

September 9, 1961

**Transcript of the Conversation between N. S.
Khrushchev and Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of
India**

Citation:

"Transcript of the Conversation between N. S. Khrushchev and Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India", September 9, 1961, Wilson Center Digital Archive, RGANI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 563, ll. 105-110. Contributed by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Angela Greenfield. <https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/300923>

Summary:

Khrushchev shares his dissatisfaction with how German and French leaders, particularly De Gaulle and Adenauer, have responded to disarmament and peace proposals. He and Nehru discuss the USSR's foreign policy toward Europe, including the fragile state of European alliances, tensions surrounding Berlin, and the possibility of shifts in West Germany's orientation. Khrushchev expresses cautious optimism that the international crisis might be resolved without war, emphasizing the need for negotiations while critiquing Western policies and leadership.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Blavatnik Family Foundation

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

TRANSCRIPT OF THE CONVERSATIONbetween N.S. Khrushchev and the Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru

9 September 1961[*]

(Residence of J. Nehru)

J. Nehru says that he would like to thank N.S. Khrushchev once again for the friendship and warm hospitality extended to him in Moscow.

He sincerely hopes that the ongoing international crisis will be resolved in a satisfactory manner.

N.S. Khrushchev says that he is very grateful to J. Nehru for his kind words and adds that the Soviet Union is delighted that J. Nehru treats us with trust and understanding. We, in turn, have great respect and understanding for the Prime Minister of India and his policies. We will make every effort to ensure that the current crisis, as doctors say, dissolves. I believe, N.S. Khrushchev continues, that this tumor will dissolve without surgical intervention. I read De Gaulle's press conference yesterday. It seemed very unreasonable to me – de Gaulle speaks of firmness and expresses confidence that if a war breaks out, Russia will be destroyed. However, no one asked him what would happen to France then. In the event of a war, every intelligent person should understand that in this case France will be destroyed. I am planning to respond to De Gaulle, but not in a militant but rather in an ironic tone. De Gaulle spoke a lot about the importance of being firm. But glass, for example, also has hardness, but it is fragile. One blow can shatter it into pieces. This kind of rigidity should not be adhered to.

N.S. Khrushchev further notes that on September 8, during a reception, he exchanged several phrases with the Ambassador of the FRG to Moscow, Kroll. This is an intelligent and wealthy man, he behaves very independently of the government, and freely expresses his opinion. He is on very bad terms with Brentano, the Foreign Minister of the FRG. Kroll said that he spoke with Adenauer over the phone and he asked to convey his greetings to N.S. Khrushchev and assured that as soon as the elections were held, he, Adenauer, would begin to normalize relations with us. Kroll then suggested that something be done to ease the tension and recommended praising Chancellor Adenauer. "I asked him," N.S. Khrushchev continues, "why should I praise him?" If I start praising him, people may misunderstand me. Kroll then asked at least not to scold Adenauer. Tomorrow, I will probably say that Adenauer spoke somewhere and said something good that could be interpreted as a sign of a sound approach to the situation.

I remain hopeful that there will come a time when we will have good relations with the FRG. Currently, the FRG is at a crossroads. After all, the FRG and the Chancellor were confident in their abilities and believed that with the help of Western forces they could absorb the GDR. The peace treaty that will be concluded with the GDR upset their plans. When a strict border was introduced between West and East Berlin, it dealt them an almost fatal blow. They expected the West to intervene, but the West did nothing, causing them to lose faith in the power of the West.

There is a possibility that Adenauer or his successor may withdraw from the NATO as they may be more economically inclined towards the USSR due to the fact that we are not their competitors. We can be a consumer of their industrial products and suppliers of raw materials, while England, France and Italy are competitors for them. The capitalism of FRG gravitates towards us, and the West is aware of this and quite reasonably believes that if the German question is resolved in a manner similar to the way the Soviet Union has decided to do it, then NATO will lose its significance and the people will not have faith in it. This refers to the people of Germany. I believe we can pass through these reefs without engaging in a war. We will complete our tests. It should be noted that the disarmament proposal presented by McCloy does not include a draft treaty; it only outlines some ideas that could serve as a starting point for negotiations.

J. Nehru inquires about the role of the common market in the analysis of the situation in West Germany.

N.S. Khrushchev responds that Europe resembles a zoo. They are cramped, they will

fight among themselves. Currently, they are against the East, but the main contradictions lay at the heart of their relations with each other. Their contradictions are irreconcilable.

J. Nehru says that prior to the First World War, there was a growing inclination towards European unity, which was particularly strong among smaller nations.

N.S. Khrushchev says that De Gaulle is currently the main proponent of this idea. He repeatedly emphasizes that his policy is based on the need to oust the United States from Europe. They have nothing to do in Europe, he says, we, the European nations, will decide European affairs on our own.

J. Nehru notes that De Gaulle is a greater burden to friends than to enemies.

N.S. Khrushchev says that he agrees with this.

J. Nehru notes that when De Gaulle speaks about firmness, it is merely an act of pomposity.

N.S. Khrushchev says that de Gaulle is like a commander-in-chief who lost his troops but proudly declares that he won the battle. This is Napoleon without an army.

J. Nehru says that during one of his meetings with Churchill, which took place 6 or 7 years ago, he asked him what would happen if war were declared. Churchill is a very experienced person in matters of both peace and war. He replied that as soon as the war was declared, British bombers from all sides would rush towards the Soviet Union, and within 1-2 days, all pre-determined military, economic, administrative, and other objects would be destroyed to the ground. When Nehru asked what would happen to England, Churchill replied that England would be completely destroyed. What a prospect, I told him, Nehru concludes.

N.S. Khrushchev says that Churchill thinks very realistically and soberly. He is an opponent of communism, but he is capable of reasoning rationally. As for De Gaulle, he mentioned in a press conference that he believes that negotiations are necessary. This is a positive move. Currently, Kennedy is also in favor of negotiations. Macmillan is also in favor of negotiations, and he has always been in favor of them; Adenauer, de Gaulle and Fanfani also speak out in favor of negotiations; and they do not take into account the opinions of other, smaller states.

Spaak had expressed a desire to come to the USSR, N.S. Khrushchev further says, - but now seems to be hesitant to take the initiative. We informed him that as soon as he expressed a desire to visit the Soviet Union, we would immediately send him an invitation. Apparently, he cannot get an approved position that he will follow while he is in the USSR. When he expressed his desire to visit, he hinted that he would be coming with the consent of the United States. On September 15th, I will be hosting Paul Renaud. This is a devoted De-Gaullevite. They say that Paul Renault made De Gaulle. At one time, he nominated him for the office. Dejean, the French ambassador in Moscow, who is also a De-Gaullevite, had told me about this.

It is likely that the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan will come to the Soviet Union. Apparently we will discuss with him their relations with Pakistan.

I believe that there is now an opportunity to clear the clouds. The day before yesterday A.A. Gromyko received the US Ambassador to Moscow, Thompson. The US Embassy's charge d'affaires also visited him this week. They want to contain us to some extent, they don't want us to aggravate the relations. When Gromyko attends the Assembly meeting, he will have a conversation with Rusk and Hume.

J. Nehru inquires whether there is a possibility that N.S. Khrushchev himself would attend the U.N. General Assembly.

N.S. Khrushchev replies that there is not the slightest possibility of him going to New York as he is very busy with the XXII Congress of the CPSU.

Next, N.S. Khrushchev conveys cordial greetings to J. Nehru from N.P. Khrushcheva and asks to convey best wishes to Nehru's daughter and his entire family.

The conversation lasted 35 minutes. Cde. A.A. Gromyko was present on the Soviet side.

Recorded by Yu. Vinogradov.

[\[*\]](#) [Handwritten: "Was not reviewed by Cde. Khrushchev."]