



December 18, 1959

Draft Report, 'On the Trip of the Soviet Party-Governmental Delegation to the PRC,' by M. Suslov to CC CPSU Presidium for Presentation to a Forthcoming CC CPSU Plenum (excerpt)

Citation:

"Draft Report, 'On the Trip of the Soviet Party-Governmental Delegation to the PRC,' by M. Suslov to CC CPSU Presidium for Presentation to a Forthcoming CC CPSU Plenum (excerpt)", December 18, 1959, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Center for the Storage of Contemporary Documentation (TsKhSD), Moscow, fond 2, opis 1, delo 415, ll. 56-91. Translated by Vladislav M. Zubok. <https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/112989>

Summary:

Draft report by M. Suslov describing the visit of a Soviet delegation to the People's Republic of China, mainly focusing on the deterioration of relations between India and China.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

Draft

ABOUT THE VISIT OF THE SOVIET PARTY-GOVERNMENTAL
DELEGATION TO THE
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

[lengthy sections on bilateral questions, including criticism of China's domestic and ideological policies omitted]

...Now let me move to some issues of foreign policy where certain differences emerged between us and the Chinese comrades.

[here followed criticisms of Beijing's exacerbations of international tensions, Mao's thesis that imperialists were "paper tigers" and seemingly cavalier attitude toward nuclear war, and China's "inconsistent" handling of the Taiwan Straits crisis of 1958 and relations with Japan.]

During this spring relations between the People's Republic of China and India have seriously deteriorated. This deterioration is linked to the counterrevolutionary rebellion in Tibet in March 1959. Reactionary circles of India to some extent were probably involved in this rebellion. However, the rebellion in Tibet would not have taken place, had one implemented timely democratic reforms and appropriate measures to improve economy and culture with a view on historical specifics of Tibet, and had one been duly vigilant with regard to reactionary elements. Unfortunately, Chinese comrades also did not draw appropriate conclusions from the warnings of the CC CPSU about the activities of reactionaries aimed at the forceful separation [otriv] of Tibet from the People's Republic of China.

Chinese comrades were correct when they put down decisively the counterrevolutionary rebellion in Tibet. They claim with justification that the issue of Tibet is a domestic affair of the PRC. We give them full support on this. We stand against the attempts of Western powers to sever Tibet from China, to exploit the Tibetan issue for aggravation of international situation. At the last (16th) session of the UN General Assembly the representatives of the USSR and fraternal socialist countries resolutely supported the PRC, protesting against the discussion of the so-called "Tibetan question" and other attempts to blacken the People's China, including the one using the Sino-Indian border dispute.

The imperialist tactics aim at making the Tibetan issue a bone of contention first of all between China and India, to pit these two great Asian powers against each other, to aggravate the situation in the South-East Asia, to undermine the influence of the socialist camp, including China, in this region of the world, to weaken the positions of communists in the movement of national liberation. The American press openly admits that one word from India compromises the prestige of the PRC more than one thousand words spoken in the USA.

Regrettably, the Chinese comrades did not take into account this tactic of the imperialists. Responding to the noisy campaign in imperialist mass media about Tibet, they unleashed their own propagandist campaign and concentrated their fire mainly on India and personally on [Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal] Nehru. They accused the Indian government and personally Nehru of an imperialist policy, aimed against China. This was the essence of a large editorial article in "Renmin Ribao" ["People's Daily"] on 6 May 1959, under the title "The revolution in Tibet and the philosophy of Nehru."

Nehru is a well-known politician. One cannot exclude that to some degree he was

involved in the intrigues against the PRC. But Nehru is far-sighted enough to recognize the vital importance of India's friendship with China, with the Soviet Union and the whole socialist camp. Nehru behaved with reserve. In his numerous speeches he admitted that Tibet is a part of China, he spoke against the establishment of a so-called "government of Dalai-Lama in exile," stressing the significance of the Sino-Indian friendship. India repeatedly raised the issue of restoration of rights of the People's Republic of China in the UN. Precisely these actions made the rightist bourgeois circles in India, who are linked to Anglo-American capital, to assail Nehru, blaming him for "indecisiveness" and "appeasement" with regard to the People's China. Their goal is to unseat Nehru, to revise the neutralist foreign policy of India, to tilt it in a rightist direction, to the path of alliance with Western powers. If reactionary circles of India succeed in achieving these goals, it would cause serious damage to the socialist camp and the whole cause of peace, since the present foreign policy line of the Nehru government is a positive factor in the struggle for strengthening peace.

One should ask, what aims did Chinese comrades pursue in attacking Nehru so uncompromisingly? As they explained it themselves, they stood by the principle of "cohesion and struggle." According to com. Mao Zedong, they unmask Nehru as a "double-dealer," "half a man, half a devil," "half a gentlemen, half a hooligan," and in doing this they allegedly "force" him to strengthen friendship with the PRC.

A question, naturally, was raised how to live side by side with this "devil"? How to build relations with India? The Chinese comrades found a solution in forcing Nehru to repent and in pressuring him into cooperation with China. At the same time the Chinese said that they visualize the possibility of the downfall of the Nehru government and see no great trouble if a reactionary pro-Western government comes to power in India. In their opinion, this would only bring us closer to a revolution in India.

Obviously this course inevitably had to lead to further aggravation of relations with India. And it happened, indeed, when after suppression of the Tibet rebellion the Chinese troops approached the borders with India.

The People's China and India inherited from the past unresolved border issues. It is not possible here to dwell on the history and the essence of these issues that deal with some territories located in the Himalayas. But it is important to notice by what methods the Chinese comrades attempted to resolve this problem, so acute and painful for both sides.

For a long time the Chinese comrades postponed a solution of this question. They stressed that in the interests of maintaining good relations with India they would not press with demarcation of the borders and would reckon with the existing realities. However, in the heated atmosphere of the Sino-Indian disputes with regard to the rebellion of Tibet the issue of the border territories became extremely acute. On 25 August [1959] an armed clash took place between the Chinese and Indian border-guards, and as a result the Hindus lost several people as killed and wounded. Exploiting this conflict, imperialist propaganda raised the uproar about "the aggression of red China." Reactionary nationalists inside India unleashed a fierce anti-Chinese campaign that was accompanied by attacks against Nehru, as well as [against] the Indian communist party.

One should mention that these events took place only a few days before the visit of comrade Khrushchev to the United States. The enemy propaganda did everything to exploit the Sino-Indian conflict for the purpose of disruption of the Soviet peace initiative, to lay blame for China's actions on the Soviet Union and thereby to cause a quarrel between us and India.

With all this in mind, the CC CPSU decided to send a letter to Beijing, expressing our

concern about the situation that emerged as a result of the Sino-Indian conflict. It also took a decision to publish a TASS announcement in order to encourage peaceful settlement of the conflict and to give the world public opinion the correct idea about our position. The declaration of the Soviet Union at that time halted escalation of the conflict and thwarted the dangerous game of the imperialists. The governments of the PRC and India announced that further intensification of the dispute would not be in the interests of peace nor in their own interests, and that they would resolve border issues according to "five principles" [pancha sila] of peaceful coexistence.

The course of events, however, demonstrated that the question of the Sino-Indian border is rife with new complications. It is known that on 21 October [1959] there was another armed clash on the Sino-Indian border that caused the loss of lives. After it the anti-Chinese campaign in India flared up with new vigor.

One should keep in mind that there are very influential forces in India that seek to aggravate relations with China. Regrettably, the position of the Chinese comrades on this question is such that it facilitates for the Indian reactionaries mobilization of public opinion in the country against the People's China and puts the progressive forces of India in a quandary.

The Chinese comrades insist that they are guided by the considerations of self-defense and prestige of their country, that the truth and justice is on China's side. In this regard one must inform the Plenum that the letter we addressed to the CC of the Communist Party of China and the TASS announcement about the Indo-Chinese border conflict did not evoke a proper understanding among the Chinese leaders. In their answer to our letter the Chinese comrades claimed that the incident on the Sino-Indian border had been provoked by the Nehru government, which, as the letter of the Chinese friends reads, "has long been marching in its domestic and foreign policies in the reactionary direction." It follows: "We believe that if one carries out only the policy of unprincipled adjustment and concessions to Nehru and the Indian government, not only would it not make them change their position for the better, but, on the contrary, in the situation of the growing offensive on their side, if China still does not rebuff them and denounce them, such a policy would only encourage their atrocity. It would not be advantageous for the friendship between China and India, and also not be advantageous to make Nehru and the Indian government improve, instead of moving toward further rapprochement with the West."

The letter contains a reproach that "the TASS announcement displayed to the whole world the different positions of China and the Soviet Union toward the incident on the Sino-Indian border, which causes a virtual glee and jubilation among the Indian bourgeoisie, American and British imperialists, who use this to drive a wedge into the relations between China and the Soviet Union. This cannot help evoking regrets."

The analysis of this letter of the CC of the Communist Party of China leads us to two conclusions of fundamental importance. They are the following: the Chinese comrades could neither correctly assess their own mistakes committed in their relations with India, nor the measures taken by the CC CPSU for regulation of the Sino-Indian conflict. The Chinese leadership's assessments of the situation in India and the behavior of Nehru with regard to the conflict are undoubtedly erroneous and arbitrary.

Let me refer to the opinion of our Indian friends expressed in their letters to the CC CPSU and the CC of the Communist Party of China. While registering the aggravation of the situation in India as a result of the conflict, the Indian comrades stated that "if the disputes continue, it would benefit reactionary forces in India and would cause a negative influence on the masses of the Indian population." Indian comrades justifiably believe that further exacerbation of the Indo-Chinese relations could weaken the democratic movement in India, gravely undercut the position of the

Indian communist party and threaten it with a ban. In the words of the General Secretary of the Communist Party of India comr. [Ajoy Kumar] Ghosh, Indian communists do not know how to explain the position of the PRC, the reason why it raised the border issue if China at this time and what hides behind it. All leading officials of the Communist Party of India wonder why the government of the PRC let itself be pulled by Indian reaction into this border conflict.

And as to the statement of the Chinese comrades about the glee and jubilation of Indian bourgeoisie, American and British imperialists, with regard to dissimilar positions of China and the Soviet Union on the incident on the Sino-Indian border, it is erroneous in its basic premises. The imperialists rejoiced indeed, but they did so at the moment when the Indo-Chinese conflict flared up. One can imagine them exulting and rejoicing even more, if the Soviet Union had become enmeshed in this conflict and the impression had been created that there was a united front of all socialist countries against Nehru. Facts demonstrate that the uproar among imperialists seriously abated after the Soviet Union came forth in favor of a peaceful settlement of the Indian-Chinese conflict.

What did aggravation of relations between China and India and other foreign policy gaffes of the Chinese comrades lead to? They led to a diminution of the international prestige of the PRC, to the weakening of her positions in Asia, to an increased tendency, in a number of countries of Asia, to ally oneself with Western powers, with the USA, despite strong hatred among the peoples of Asian countries towards their perennial enemies - the colonizers.

[after discussion of Soviet-Chinese differences over Indonesia and other foreign policy issues, Suslov recounted the summit meeting in Beijing on 2 October 1959 between Khrushchev and Mao; his description of the exchange dealing with the Sino-Indian border conflict is printed below]

From our side in the discussion of foreign policy issues took part comrades Khrushchev, Suslov and Gromyko. From the Chinese side participated comrades Mao Zedong, Liu Shaoqi, Zhu De, Zhou Enlai, Lin Biao, Peng Zhen, Chen Yi, Wang Jiaxiang.

The discussion took place on 2 October in the residence of the Politburo of the CC Communist Party of China. Comrade Khrushchev informed the Chinese friends about his trip to the USA and his talks with President D. Eisenhower. He stressed that among American political figures there is growing sentiment in favor of peaceful settlement of unresolved, disputed questions and that at the present time there is a very real possibility for further resolute steps toward a more durable peace. In this regard he brought the attention of the Chinese friends to the necessity for the socialist camp to avoid anything that could be exploited by the reactionaries to push the world back to the tracks of the cold war.

Comrade Khrushchev told the Chinese comrades that we do not completely understand their foreign policy, particularly with regard to India, and on the issue of Taiwan.

Comrade Khrushchev pointed out at the necessity to improve mutual information between the leadership of our parties on the issues of foreign policy. One cannot regard as normal the situation, when we, China's ally, do not know what the Chinese comrades may undertake tomorrow in the area of foreign policy. Indeed, all countries of the socialist camp are linked not only by the common ideas and goals, but also by the alliance commitments. Incorrect actions of one country may hurt international situation of the whole socialist camp. One should keep in mind that imperialist propaganda directly link activity of Chinese comrades to the policy of the USSR and other socialist countries. Indeed, communist parties always emphasize that the

socialist camp has one line in foreign policy.

As far as the CC CPSU is concerned, we systematically inform the leadership of fraternal parties of socialist countries about most important foreign policy steps of the USSR and, in special cases, we seek their advice.

One must admit that the Chinese comrades reacted to the remarks of comrade Khrushchev painfully. They claimed that their policy with regard to Taiwan and the off-shore straits has been fully justified and is conducted with skill, that their line toward the Nehru government is correct. At times the tone of our discussion became quite sharp. It came to the point when a member of the Politburo CC Communist Party of China, minister of foreign affairs Chen Yi, claimed that our line on Nehru is allegedly opportunistic [prisposoblencheskaia], and the policy of China is more firm and correct. Naturally, we gave a resolute rebuff to these pronouncements.

In connection with the remarks of the Chinese leaders one cannot help wondering how they understand the Leninist principle of peaceful coexistence, whether they see it as a general line of foreign policy of the socialist camp, whether they think it is necessary to struggle for relaxation of international tension and for securing general peace.

We are getting an impression that, while recognizing formally the principle of peaceful coexistence between the two global systems, the Chinese comrades tend to regard this principle just as a temporary tactical maneuver.

[ed. note: after additional critical remarks and recounting of discussion of other matters at the meeting, Suslov noted:]

One should say that at the end of the conversation on 2 October Mao Zedong and other Chinese comrades declared that they did not want war; that they would resolve the Taiwan issue by peaceful means and would settle the conflict with India through negotiations. They confirmed again that the Communist party of China has a common line and common goals with us. We expressed our satisfaction in this regard.

[noting that Khrushchev had pointed out the Chinese leadership's "nervousness and touchiness" at being criticized, Suslov harshly criticized the "atmosphere of the cult of personality" surrounding Mao, which he likened to that of Stalin; recalling that during a 1958 conversation with Khrushchev, Mao had compared Soviet-Chinese relations to two hands in which nine fingers were fully unified "and only in one, little finger we have disagreements," Suslov ended his report on an optimistic note, vowing that the Soviet leadership would do its utmost to promote strong ties and friendship between Moscow and Beijing]