

May 8, 1962

**Transcript of the Conversation Between N.S.
Khrushchev and the Deputy First Minister and
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, Subandrio**

Citation:

"Transcript of the Conversation Between N.S. Khrushchev and the Deputy First Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, Subandrio", May 8, 1962, Wilson Center Digital Archive, RGANI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 565, ll. 92-106. Contributed by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Angela Greenfield.

<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/300930>

Summary:

On May 8, 1962, N.S. Khrushchev met with Indonesian Foreign Minister Subandrio to discuss Soviet-Indonesian relations, including economic and military cooperation. Subandrio expressed gratitude for Soviet assistance in Indonesia's struggle against Dutch colonial rule and outlined Indonesia's plans to pursue a socialist-oriented path. The conversation also covered military aid, economic exchanges, and Soviet specialists in Indonesia, with A.N. Kosygin addressing specific agreements and financial arrangements.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Blavatnik Family Foundation

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

TRANSCRIPT OF THE CONVERSATION

between Cde. N.S. KHRUSHCHEV and the Deputy First Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, SUBANDRIO

8 May 1962

N.S. Khrushchev expresses his delight in welcoming his old acquaintance, the longtime friend, Subandrio. In the Soviet Union, we are always pleased to receive representatives from friendly Indonesia.

N.S. Khrushchev humorously notes that we are having a meeting of an old Indonesian, Khrushchev, and an old Muscovite, Subandrio. We often reminisce about our time in Indonesia, recalling the warm hospitality and delicious treats. I particularly remember the tropical durian fruit, which, to be frank, not everyone may be able to eat.

Subandrio expresses his great pleasure in meeting N.S. Khrushchev and considers it a great honor for himself. In Indonesia, we hold warm memories of N.S. Khrushchev and other Soviet comrades' visit.

As for durian, not everyone may like it indeed, but Indonesia offers a variety of other fruits.

N.S. Khrushchev remarks that in a book on the history of Indonesia, he read about clan wars fought over durian trees. Indeed, there are many tropical fruits and national dishes that require acquired taste. For instance, Chinese and Japanese enjoy *trepang* (translator's note: sea cucumbers), while Russians, perhaps, would not eat them.

A.N. Kosygin remarks that Russians tend to prefer heartier food like *salo* (translator's note: cured pork subcutaneous fat).

N.S. Khrushchev says that Russians and Ukrainians do love *salo*, but we, "Indonesians", enjoy other ethnic dishes as well.

We, continues N.S. Khrushchev, have the best memories of our visit to your wonderful country. The people and nature are Indonesia's true wealth. You are, so called, God's favorites, while we were left in the north, seemingly abandoned to freeze. You were fortunate to end up on the islands. In this case, God acted unfairly.

Subandrio remarks that thanks to God, the Soviet people have become strong and powerful.

N.S. Khrushchev states that the Soviet people achieved this on their own, despite God. It turns out that Soviet truth is stronger than God. However, N.S. Khrushchev jokes, be cautious about discussing religious topics, as people might say that you are religious but listened to the atheist Khrushchev.

Subandrio conveys President Sukarno's best wishes and greetings to N.S. Khrushchev.

N.S. Khrushchev inquires about Sukarno's health.

Subandrio informs him that the president is feeling better. He had liver stones, which caused much discomfort. However, the stones have now been removed and Sukarno's health is improving. I think, Subandrio adds jokingly, that, aside from a few attempts on Sukarno's life, he is as healthy as you, Mr. Prime Minister.

N.S. Khrushchev expresses gratitude for the greetings and asks Subandrio to convey best wishes to President Sukarno and the people of Indonesia. The Soviet Union considers the Indonesian people great friends and is ready to do everything possible to help Indonesians expel the Dutch, achieve true independence and freedom, allowing Indonesia to develop its productive forces and become a rich and prosperous country. The USSR does not have much of what Indonesia has, and Indonesia does not have much of what the Soviet Union has. That is why we want to promote exchange, supplying various products in exchange for your durian.

Subandrio expresses apologies for once again reaching out to the Soviet government and the Soviet people for assistance needed by Indonesia to complete the revolution. President Sukarno has repeatedly sought help from the Soviet Union for the successful struggle of the Indonesian people. I believe, Subandrio continues, that in the near future, we will be able to eliminate subversive activities harming Indonesia's

economy, develop the country's economy, and expand exchanges in every possible way. So, eventually, we will stop "robbing" you.

N.S. Khrushchev jokingly remarks that he no longer carries anything valuable in his pockets.

Subandrio continues, stating that the Indonesian delegation arrived in Moscow to request the Soviet government to carefully study the considerations and requests of the Indonesian side, as currently, the government of Indonesia is facing a decisive and concluding stage of the Indonesian revolution. The requests and wishes of the Indonesian delegation, expressed in the conversation with Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers, A.N. Kosygin, were mostly satisfied. The equipment Indonesia will soon receive will allow it to resist any attempts by Dutch colonizers to undermine the Indonesian revolution.

On behalf of the government and the people of Indonesia, Subandrio says, I would like to express deep gratitude from the bottom of my heart for the assistance provided by the Soviet Union in our struggle against imperialism. The people of Indonesia will never forget this help.

The Indonesian revolution is currently evolving, entering a new stage of development. President Sukarno now holds all power, both political and economic. We are confident that after resolving the West Irian issue, after the liberation of this territory, we will be able to accelerate the pace of economic development. This is the message we wanted to convey to Chairman Khrushchev.

N.S. Khrushchev expresses gratitude for the high regard given to the Soviet assistance. The primary goal of this aid is to ensure Indonesia's independence. It is gratifying to hear such words directed at the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union's duty is to provide assistance to those in need, fighting against colonizers and imperialists.

N.S. Khrushchev remarks that some of our adversaries, fools, accuse us of fearing imperialism. How does this align with our actions, figuratively speaking, when we struck them under the ninth rib? I am referring to Albanian fools. Because if we provide assistance to Indonesia, we strike the writhing snake ball of imperialism itself. It involves not only Netherlands but also NATO and SEATO, a whole imperialist conspiracy, and it is precisely here that we must deal them a defeat. The pivotal question for Indonesia is as follows: will imperialism strengthen on its territory or be ousted? Americans assist the Netherlands, as they fear the development of the Indonesian revolution, which influences not only neighboring nations but also countries in Latin America. Kennedy is a young president; he thinks that he is the smartest (of course, it is for the American people to decide who is the smartest), but nations are not less intelligent than him. Here he is creating the Peace Corps, the Alliance for Progress, and so on. He sends lecturers to Asian and African countries, thinking that if people listen to one or two lectures, they will immediately adopt the American way of life. People need not just lectures but bread, clothing, and education. They know themselves what they need, without any lecturers.

A.N. Kosygin notes that under the guise of the Peace Corps, they send spies and prepare soldiers in other countries.

N.S. Khrushchev adds that in the West, there is often talk about the free world and the closed world. However, we take pride in our closed world. Closed to capitalists, monopolists, imperialists, and parasites but open to workers, peasants, and intelligentsia. Although we are less affluent than Americans, it is our people who were the first to launch a man into space.

What is their open society? It is equal opportunities for Rockefeller and a loader, for President Kennedy with a capital of 8 million dollars and for the unemployed. They say everyone can become a capitalist there and have whatever they want, while the unemployed cannot even provide bread for their family. That is their freedom of exploitation and oppression. Here, we consider it robbery, and naturally, it is prohibited. No one has the right to own the means of exploitation. The means of production are collectively owned here. We indeed have equal opportunities for everyone. Let me share this example: my grandfather was a serf, practically a slave; my father was a miner, and I worked in the mine myself. The people nominated me for the position of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers. We do not care about who your father was, who your parents were; only talent and diligence are taken into

account. This is what a free society is – a society for those who work. And our cause will triumph because it is just. The question of whether someone is a communist is irrelevant. Imperialists label anyone fighting for freedom and independence as a communist, and we like that. Communism has become a broadly inclusive term.

When I was young, N.S. Khrushchev continues, I used to read the liberal magazine "*Russkoe Bogatstvo*" (Russian Wealth) published by Korolenko. There was an article describing the life of the revolutionary Karakozov. After spending a long time in prison, Karakozov wrote a manifesto in his own blood, as if coming from the tsar. In this manifesto, the tsar addressed the people, particularly the peasants, asking for their help in the struggle against the nobility, claiming that he wanted to give land to the peasants, while the nobility opposed it. This manifesto was distributed among the peasants, leading to unrest and uprisings. In particular, there were significant disturbances in the Poltava region, and the government decided to use priests to explain that the tsar did not write such a manifesto; it was written by troublemakers, enemies of the tsar. The priest tells a peasant: the tsar did not write the manifesto, it was written by his enemies. The peasant responds, saying, "Yes, I know the Tsar didn't write it, but I really like the manifesto because it gives us all the land owned by the landlords."

Similarly, the peoples of the world appreciate what communism fights for. In this lies the strength of the idea and the impotence of the reactionaries. You, for example, not being communists, may not understand us, but our interests coincide. You stand against colonialism, against imperialism, for the development of the national forces of your country, for peace, for disarmament, and we also advocate for this, supporting you. We support everyone who fights against oppression, against capitalists, and imperialists.

Cde. Kosygin has briefed me on the progress of the negotiations. We agreed to accommodate your needs, and we would like our assistance to aid you in liberating your land from imperialists. We have also agreed to support you with personnel, but it seems appropriate to use mixed groups of your people and ours, minimizing the presence of our personnel. From our perspective, the fewer of our people involved, the better. The imperialists claim that when the Soviet Union provides assistance, it aims to send as many Soviet people as possible to the receiving country. This is entirely false. We believe the best fighters for their freedom are the people themselves. If they lack material means, we help; if they lack necessary knowledge, we assist. However, the strength of the revolution lies in people embracing ideas, not in having a large number of our specialists in the country. On the contrary, this weakens the revolution, providing enemies of the revolution the opportunity to distort the true intentions of the Soviet Union. We understand that, at this stage, you need assistance from our specialists. Indeed, military technology is complex and expensive; learning and fighting with such equipment is challenging. Therefore, it is necessary to send people who can instruct in the use of this equipment and, perhaps, act themselves.

We are ready to sign an agreement if the terms are approved. On our part, the agreement will be signed by Cde. Kosygin, and all the responsibility will thus fall on him, jokingly notes N.S. Khrushchev.

Subandrio expresses gratitude to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR for satisfying the requests of the Indonesian side. Regarding the use of Soviet specialists, he emphasizes a cautious approach to avoid accusations by the West that the struggle is led by the Soviet Union rather than the Indonesian people. The Indonesian people should take responsibility for all forms of their struggle independently.

I think, continues Cde. Subandrio, you understand why we are asking for specialist assistance at this stage. Currently, Indonesia is facing a complex and tense situation. We appreciate your valuable advice and find it highly useful. Your help – sending the specialists – is more than any material assistance; it is assistance in spirit, in thoughts. We will not be able to repay this assistance with any payments. At the same time, we express the hope that Soviet equipment and the moral and material support of the Soviet people will play a significant role in the development of the Indonesian revolution. You rightly emphasized that the struggle of the Indonesian people extends beyond the West Irian issue and significantly influences the

development of neighboring and even non-neighboring countries. The ideas of the Indonesian revolution have inspired other nations, serving as an example of constructing a national state. Indonesia departed from the parliamentary democracy system, and many other states have followed this example. In the past, this system merely allowed imperialists to interfere in a country's internal affairs. It is known that in countries like the Philippines, Malaya, Thailand, people are studying the experience of Indonesia with interest. We are convinced that the Indonesian revolution contributes to the struggle of nations for peace, freedom, and independence. We understand that difficulties will arise on the path to achieving the goals of our revolution, but we are confident that step by step, stage by stage, we can overcome them and consolidate our national strength. The entire Indonesian population and all Indonesian leadership accurately assess the assistance provided by the Soviet Union in economic and military areas. As for the ideological aspect, although we are not communists, I can say that many ideas of Marx, implemented in the Soviet Union, are the subject of our detailed study. President Sukarno stated that Indonesian socialism is Marxism applied to Indonesia's conditions. Currently, we are strengthening the foundations of socialism. Perhaps, besides socialist countries, Indonesia is the most progressive state mastering the fundamentals of building socialism. The Indonesian people and their leaders believe that the world should move towards socialism, seeing no other path. The Indonesian people understand well the global situation and are not afraid, even if they are sometimes labeled as supporters of communism.

President Sukarno explained to President Kennedy why we have such good relations with the Soviet Union. Sukarno told Kennedy: the Soviet Union supports Indonesia politically and economically. The Soviet government assists Indonesia in the military sphere. So why shouldn't the Indonesian people be friends with the Soviet people? How can the Indonesian people not feel love for the people of the Soviet Union? Whatever is said about the Soviet Union, the Indonesian people know the truth about this country and know how the Soviet people feel towards them. In Indonesia, it is understood that the extensive assistance provided by the Soviet Union to Indonesia comes at the cost of certain sacrifices for the Soviet people. That is why Indonesia highly values this truly fraternal assistance from the Soviet Union.

In the ideological sphere, Indonesia follows its own unique path of development. We have never felt that the Soviet Union was trying to impose its ideology on Indonesia. It can be said that currently, in Indonesia, the Soviet citizens constitute the largest group of foreigners, numbering 3-4 thousand people, but we are not afraid of their presence. We believe that our relations are developing in full accordance with our interests.

N.S. Khrushchev says that it pleases him to hear this. We believe President Sukarno accurately assesses our relations. Even opposing camps may sometimes unite in the common interest without interfering in internal affairs. Back in the day, we joined forces in the fight against Hitler's Germany. There is certainly no analogy with our relationship with Indonesia here. Imperialist powers could not resist Hitler; they needed the assistance of the Soviet Union. We, too, faced difficulties and needed material aid from the West. So, in the camp opposing Hitler's Germany, both socialist states and imperialist colonial powers found themselves side by side. Moreover, we can unite our efforts with Indonesia. We share a common understanding of the struggle for the liberation of peoples from colonialism and imperialism. Therefore, jokingly remarks N.S. Khrushchev, if the Americans or the British try to lecture you, tell them that you are following their example. After all, they together with the Soviet Union once fought against Hitler's Germany. And we, Indonesians, have joined forces with the Soviet Union against Dutch imperialism.

Indeed, as N.S. Khrushchev continues, we share common interests - the fight against colonialism and imperialism. The victory of the Indonesian people over colonialism weakens both colonialism and imperialism, and this corresponds to our common interests.

I would like to share a story with you, N.S. Khrushchev continues. When England, France, and Israel attacked Egypt, the whole world, including the U.S., condemned this aggression. The U.S. acted to mislead inexperienced politicians, but in fact, they were, of course, assisting England and France. To expose American imperialists, we proposed that our armed forces jointly oppose England, France, and Israel under the

UN flag. Eisenhower said that the idea of the U.S. fighting against France and England alongside the Soviet Union was simply madness. We knew, of course, that they would say that, but we did it to make clear to others the imperialistic nature of the ruling elite in the U.S., showing that they say one thing and do another. Then we threatened England and France with a missile strike, and 22 hours after our statement, the war ceased. It was a decisive assistance to Egypt. In terms of military development, a lot of time has passed since then. Back then, we had few missiles and weaker nuclear weapons. Now it is a completely different story. Currently, we can launch several dozen intercontinental missiles at the U.S. in one salvo. Moreover, the power of the warhead is measured in millions, ranging from 5 to 100 million tons. If such a strike is carried out in Europe, there will be nothing left of it. But just think, they still threaten us! It is a suicidal threat. If they start a war, they will perish themselves. That is the situation. That is why we are on the side of forces fighting for their freedom and independence.

We wish success to the people of Indonesia in their struggle and will rejoice in their successes.

I would like you to convey my best wishes to President Sukarno and his associates, everyone I met in Indonesia and hosted here in the Soviet Union. We believe we have good relations with both Cde. Aidit and Mr. Nasution. In matters concerning the struggle against Dutch colonizers, Aidit and Nasution are acting towards the same goals. As for internal affairs, that is a question for you to decide. Let it be your headache, we have no business poking our noses into it.

N.S. Khrushchev then asks Subandrio to send regards to President Sukarno's wife and tell her that we are looking forward to seeing her. He also sends greetings to Subandrio's wife and asks to convey to her that we still consider her a Muscovite and remember how she wonderfully sang when the diplomatic corps gathered outside the city at the dacha.

Subandrio says he will definitely convey Chairman Khrushchev's warm wishes to President Sukarno.

He notes further that he would like to raise several questions for Cde. Kosygin.

Yesterday, on May 7th, Cde. Kosygin stated that Indonesians would only pay salaries to Soviet experts in Indonesia in Indonesian currency and that Indonesia should not bear other expenses. However, members of the commission on the Soviet side hold a different opinion.

A.N. Kosygin says that we have reduced the Indonesian side's expenses for compensating soviet specialists by 50%. If Indonesia used to pay a Soviet specialist, let us say, 200 pounds, now it will only pay 100 pounds, with 40% in hard currency and 60% in local currency; this means the expenses are reduced by half, while we bear the costs of compensating the specialists' families in the Soviet Union, paying them salaries in Soviet rubles.

N.S. Khrushchev jokingly remarks that he knows Indonesians are "robbers," so their appetites need some limitation. Tolstoy wrote about human greed. In one of his stories, a peasant was told he would be given as much land as he could run around. He ran so fast that he died. That is why it is necessary to limit the appetite of the Indonesian side through pricing. It is in its own interest.

Subandrio says that they apparently misunderstood the Soviet side's proposal regarding the compensation of Soviet specialists.

A.N. Kosygin says that he assumed as much.

Subandrio notes that regarding the so-called civilian goods, he would like to emphasize the supply of tankers. Tankers are needed by Indonesia to refuel planes with fuel in open sea areas around West Irian. General Hidayat remains here, and the Indonesian side would like to count on A.N. Kosygin's assistance.

A.N. Kosygin states that tankers have been provided on favorable terms already, and that they should proceed as agreed. There is no need to change the conditions, and the expenses here are not significant, as it is only about two tankers.

N.S. Khrushchev says that if Subandrio finds it challenging to negotiate with Kosygin, it is even more difficult for Khrushchev.

Subandrio continues that although he fears potential accusations of "robbery,"

however, he will nevertheless bring up another issue - the Indonesian side is asking to ease payment conditions for equipment supplies in 1962-1963.

A.N. Kosygin says that Soviet specialists have examined this matter twice. The issue concerns 22 million rubles annually, excluding annual interest. We consider this sum small and not burdensome for Indonesia's economy. For instance, we purchase 60,000 tons of rubber from Indonesia but could buy 250,000 tons. It should also be taken into account that we make certain plans that take into account all our revenues. Therefore, the Soviet side requests to drop this issue.

N.S. Khrushchev jokingly remarks that it is disadvantageous to raise such questions. If you take loans, you have to pay them back, or it will be more difficult to get new ones.

Subandrio says that if the Soviet side does not find it possible to meet this request, he withdraws this issue. The reason for making such a request is that the years 1963-64 will be difficult for Indonesia, and, in addition, the situation has deteriorated due to last year's drought and this year's floods.

A.N. Kosygin says that we take all this into account and, therefore, postpone the payments to a later date. There is no need to break the agreement.

N.S. Khrushchev asks to convey to President Sukarno that the Soviet Union has experimentally produced synthetic rubber, the quality of which exceeds that of natural rubber. This comes as President Sukarno made a bet with him, Khrushchev, that it was impossible to create synthetic rubber with properties equal to natural rubber and lost the bet.

Subandrio mentions that he would like to draw the Soviet side's attention to the desirability of purchasing a larger quantity of Indonesian goods, such as tea, coffee, copra, etc.

A.N. Kosygin suggests that these matters should be considered by our foreign trade organizations.

Subandrio inquires about the Soviet side's opinion on Indonesia's proposal to establish an industry for producing weapons based on the Indonesian government's decision to standardize arms according to Soviet models.

A.N. Kosygin mentions that he reported this matter to N.S. Khrushchev, who responded positively to the idea. This issue should be clarified and further discussed in the future.

The conversation lasted 1 hour and 50 minutes. From the Indonesian side the meeting was attended by: General Hidayat, the Head of the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Supeni, and the Indonesian Ambassador to the USSR, Malik. From the Soviet side - comrades A.N. Kosygin, A.A. Gromyko, and M.V. Zakharov.

Written down by: /Signature/
(Yu. Vinogradov)

2-kl/ts
08.05.62