

November 15, 1955

**Record of Conversation between N. S. Khrushchev
AND A. I. Mikoyan with Norwegian Prime Minister E.
Gerhardsen and Minister of Trade A. Skaug on 15
November 1955**

Citation:

"Record of Conversation between N. S. Khrushchev AND A. I. Mikoyan with Norwegian Prime Minister E. Gerhardsen and Minister of Trade A. Skaug on 15 November 1955", November 15, 1955, Wilson Center Digital Archive, AVP RF, fond 0116, opis 14, papka 179, delo 11, listy 95-107. Translated by Margarita Malkina.
<https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/118470>

Summary:

The Soviet side provides information regarding missing Norwegian citizens. They then discuss the draft communique regarding trade and cooperation between Norway and the Soviet Union.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

Secret. Copy #2
29 November 1955
#2338/3ss

RECORD OF CONVERSATION
coms. N. S. KHRUSHCHEV AND A. I. MIKOYAN WITH NORWEGIAN
PRIME MINISTER E. GERHARDSEN AND MINISTER OF TRADE A. SKAUG

15 November 1955

KHRUSHCHEV asks where should today's work begin, and would the Norwegians like to choose the first topic themselves?

GERHARDSEN says that, as far as he understood, the situation has been clarified, particularly with respect to the Norwegian citizens, and that he would like to hear the information on this subject.

KHRUSHCHEV says that we can begin with this question, on which com. Zorin will deliver the report.

ZORIN. In connection with the question raised by Mr. Gerhardsen on 11 November regarding Norwegian citizens, we can report the following:

1. The appropriate Soviet authorities will gladly investigate the question of citizen O. Hariu's immediate release and repatriation to Norway, who has been in the USSR while serving his sentence for serious crimes committed against the Soviet Union during the war.

[the following text is crossed out, with a side note "to be deleted"]

2. As a result of the investigation carried out by the appropriate authorities, it has been determined that of those persons included in the list given by Mr. Gerhardsen on 11 November of this year, there exists information on 4 citizens:

PEDERSEN, Odd - 28 June 1944 was taken prisoner by Soviet forces within the territory of Finland. On 27 September 1945 was transferred to Berlin to the representative of the French repatriation commission, lieutenant Bartsen.

EGER, Kiell - died on 27 June 1945 at a military hospital.

VOBENSTED, Georg - died on 15 December 1944 at a military hospital.

OSIORDET, Stein - died on 11 February 1945 at a military hospital.

Regarding the remaining citizens included in the list, the Soviet government has no information.

3. In addition, there is information on the following Norwegian citizens:

VIK. Ivar Johann - Born in 1923, was taken prisoner by Soviet forces in German territory. On 1 September 1845 was released from the prisoner of war camp in Poznan.

SVEN Hans Hans - Born in 1925, was taken prisoner by Soviet forces on 26 June 1944 in the territory of Finland. On 27 September 1945 was transferred by law to Berlin to the representative of the French repatriation commission, lieutenant Bartsen.

JOHANSEN Peter Ludwig - Born in 1926. Taken prisoner by Soviet forces on 29 April 1945 near Berlin. In July 1947 was transferred, together with other POW s to Hungarian authorities in the city of Fokshan (Romania).

ELVAROM Andrias Avgust - Born in 1911. Died on 19 January 1946 at a military hospital.

FALSTAD Olaf Olaf - Born in 1920. Died on 18 March 1944 at a military hospital.

BAST Bern Jun - Born in 1921. Taken prisoner near the city of Uritsk (Leningrad region) on 20 May 1942. Died on 22 July 1944 at a military hospital.

Besides these persons listed above, we have no Norwegian citizens. If the Norwegian side requests, then we may give you certificates of death for the citizens listed above.

GERHARDSEN says that he would like to deeply thank for this report and also express thanks for the interest that the Soviet government demonstrated in this matter. The Norwegian government still has a number of names of Norwegian citizens as yet unaccounted for, and the Norwegian side would like to give a supplementary list so that the Soviet government could, to the extent possible, investigate further.

KHRUSHCHEV says that the Norwegian side can forward this list, and although there are no Norwegian citizens located in the Soviet Union, certain information on Norwegian citizens can possibly be found.

GERHARDSEN says that this list can be forwarded through the Norwegian embassy in Moscow.

KHRUSHCHEV agrees.

GERHARDSEN says that now they can move to the question of the draft communique.

KHRUSHCHEV suggests listening to the commission that was entrusted yesterday to prepare the text of the communique.

ZORIN says that the work with the Norwegian representatives yesterday evening involved the examination of the Soviet draft of the text that had been proposed as the basis for the communique. The Norwegian side made a number of corrections. Some of them are purely of grammatical nature and improve the text, particularly with respect to the first part of the communique. These corrections raise no objections and the Norwegian, and their Norwegian redaction can be adopted. The Norwegian side also made material corrections, particularly with respect to trade. The Norwegian side proposed the following text for the corresponding portion of the communique: "With this, there was an expression of desire to further develop Soviet Norwegian trade and other economic ties on the basis of full mutuality."

The Soviet draft had stated that both sides expressed "the desire to develop comprehensively Soviet-Norwegian trade and construct economic ties on the basis of mutual benefit without any kind of discrimination on the part of either side." Clearly, the change proposed by the Norwegian side deserves to be discussed here.

On the third page of the draft, the Norwegian side made a correction to improve the text, and it does not raise any objections from our part. This concerns the establishment of a joint commission to study the question of exploiting the hydro-energy potential of the Paatso-loki River. A slightly different version was proposed by the Norwegian side, dealing with the operations of the emergency rescue service.

Finally, the last material correction concerns the question of [military] bases on Norwegian territory. The Norwegian side proposed two formulations, with the first as the better one. Here is its text:

"In connection with the question raised by the Soviet side, Prime Minister E. Gerhardsen gave an assurance that the Norwegian Government will not support any aggression-directed policy and will not provide bases for foreign armed forces on Norwegian territory as long as Norway is not under attack or under the threat of attack."

This correction also needs to be discussed. Other corrections, as I have already noted, are of editorial nature. That is everything that needs to be said regarding the preliminary work on the text of the communique.

KHRUSHCHEV asks what would the other side like to say regarding the communique.

BRODLAND says that he agrees with what Zorin has said, adding that the Norwegian translation of the text that was given to the Norwegian side is far from perfect and needs additional work with respect to language.

GERHARDSEN says that perhaps a few words should be said about the section dealing with trade relations.

SKAUG says that formulation proposed by the Norwegian side reflects the actual situation at hand. The Norwegian side supposes that there are great possibilities for increasing trade for mutual benefit and that the proposed formulation is the most effective.

MIKOYAN asks, from what point of view?

SKAUG replies, from the point of view that both sides, evidently, will be increasing the scope of trade on the basis of benefit and full mutuality.

KHRUSHCHEV notes that Skaug has certainly clarified the matter.

MIKOYAN notes that discrimination is not a good thing.

SKAUG says that the whole matter rests in the fact that Norway sometimes discriminates in favor of the Soviet Union and cites the example of automobiles. He further says that if the communique were to specify trade without discrimination, then the Germans, the English and the French would demand that Norway buy more automobiles from Germany, England and France. If the communique were to mention discrimination, then we could likely demand that the Soviet Union increase its purchases of frozen fillet from Norway, since, with respect to this item, the Soviet Union maintains a policy of discriminating against Norway while favoring of Iceland. Thus, it seems it would be better to abandon this contentious issue.

MIKOYAN says that he understands the somewhat joking tone in the explanation

given by Skaug, who knows that trade between us must be built on the basis of benefit, that there is no correlation between quantity and discrimination, and that if it is beneficial to trade in some types of goods and Norway does not trade in them, then this is not caused by business decisions, but rather those of the political and other spheres. That is the exact definition of discrimination. However, taking into account your relationship with the West, we are prepared to understand you and adopt the "opportunistic" formulation that you have proposed.

KHRUSHCHEV says that if it is not beneficial for Norway to buy automobiles from the Soviet Union, we are not imposing these automobiles or any other products [on Norway]. One should buy what is advantageous, and sell what is advantageous. [He] expresses the opinion that Norway understands our relations and our views on discrimination. Taking into consideration our positive and cordial relations, the Soviet side accepts the Norwegian formulation and declines its own. Reiterates that the Soviet side understands the Norwegian position and does not want to put Norway into a difficult position in front of its bad allies. Nevertheless, in practice, we will abide by what we have said before. If the Norwegian side carries out discrimination, then we will be very sensitive [to that]. Says that we are willing to accept the Norwegian formulation.

SKAUG says that in connection with the agreement reached today on trade issues, it can be noted that only one type of commodity was named as raising difficulty, and even this question has been settled through an exchange of letters. Thus, in Skaug's opinion, we can only be speaking of a hypothetical situation. Returning to the question of automobiles, Skaug notes that it is difficult for the Norwegian side to hear accusations of discrimination from the direction of England, France and Germany.

GERHARDSEN notes that it is probably not worthwhile to continue the discussion on this question.

KHRUSHCHEV says that the Soviet side also gives up and thus accepts the Norwegian formulation, in other words, it is offering complete capitulation.

MIKOYAN says that, with respect to bases on Norwegian territory, the Norwegian side proposes to continue the current situation, although we have the right to demand some improvement. Says that we are now in a period of good relations and will not insist on our own formulation. We see that the Norwegian leaders have good intentions toward us, and we welcome that.

KHRUSHCHEV says that as an initial step this is sufficient and expresses the hope that in the future things will be better, and then this question will be resolved better.

SKAUG says that we will have to deal with concrete matters.

KHRUSHCHEV says that the Soviet side speaks about bases, while SKAUG speaks about merchandise.

MIKOYAN says that the previous version is not successful, and that we had a better version. Nevertheless, taking into consideration that in their hearts the Norwegian leaders want improve relations, we can accept their formulation.

KHRUSHCHEV reads out the corresponding section of the communique, regarding the question of bases.

MIKOYAN says that we have heard this before.

KHRUSHCHEV says that the formulation of the Soviet side was better, but it does not alleviate the position of the Norwegian side in its relations with the allies. But taking into consideration that we are friends, we agree with the "opportunist" formulation. With this, we proceed from the assumption that it is not possible to do everything at the same time. When we become more familiar with each other, it will be possible to achieve better results. Besides that, this formulation of the Norwegian side is convenient for us because we do not and have never intended to attack Norway. That is why we feel secure that you will not give foreign forces the right to be on your territory for the purpose of attacking us.

GERHARDSEN says that the formulation offered by the Norwegian side does not contain anything new, and that, indeed, the Norwegian side uses the same wording. [He] says that the Norwegian delegation bears the responsibility before its own country and was not ready for negotiations on such important political problems like this one, and it [Norway] did not consider such negotiations indispensable. Thanks for the fact that the spokesmen for the Soviet side are ready to accept the Norwegian formulation. Adds that he is firmly convinced that the idea expressed by the Norwegian formulation will find support among the majority of the Norwegian population. There were forces in Norway, although of little influence, which demanded that the country allow foreign troops in its territory. Nevertheless, the government and the Storting (parliament) of Norway, in this respect, unanimously take the same firm position as is expressed in the proposed formulation.

GERHARDSEN repeats that this position enjoys the support of the overwhelming majority of the Norwegian population.

KHRUSHCHEV We are happy to hear this statement, and from our side we will do everything to convince the Norwegian people of our positive inclinations towards them and to insure that there will be genuine trust between our countries. We have the best intentions towards our neighbors and towards the struggle for a stable peace. If those who in their hearts are our enemies, although they openly might not admit it, honestly analyze the situation, they would have to admit that we do not have any reasons to start a war. Our country is great and wealthy, with many people and vast space that is far from developed - what do we need a war for? A country that is preparing for war in Northern Europe would have never evacuated its base from Finland. There is no reason for us to start a war and to pillage such countries as Finland, Sweden and Norway. Let us better be friends and speak about friendship with each other and not about war. On this basis we agree to conduct talks about any questions; indeed, there are many questions and they are very interesting. Let us, for example, build a power plant on our border.

Khrushchev asks further whether the communique can be considered fully agreed upon.

GERHARDSEN affirms that that is correct.

KHRUSHCHEV asks what procedure will be established for the official signing of the joint communique: should it be signed, or, more accurately, initialed?

GERHARDSEN replies that the Norwegian side is ready to do that.

KHRUSHCHEV remarks that such a procedure has, of course, not a juridical, but a purely moral character, as it will symbolize the successful completion of negotiations. Suggests to get together at 18: 30 at the Kremlin, thirty minutes before the reception in order to initial the communique.

ZORIN says that it the protocols on issues of trade can be signed at the same time.

GERHARDSEN expresses agreement.

SKAUG asks the question, at what moment, precisely, will the joint communique be published?

KHRUSHCHEV says that the agreed upon text can be conveyed to Oslo now, so that it can be published simultaneously in Moscow and in Oslo.

ZORIN suggests that the text of the communique be broadcast on the radio in both countries on the 15th of November at 19 o'clock Moscow time and published in the newspapers on the 16th of November.

GERHARDSEN says that such an arrangement is fully acceptable for the Norwegian side.

SKAUG proposes that together with the text of the protocols on trade issues, we should publish the figures for the full amount of the proposed commodity exchange between the USSR and Norway, along with the list goods to be exchanged.

KHRUSHCHEV agrees with the proposal.

GERHARDSEN suggests entrusting the specially designated representatives of each side to reach a consensus on the final version of the text to be published. Ambassador Brodland will represent the Norwegian in this matter.

ZORIN says that ambassador Arkadiev will take part as the representative of the Soviet side.

GERHARDSEN says that he would like to touch upon a question which was already mentioned earlier during the conversation between Mikoyan and Skaug. The discussion concerned the matter of sending a delegation of Soviet experts to Norway for the purpose of acquainting themselves with the Norwegian fish industry. It is our understanding that the Soviet side is interested in this proposal of ours. If there are no objections, then on our return to Norway we could send the appropriate invitation.

KHRUSHCHEV says that it would be very good.

GERHARDSEN adds that in his opinion, it would also be not bad if, together with this delegation, representatives of the Soviet press could arrive and then write something about the Norwegian fish industry. Gerhardsen says that this, his last proposal is combined with a promise which he had given Norwegian journalists before his departure to the Soviet Union. He says that he will try to ascertain the possibility of sending a delegation of Norwegian journalists to the Soviet Union.

KHRUSHCHEV says that it would be good if such a delegation visited the USSR.

SKAUG reminds that on the 12th of November, during a meeting hosted by Mikoyan, there was a discussion of a possibility of sending to the Soviet Union a delegation of Norwegian industrialists and representatives of export companies interested in purchasing machinery and new equipment from the Soviet Union. Skaug says that if there are no objections, on his return to Norway he will discuss this with the representatives of Norwegian business circles, with the purpose of arranging such a trip in approximately spring of next year.

MIKOYAN says that we welcome this proposal.

KHRUSHCHEV affirms this and adds that we will show the representatives of the Norwegian business circles everything that they desire to see.

GERHARDSEN In conclusion, I would like to raise one more question. We do not dare to hope that the prominent leaders of the Soviet state will find time for a special visit of such a small country as Norway. Nevertheless, according to our knowledge, N.A. Bulganin and N.S

KHRUSHCHEV intends to travel to England in the nearest future. If, for example, on their way back from England they could find a chance to stay for a couple of days in Norway, we would be very grateful.

KHRUSHCHEV thanks for the invitation and says that he will discuss the question with his comrades and will give an answer later. Adds that GERHARDSEN's invitation is of great interest. We, on our part, would like to have more frequent meetings and closer contact. It is possible that such a visit could take place on our return from England, but maybe we will be able to find time for a special visit to Norway. Since we are neighbors, it will probably be possible to find time for such a trip.

GERHARDSEN Even better.

KHRUSHCHEV once more thanks for the invitation and promises to give the final response somewhat later.

A break is announced until 11 o'clock.

The discussion lasted from 10 to 11 o'clock. The Norwegian side was represented by Gerhardsen, Skaug, Brodland, Sommerfelt, Heiberg, Ekeland, and interpreter Krane. The Soviet side was represented by N.S. Khrushchev, A.I. Mikoyan, I.G. Kabanov, V.A. Zorin, B.S. Semenov, G.P. Arkadiev, and S.A. Afanasiev.

The discussion was recorded by S.A. Afanasiev.