentially represents a return to Leninist proposals. For under a socialist system when everything belongs to the people it is simply stupid to exercise control without the people's participation. Accordingly, such control needs to be done through the Communist Party, through the Komsomol, that is, through the people. The popular masses should be in control and learn to manage.

We have long approached a solution to all these questions, N. S. Khrushchev continued, and have finally solved them. Of course, a complete restructuring will take no less than a year since much work needs to be done.

Then N. S. Khrushchev said that in about six months a CPSU CC Plenum will be held devoted to the development of the chemical industry. Chemistry is taking first place compared to all other materials and can even successfully compete with steel. In this

connection N. S. Khrushchev recalled one of his conversations with President Sukarno, in the course of which he told the President that a time would come in the not too distant future when the Soviet Union would produce its own artificial rubber [inserted above the line by hand: which will be better than natural] and will cease buying rubber in Indonesia. Sukarno then replied that this was impossible. But such a time will have to come since the achievements of modern technology will allow the organization of a continual process of production instead of walking with a cup and collecting natural rubber drop by drop.

Then N. S. Khrushchev said that at the core the foreign policy of the Soviet Union is the question of peace and peaceful coexistence. We have no disputes with [our] neighbors, he continued, and we want to live in peace with all countries. If we create weapons, then they are only for defensive purposes until disarmament is achieved.

So I again thank you for the correct understanding of the policy of the Soviet Union.

Kaul wished N. S. Khrushchev success in the accomplishment of the program outlined by the Plenum. We in India, he continued, have also been striving during all our independent life to focus efforts on the development of industry and agriculture in order to raise the people's standard of living, and therefore we have devoted insufficient attention to questions of defense, being confident that our policy of peace and non-alignment with blocs will be respected by all countries. However, our great Chinese neighbor has disappointed us. Obviously the Chinese believed in coexistence so as long as the matter concerned strong and well-armed countries. But in relations with India they evidently do not believe in peaceful coexistence. The matter has reached the point that the very existence of India is at stake, and therefore the Indian government has turned to all friendly countries, including the Soviet Union, with a request to give [it] military aid. The Indian government hopes that the Soviet government will correctly understand the situation and give all possible help. In the process we of course understand that the Soviet Union is in a quite delicate position and we do not want to put it in an awkward position. In any event we are appreciative of the aid which the Soviet Union has given India and hope that the Soviet government will always regard our policy of non-alignment with blocs with respect and understanding, just as we in India respect and highly appreciate your policy of peaceful coexistence and especially those steps which you have taken to liquidate the recent crisis in the region of the Caribbean Sea, when you did not allow yourself to be provoked.

N. S. Khrushchev said that the Soviet government is deeply pained by the situation which has developed on the border between India and China. This is a great concern for all who want peace, and [Translator's note: the following words were typed above words which were blacked out, but which seem to reflect the same thought] it is especially unpleasant for us] since the Soviet Union is an ally and friend of China and at the same time is a good friend of India.

It seems to me, continued N. S. Khrushchev, that the cease-fire announced by China and the fact of the cessation of shooting has also been confirmed by the Indian government, and also the commitment of China to withdraw its troops which evidently will be done; they might be a good plan for a settlement of all contentious questions so as not to allow a resumption of combat operations on the Indo-Chinese border.

The Indian government still has not expressed itself on the substance of the Chinese proposals, but I hope that it will correctly understand them. In any event, it seems to me that if India took another position and did not accept the proposals of China for a cease-fire and a withdrawal of troops this would cause India moral damage.

Then N. S. Khrushchev said that there exist chauvinist elements in India, of course, who are calling for a bloody revenge. But all these calls are harmful chatter, for the more blood is shed the more will be killed on one side or another, and the greater will be the desire to avenge the dead. But where is the end then? This can only lead to war until final victory, but that is until the final extinction of one of the participants of such a war. Therefore the people who advance such appeals need to be decisively straightened out, and there are such people both in India and in China.

N. S. Khrushchev continued, I think that after the cease-fire which has already occurred neither side will lightly resume combat operations. Therefore I am of the

opinion that the current cease-fire might be the start of the cessation of the entire military conflict. I want to think so and think [inserted by hand above the line: I want to think it will be so].

While saying this N. S. Khrushchev stipulated that he was expressing a personal opinion inasmuch he was not authorized to speak in the name of one side or another. However, logic and common sense advise that just this ought to happen.

It is necessary to bear in mind, N. S. Khrushchev said further, that those reactionary elements of which I have already spoken want to draw out the current military conflict, hoping to make use of it to achieve a change of Indian policy. Of course, these elements cannot openly declare that this conflict is to their benefit, and therefore they are seeking their goals in inciting a nationalist and chauvinist frenzy. I think that the Indian government correctly understands all these questions and will understand that in my statements I am not trying to give any advice, but only reasoning out loud.

As concerns the policy of the Soviet Union with regard to India then it remains unchanged, and we want the friendship between our two countries to continue to grow and strengthen. Based on this policy of ours we will of course fulfill all our commitments to India. We will build an aviation plant and, if it turns out to be necessary, we will send our engineers. We will sell India MIG-21 aircraft, concerning which an agreement for delivery has already been reached. If we can't deliver them in December then we will do this later. However, it is not excluded that we will be able to hand these aircraft over to India even in December, especially as right now in connection with the end of the crisis in the region of the Caribbean Sea a greater opportunity for this has appeared to us.

N. S. Khrushchev replied that if India reoriented its policy right now and embarked on a militaristic path of building up weapons, this would only cause harm to India itself, throw it far back, and create great difficulties for it. In general the militarization of a country always creates a great burden for any people, but for India it would be a special scourge. These comments, said N. S. Khrushchev also need to be viewed as thinking aloud.

Kaul replied that the Indian government not only highly appreciates the friendship between India and the Soviet Union, but also believes that this friendship is a factor which promotes the strengthening of peace in the entire world. Therefore, he continued, we regard all your statements with respect and trust, even when you are reasoning aloud.

During our last conversation, he said further, you expressed the hope that the calm which had come on the Indo-Chinese front was not only the result of a fall in temperature, but a manifestation of reason. However, afterwards we have seen with disappointment that this is not so, for on 15 November without any pretext from our side the Chinese deployed a wide-scale offensive exceeding the October attack in scale. Right now they have declared a cease-fire and a withdrawal of troops. However, guided by past experience, we cannot believe the word of the Chinese anymore. Nevertheless, in spite of the danger concealed in the current situation we want to see how they will fulfill the commitments they have taken upon themselves and we await specific actions from them. The Indian government has carefully considered the latest proposals of China. They are extremely vague and unclear in many respects. The best resolution would be for the Chinese to agree to withdraw their troops to the line at which they were located before 8 September. Such a step would really create conditions for negotiations.

Then the Ambassador made reference to Nehru's statement in the Indian Parliament that India would hold to its policy of non-alignment and strive as before for peace with all countries and declared that, however, he cannot risk their safety as they did before. It was these considerations that were dictated by the requests for weapons sent by India to a number of friendly countries. India is not a militarist country by its nature, policy, custom, or history, continued Kaul. We were forced to arm ourselves by the threat to our independence which we won in a determined battle with Britain. The Indian government is extremely interested in obtaining aid from the Soviet Union since it does not want to receive it from one side. Therefore I was quite disappointed when Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Malik informed me that the Soviet Union would not be able to supply India with MIG-21 aircraft at the present time. Kaul

stressed that the Indian government would be appreciative if the Soviet government nevertheless considered it possible to grant the request of India concerning the delivery of these aircraft, especially as they, in his words, will play little significant role from the military point of view inasmuch as India has in general refrained from using combat aircraft in the conflict on the Indo-Chinese border so as not to expand the scale of combat operations and to not let them grow into a world war. Thus, the Indian government attaches more symbolic than military importance to the delivery of the Soviet aircraft.

Then Kaul, referring to the fact that during the last conversation N. S. Khrushchev told him that the Soviet Union was not supplying weapons to China, declared that nevertheless there were discussions in some circles that certain types of strategic material such as oil, for example, are nevertheless being supplied to China by the Soviet Union. When he said this he stipulated that was not addressing any request or desire to N. S. Khrushchev in this connection, but only mentioning this, inasmuch as such discussions are taking place.

N. S. Khrushchev said that he had essentially already replied to Kaul's comments regarding the deliveries of Soviet MIG-21 aircraft. Today, he continued, I will charge our military with reporting on the possibilities of making these deliveries and I think that there will be no special difficulties in this question. Like the Indian government we also do not attach military significance to these aircraft, for in such insignificant quantities and besides in their technical specifications, these aircraft can serve only defensive, and not offensive, purposes.

As concerns the discussions you mentioned that the Soviet Union is supposedly delivering weapons to China, I can only repeat that we are not doing this, and not by virtue of some special position of ours on this question, but simply because the Chinese are not asking us about this. I recall in this connection how in India they came to me with a request for the Soviet Union to build an aircraft plant there. Admittedly, I then thought that obviously the Indian specialists were not very well aware of this question since one plant is not enough for the organization of an aviation industry, for a modern plane is not a chunk of flying metal, it is an entire set of complex mechanisms produced at various plants. The Chinese began the production of weapons somewhat earlier than India and therefore right now they have all the necessary plants for this and do not need supplies of weapons from other countries.

As concerns our supplies of oil to China, then no one is making [it] a secret - the whole world knows that the Soviet Union sells oil to any country that wants to buy it. We even sell oil to Japan and Italy. despite the fact that it is a member of NATO. We are ready to sell oil even to the US, but as everyone knows, they don't take it. So, if someone wants to build a policy on the basis of the fact of the Soviet Union's sale of oil to China, this is simply stupid. If you desire, we can sell oil to India in the same quantity as to China. I don't remember the exact figure right now but, generally speaking, we sell some oil to China, but China has recently even reduced its purchases as a consequence of the economic decline now being observed in China. The Chinese explain this decline by drought and floods, but nevertheless the economic situation in China has declined after 1958, which we of course regret.

Then N. S. Khrushchev noted that in case of a resumption of the Chinese-Indian conflict and its delays of deliveries to India of the Soviet MIG-21 aircraft, they might backfire against the Soviet Union since if not the Chinese themselves then some others will cast the same reproaches about this at the Soviet Union as India is doing right now with respect to supplies of Soviet oil to China. But nevertheless once the Soviet government has obligated itself to do this then it will supply India with the promised aircraft, helicopters, and other equipment.

N. S. Khrushchev continued, I hope you understand us correctly. The Soviet government is extremely pained by the conflict which has broken out and does not want it to continue. A policy of throwing fuel on a fire instead of putting the fire out is not our policy. The other side acts this way, pursuing its narrow goals. The Soviet Union is striving only for one thing - to prevent a war and to liquidate the conflict. We don't want to profit from the blood of Indians or Chinese. We are Communists and we hold to our understanding of the nature of war and we have our own quite definite attitude toward war. I can say with complete confidence that if the Soviet Union and

India had a common border India might not build an aviation plant, for this border would not threaten it. In general, the Soviet Union has legally reinforced its borders and after the death of Stalin it settled all the contentious questions with neighboring countries. It is true that the Armenians obviously will not agree with me, since it is generally known that part of the Armenian lands are in Turkey. But this question will not be solved through war, of course. A time will come and Turkey will become a socialist state, and then this question will receive its solution.

Kaul replied that if China had pursued the same policy as the Soviet Union India would not need the MIGs. But the trouble is that China is not pursuing such a policy. I cannot comment on questions of Communist ideology, he continued, and express myself regarding the problem of just and unjust wars. During the last conversation you said that the events on the Indo-Chinese border are a border incident, and not a colonial, expansionist war unleashed by China. I would like to believe this, however right now we in India, and indeed an increasingly number of people in the other countries of Asia, have come to the opinion that China's actions are no better than Hitler's aggression. What is happening right now is a conflict between a chauvinist imperialist country and a peace-loving country. The policy of contemporary China is no different than the policy of the old imperialist China, from the policy of the Kuomintang government, but if the latter did not have enough strength to back its policy with concrete steps then contemporary China has such strength. If the matter had come down to just a border dispute we would have been ready to solve it by negotiations. Since 1955, when the Chinese first seized part of Indian territory India has taken no action capable of aggravating the situation and causing an armed conflict. India only created control [*kontrol'nye*] posts to block the path of a further advance of the Chinese deep into Indian territory. Now the Chinese want to completely eliminate these posts, however leaving behind everything that they have captured. I would like to share your hope that the cease-fire will initiate negotiations. However, if the Chinese want to impose a solution on us suitable to them, as a victor dictates its terms to the defeated, we won't accept this.

We don't want the war to be resumed, continued Kaul, and we don't want to hand this problem over to the UN so as not to aggravate the Cold War. India is striving to localize this problem; however if the Chinese want to humiliate India and force it to accept all their demands like a defeated power the problem will not be solved. If they are ready to withdraw their forces right now then why invade then, why were all these killings and bloodletting necessary? What was the sense in all this?

N. S. Khrushchev said that he, of course, understands why Kaul talked about China with such bitterness and harshness. The Chinese are also employing the same harsh arguments and expressions with regard to India. But, he continued, I would not like to pose as a judge and express judgments with respect to this conflict. History will do this. Of course, we have our own opinion about the events occurring on the Indo-Chinese border, but we would not like to express it since it won't be to the benefit of either of the sides. It is necessary to understand the main thing: it is necessary to stop the war and begin negotiations. If China took a rational step right now then it wouldn't be necessary to ask oneself the question of why it was done. I have to agree, since this is really reasonable. And, of course, it is not necessary to look into who first began the conflict, who is at fault...

Neither side should raise any other conditions. Right now you are saying that the Chinese should withdraw [their] troops to the 8 September line, but they will say that they don't want to do this, and so on endlessly. Finally, it is necessary to begin negotiations. It seems that the last proposals of Zhou Enlai about holding such negotiations is entirely reasonable.

Then N. S. Khrushchev noted that recently at his request Marshal Malinovsky showed him on a map those regions because of which the dispute is being waged between India and China. They are totally unsuitable for habitation, and it is even impossible to even fight in them. Right now, for example, the temperature there has dropped to 35 degrees, and cases of frostbite of the soldiers have been observed on both sides. N. S. Khrushchev continued, we simply cannot understand why this conflict is being waged. But we are confident that both sides will solve all the contentious questions at the round table, for it is disadvantageous for both sides to resume the conflict. In fact, if the Soviet Union managed to reach agreement with the US with respect to the crisis

in the Caribbean Sea region then of course India and China have much greater opportunities to liquidate this border conflict.

Then N. S. Khrushchev said that if the Soviet Union helps India with MIG-21 aircraft then it would not at all mean that it is acting against China. These aircraft are being furnished to India because it has actual enemies, just as China does. India and China are not enemies, for China has never called India its enemy, and indeed India never called China this word before. N. S. Khrushchev said, I think that in the end relations between China and India will return to the normal course, and they will live again as good neighbors on the basis of the principles of peaceful coexistence.

Kaul expressed the hope that the Soviet government will not draw a final conclusion that the recent Chinese proposals create a rational basis for negotiations without hearing the opinion of the Indian side. The cease-fire in itself is a positive fact.

N. S. Khrushchev noted that if India recognizes that the cease-fire is a positive fact it means the proposals are reasonable.

Kaul replied that this is only a good sign, but it still remains to clarify its specific content.

N. S. Khrushchev said that this is no longer a sign, but a real fact. The offer of negotiations is actually only a sign, but a cease-fire is a reality [Translator's note: some faded, illegible handwritten words were inserted above the last sentence].

Kaul agreed that the cease-fire is actually a good fact, and said further that the Chinese proposals, however, contain much in them that is unclear, vague, and even contradictory and mutually exclusive provisions. He would like to present his views on this matter in detail to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union or to someone else whom N. S. Khrushchev appoints for this purpose.

Then, referring to the example N. S. Khrushchev cited of the peaceful resolution of the conflict between the Soviet Union and the US in the region of the Caribbean Sea, Kaul said that if one side can wage a war then peace can only be concluded by two sides by mutual desire. He asserted that in a certain sense the latest proposals of China are even worse than its proposal of 24 September. For example, the Chinese right now want to preserve the police control posts. He reiterated again that India cannot accept China's demands as a preliminary condition for holding negotiations. The Chinese may not call India an enemy, he continued, however with their rude and insulting tone they speak ill of our government and our prime minister, and even about the Communist Party of India. India has never refused and does not refuse any opportunity to begin negotiations. Up to the start of the Chinese offensive of 8 September India held negotiations about the composition of the delegations to discuss border questions, but then the aggression suddenly followed. And since that time events have continually developed from one offensive to a lull, and then to the latest, new offensive. India is ready to hold peace negotiations on honorable terms; but will never agree to accept such terms as can only be dictated to a defeated country. If the Soviet Union can respect us on such a basis, we would be ready to hear your suggestions.

N. S. Khrushchev replied that the Soviet government cannot declare anything on this question since it had not been empowered either by China nor India to act in the role of an arbiter. However, the arguments against negotiations cited by you, Mr.

Ambassador, seem unconvincing. Continued N. S. Khrushchev, you said that not one country could accept the terms offered by China. I can tell you that I would sit at the negotiating table on these terms. Churchill wrote in his memoirs that any negotiations are better than war. It is not for us to praise Churchill, of course, but he displayed a reasonable approach here.

Kaul noted that possibly he presented the position of the Indian government insufficiently clearly. He agrees with Churchill's statements that any negotiations are better than war; however, if terms are offered as a prerequisite for negotiations that the other side should fulfill a whole series of demands, then an offer to hold negotiations cannot always be accepted. In other words, we cannot agree that negotiations on terms humiliating for India are better than war. If the Chinese had agreed to withdraw their troops to the line at which they were located on 8 September then 12,000 square kilometers of Indian territory would remain in their hands, but in this case at least honorable conditions would be observed for both

sides. For in the Korean War, although it of course can not serve as a complete analogy, in this case negotiations were started only after troops were withdrawn to the 38th Parallel.

Kaul again reiterated that right now India is taking a wait-and-see position and wants to see how China fulfills its promises presented in its latest proposals. The Indian government does not want to give a negative assessment to these proposals, however they actually contain many vague and mutually exclusive provisions. India does not want to humiliate China, but neither it will not allow itself to be humiliated. Therefore it will seek peace on honorable terms.

Kaul said that India views the Soviet Union as a friendly country and hopes that it will play a positive role in restoring peace in the region of the Indo-Chinese border.

N. S. Khrushchev replied that the Soviet government is ready to do everything in order to ensure the war ends so that both sides can come to agreement with one another on honorable terms.

Kaul thanked N. S. Khrushchev for the conversation and noted that the Indian government fully understands the position of the Soviet government. At this time he expressed the hope that the Soviet government would regard the position of India with understanding. He said in conclusion, we also hope that everything of which you, Mr. Chairman, spoke will come to pass.

N. S. Khrushchev asked Kaul to pass best wishes to Prime Minister Nehru.

USSR Minister of Foreign Affairs A. A. Gromyko was present at the conversation.

The conversation was recorded by V. Sukhodrev

[signature]