

October 2, 1959

Discussion between N.S. Khrushchev and Mao Zedong

Citation:

"Discussion between N.S. Khrushchev and Mao Zedong", October 2, 1959, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Archive of the President of the Russian Federation (APRF), f. 52, op. 1, d. 499, ll. 1-33, copy in Volkogonov Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Translated by Vladislav M. Zubok.
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112088>

Summary:

Khrushchev and Mao discuss current political situations in Tibet, India, Indochina and Taiwan.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

Present at the conversation: Cdes. M.A. Suslov and A.A. Gromyko.

Cdes: Deputy Chairmen of the CC CCP Liu Shaoqi, Zhao Enlai and Lin Biao; Members of the Politburo Peng Zhen and Chen Yi; Member of the Secretariat Wan Xia Sang.

Today, together with cde. M.A. Suslov and A.A. Gromyko, I paid a visit to Mao Zedong at his request in his residency.

Mao Zedong: We acquainted ourselves with the content of the message from Eisenhower to you, Cde. Khrushchev, which at your instruction was passed to us this morning.

N.S. Khrushchev: Good. Besides, we would like to acquaint you with the excerpt concerning China from my conversation in the US with President D. Eisenhower on 27 September 1959, and after that let us exchange opinions on the issue regarding my trip to the US and on the issues of relations with America. Most advisable would be if the above mentioned excerpt from my conversation with Eisenhower would be translated here orally by the interpreter.

The interpreters Yang Ming Fu and Li Yue Zhen translate orally the aforementioned excerpt from my conversation with Eisenhower.

The Chinese paid greatest attention to the issue of detention of 5 Americans in China, as well as the remark by Eisenhower about the reason for which the USSR did not take the same position on the Taiwan question as on the German question.

N.S. Khrushchev (after the translation ended): It is clear why Eisenhower was in a hurry to send his message to China.

Mao Zedong: As far as I understand it, the meaning of Eisenhower's observations can be summarized as follows: that moderate and restrained policy should be conducted.

N.S. Khrushchev: Yes.

Mao Zedong: Eisenhower also says that 45 countries allegedly recognize Taiwan and there are smaller number of [countries that recognize] us, and [that] war is unnecessary. There are positive points in Eisenhower's dispatch, in particular his observation that one should not let war break out. We also do not want war.

N.S. Khrushchev: You understood this correctly. I would like to emphasize that there is a thought in Eisenhower's message which implies not removing forever, only postponing the resolution of the Taiwan issue. The main idea of the Eisenhower message is that there should be no war. We do not want war over Taiwan.

Mao Zedong: Taiwan is an internal PRC issue. We say that we will definitely liberate Taiwan. But the roads to liberation may be different - peaceful and military. Zhou Enlai declared at the Bandung conference in 1955 that China is ready to conduct negotiations with the US. In effect, since then there have been talks between Americans and us, first in Geneva, then in Warsaw. At first, the representatives at these talks met once a week, then once every two weeks, and recently once a month. Both sides do not want to derail the talks. For a while the Americans attempted to derail the talks. We declared that it was bad and set the terms for its resumption. The Americans declared that they were also in favor of continuing the talks, but they could not accept the "ultimatum" schedule. We disagreed. Then, after our shelling of the off-shore Chinese islands Quemoy and Matsu, the talks resumed. We Chinese

always put forth the following idea at the talks: Americans, please, leave Taiwan, and after that there will not be any problems between us. We would then begin resolving the remaining issues with Jiang Jieshi [Chiang Kai-shek] on the basis of negotiations. Jiang Jieshi does not want the Americans to leave. The US, in turn, is afraid that Jiang Jieshi may establish ties with the PRC. There were military actions in this region but they did not constitute war. In our opinion, let Taiwan and other islands stay in the hands of the Jiang Jieshi-ists for ten, twenty and even thirty years. We would tolerate it.

N.S. Khrushchev: I would like to say that at the first lunch meeting at the Soviet embassy in the USA, Eisenhower said that they, the Americans, had been negotiating with the PRC for a number of years and there were no results, and that the Chinese did not even agree to liberate five Americans that were in confinement in the PRC, and this complicated the situation and seriously irritated the American people. Moreover, Eisenhower told me, let all the Chinese that live in the US leave, if they like, we will not hold them back. Eisenhower also told me that there was no use for me to go to China.

Mao Zedong: China cannot be equaled with Germany, not only because the population of Taiwan is considerably smaller than the population on the Chinese mainland, but also because China was not a defeated country at the end of World War II, but among the victorious powers. Germany was divided into two states as a result of the Potsdam Agreement. In Korea, the 38th parallel was also established per agreement between Kim Il Sung and us, on one side, and Americans on the other. Vietnam was divided into North and South in accordance with the Geneva agreements. As for Taiwan is concerned, there was no decision on it at any international conference. The appearance of Americans on Taiwan arouses discontent not only in socialist countries, but also in England, in the US itself and other countries.

N.S. Khrushchev: Eisenhower understands this. But the problem is that he must first recognize the Chinese Revolution, and then the Chinese government. And recognize the Revolution is what he does not want.

Mao Zedong: Yes, this is true. The US understand[s] this, but they want to conduct talks in their direction. The US government hinted that the PRC should make a declaration on the non-use of violence in the Taiwan question. The Americans want to receive guarantees on the non-use of arms, but as for them, they intend to do there whatever they want.

N.S. Khrushchev: I did not even know that the PRC holds five Americans in captivity. Is this true? In the conversation with Eisenhower I only said that, as a matter of friendly advice, I could touch on this question in Beijing.

Zhou Enlai: On 1 August 1956, the Americans and we reached an agreement in Geneva according to which Americans who had long lived in the PRC (immigrants), could be returned to the US. However, we stipulated that if these people committed any crime, they could be arrested. Chinese law also stipulates that if a prisoner behaves well in prison, his sentence might be reduced. The second category of people on which agreement was reached to allow them the right of exit from the PRC were prisoners of war. A US plane shot down over China in the area of Andung, not in Korea. 18 US military personnel who were on this plane were taken prisoners. Subsequently we set them all free. You recall that the question of American prisoners of war was discussed by the United Nations, and that in 1955 UN General Secretary Dag Hammarskjöld came to the PRC on this business. Following Hammarskjöld, [French Prime Minister] Mendes-France also came [to discuss] the same question. Via the British, the Americans informed us that they would like to hold talks with the PRC. We agreed to it and the talks began. We took the initiative and released 13 American

prisoners of war. Therefore at the conference in Geneva the Americans had no axe to grind with us. After this there were two more Americans, Fekto and Downey, who were in our prisons; they are the agents of the US Central Intelligence Agency and were caught red-handed. Their plane was shot down when they tried without landing to raise their spies onboard with a special rig. A Chinese court sentenced them to lengthy prison sentences: one to life in prison, the other to 20 years in prison. When Hammarskjold came to the PRC, he said that negotiations about the fate of these Americans was not part of his mission. The remaining three are people who lived permanently in China and were arrested for conducting espionage activities. We had overall something like 90 Americans. Most of them we released and now there are only five persons in prison in the PRC. All of them are spies, and, according to the Chinese law, they are subject to imprisonment. We believe that we, Chinese, let too many Americans go.

N.S. Khrushchev: This is the first time I am hearing about this. But if you want to hear my opinion, we, if we were you, would have acted differently. The Americans who are imprisoned in the PRC should, if you do not take the course on confrontation, either be expelled or traded for counterparts. Lenin did it at his time and was correct. If one, so to say, would "tease geese", then, of course, the Americans should be kept in detention. At some point we exchanged [Mattias] Rakosi for one of the Hungarian spies we detained. In a word, in our opinion, the Americans that you hold in prison should better be set free.

Mao Zedong (with obvious displeasure and testily): Of course, one can set them free or not, and we will not release Americans now, but we will do it at a more appropriate time. After all, the Americans sent a large number of our volunteers [who fought in] Korea to Taiwan, and a great deal of the fighters from the DPRK [Democratic People's Republic of Korea] army they sent to South Korea.

N.S. Khrushchev: Good. This is your internal affair. We do not interfere. But your attitude and the fact that you probably took offense at us complicates the exchange of opinions. I would like to emphasize that I am not a representative of the US and not a mediator on behalf of the Americans. I am a representative of my own Soviet socialist state, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. If I touched on this issue, I did it only because I wanted to sort it out and to lay before you our point of view, since this issue stirs up the international situation.

Mao Zedong: That means it complicates life for the Americans.

N.S. Khrushchev: This issue also complicates our life. We have more substantial grounds to present our claims to the US. After all, they detain a big number of the so-called displaced persons [peremeschennikh lits]. The weakness of our position stems from the fact that many of these people do not want to return to the USSR. Of course, we did not discuss with the Americans the issue of setting free the Americans who are imprisoned in the PRC. I only promised Eisenhower to raise this question in the form of a friendly advice during my stay in the PRC. And the Americans raised this question only indirectly.

Mao Zedong: The issue of Taiwan is clear, not only will we not touch Taiwan, but also the off-shore islands, for 10, 20 and perhaps 30 years.

N.S. Khrushchev: Taiwan is an inalienable part, a province, of China, and on this principled question we have no disagreements. As for the five Americans, we would resolve it differently. You are saying that you will live without Taiwan for 10, 20, and even 30 years. But here the main issue is about tactics. The Taiwan question creates difficulties not only for the Americans, but also for us. Between us, in a confidential way, we say that we will not fight over Taiwan, but for outside consumption, so to say, we state on the contrary, that in case of an aggravation of the situation because

of Taiwan the USSR will defend the PRC. In its turn, the US declare that they will defend Taiwan. Therefore, a kind of pre-war situation emerges.

Mao Zedong: So what should we do then? Should we act as the US says, that is declare the non-use of force in the area of Taiwan and move towards turning this issue into an international issue?

Zhou Enlai: As far as the Taiwan question is concerned, we should draw a clear line between its two aspects: relations between the People's Republic of China and Taiwan are an internal issue, and relations between China and America regarding the Taiwan issue this is the international aspect of this problem.

N.S. Khrushchev: This is clear, and this is how we spoke with Eisenhower, as you could see from the excerpt of the record of my conversation with the President. To be sure, every question has many sides to it. The main issue - what should be put in the beginning [kakoe poloshit nachalo]. A while ago Lenin created the Far Eastern Republic in the Far East of the Soviet Union, and Lenin recognized its [sovereignty]. Keep in mind that this republic was established on the territory of the Soviet Union. It was unbelievable, but Lenin temporarily put up with this. Later, as it ought to be, the Far Eastern Republic merged with the Soviet Union.

We do not have proposals regarding the Taiwan Question, but we would think you ought to look for ways to relax the situation. We, being your allies, knew about the measures you undertook on the Taiwan Question, and today I am hearing for the first time about some of the tenets of your position in this area. Should it be appropriate for us as allies to exchange opinions on all these questions that might involve not only you, but also your friends into events? We could search for ways to promote the relaxation of international tensions without causing damage to the prestige and sovereign rights of the PRC.

Mao Zedong: Our General Staff informed you about our intentions in the Taiwan Question through your chief military adviser whom we asked to relay everything to the USSR Ministry of Defense. I would like to clarify right away that we did not intend to undertake any large-scale military actions in the area of Taiwan, and only wanted to create complications for the United States considering that they got bogged down in Lebanon. And we believe that our campaign was successful.

N.S. Khrushchev: We hold a different opinion on this question.

Mao Zedong: Although we fire at the off-shore islands, we will not make attempts to liberate them. We also think that the United States will not go to war because of the off-shore islands and Taiwan.

N.S. Khrushchev: Yes, Americans will not go to war because of Taiwan and the off-shore islands. We are familiar with the content of the instructions that were given to [John Foster] Dulles when he went to a meeting with Jiang Jieshi. If you are interested to see this document, we can show it to you. As for the firing at the off-shore islands, if you shoot, then you ought to capture these islands, and if you do not consider necessary capturing these islands, then there is no use in firing. I do not understand this policy of yours. Frankly speaking, I thought you would take the islands and was upset when I learned that you did not take them. Of course, this is your business, but I am speaking about it as an ally.

Mao Zedong: We informed you about our intentions regarding Taiwan a month ahead, before we began shelling the off-shore islands.

N.S. Khrushchev: He reported to us not about your policy on this issue, but about some separate measures. We expressed our position, and now it is your business, whether to agree with us or not. We do not quite understand your policy in international issues. The issues of international policy we must coordinate. You perhaps should think if it is necessary to exchange opinions through the channels of foreign ministries on major political issues where we have no agreement.

Mao Zedong: As I already said, we informed you about our intentions through your General Staff. However, I would like to know what is your opinion on what we ought to do.

N.S. Khrushchev: We stand for relaxation of tensions. We only wanted the people to understand that we stand for peace. It is not worth shelling the islands in order to tease cats.

Mao Zedong: This is our policy. Our relations with Jiang Jieshi and with the Americans are two different things. With the United States we will seek to resolve issues by peaceful means. If the United States does not leave Taiwan, then we will negotiate with them until they go from there. The relationship with Jiang Jieshi is our internal question and we might resolve it not only by peaceful, but also other methods. As far as the creation of the Far Eastern republic is concerned, and also the fact that at some point Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia were separated from the Soviet Union, you should keep in mind that in these cases there was no foreign intervention.

N.S. Khrushchev: The issue of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, Poland, Georgia, Armenia - this is an issue of a completely different nature. This is an issue of national self-determination. As for the Far Eastern republic, it was part of Russia.

Mao Zedong: The Taiwan Question is very complex.

N.S. Khrushchev: We have a common understanding of the question of Taiwan. At the present time there is only [a difference on] the question of tactics. You always refuse to work out a policy on this question that we could understand. You might think that we interfere into your internal affairs, but we only express our considerations. In this regard I would remark that we do not know what kind of policy you will have on this issue tomorrow.

Mao Zedong: We do not want war with the United States.

N.S. Khrushchev: One should not pose the issue this way. Neither you nor I want war - this is well known. The problem is that not only does the world public opinion not know what you might undertake tomorrow, but also even we, your allies, do not know it.

Mao Zedong: There could be two ways here. The first of them to do what the Americans demand, i.e. to provide a guarantee on the non-use of force regarding Taiwan. The Americans long ago posed the question and told us about it via Eden as early as March 1955. The second way is to draw a clear line between our relations with the United States and the relations with the Jiang-Jieshi-ists. As to the relations with Jiang Jieshi, here any means should be used, since the relations with Jiang Jieshi are our internal matter.

After a one-hour break the exchange of opinions resumed.

Mao Zedong: What should we do?

Zhou Enlai: We should continue.

Mao Zedong: To do what the Americans propose is not too good for us. And the Americans do not want to reciprocate, to do what we want.

N.S. Khrushchev: You are leaving us in an awkward position. You frame the question as if we support the position of Americans, while we stand on our Soviet communist position.

Mao Zedong: Perhaps we should postpone this question indefinitely. Everyone sees that we are not close to the United States and that the United States, not us, send[s] its fleet to our coast.

N.S. Khrushchev: One should keep in mind that we also are not without sin. It was we who drew the Americans to South Korea. We should undertake such steps that would allow the Americans to respond with their steps in the direction of a relaxation of the situation. We should seek ways of relaxing of the situation, to seek ways to ameliorate the situation. You know that when the events in Hungary took place, our hand did not waver to deliver a decisive crack-down on the counterrevolution. Comrade Liu Shaoqi was then with us and we together resolved this question. If it becomes necessary again, then we will carry out one more time our internationalist communist duty, and you should have no doubts about it. We would think that one should work out a whole system, a staircase of measures, and in such a way that people would understand us. After Stalin's death we achieved a lot. I could tell about a number of points on which I disagreed [with Stalin]. What did Stalin leave for us? There were [anti-aircraft] artillery around Moscow that was ready to open fire any moment. We expected an attack at any minute. We succeeded in liquidating such a situation and we are proud of this. Keep in mind that we achieved [the present-day] situation without giving up on any principled positions. We raised this issue also because we do not understand your position, do not understand in particular your conflict with India. We had a dispute with Persia on border issues for 150 years. 3-4 years ago we resolved this issue by transferring to Persia some part of our territory. We consider this issue as follows: five kilometers more land we have or five kilometers less - this is not important. I take Lenin's example, and he gave to Turkey Kars, Ardahan and Ararat. And until today area a part of the population in the Caucasus are displeased by these measures by Lenin. But I believe that his actions were correct. I am telling about all this to show you that for us this territorial issue was not insurmountable. You have had good relations with India for many years. Suddenly, here is a bloody incident, as result of which [Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal] Nehru found himself in a very difficult position. We may say that Nehru is a bourgeois statesman. But we know about it. If Nehru leaves, who would be better than him? The Dalai Lama fled from Tibet, he is a bourgeois figure. This issue is also not clear for us. When the events in Hungary took place, then Nehru was against us, and we did not take offense at him, because we did not expect anything from him as a bourgeois statesman. But although he was against it, this did not prevent us from preserving good relations with him. If you let me, I will tell you what a guest should not say the events in Tibet are your fault. You ruled in Tibet, you should have had your intelligence [agencies] there and should have known about the plans and intentions of the Dalai Lama.

Mao Zedong: Nehru also says that the events in Tibet occurred on our fault. Besides, in the Soviet Union they published a TASS declaration on the issue of conflict with India.

N.S. Khrushchev: Do you really want us to approve of your conflict with India? It would be stupid on our part. The TASS declaration was necessary. You still seem to be able to see some difference between Nehru and me. If we had not issued the TASS declaration, there could have been an impression that there was a united front of

socialist countries against Nehru. The TASS declaration turned this issue into one between you and India.

Mao Zedong: Our mistake was that we did not disarm the Dalai Lama right away. But at that time we had no contact with the popular masses of Tibet.

N.S. Khrushchev: You have no contact even now with the population of Tibet.

Mao Zedong: We have a different understanding of this issue.

N.S. Khrushchev: Of course, that is why we raised this issue. One could also say the following: both you and we have Koreans who fled from Kim Il Sung. But this does not give us ground to spoil relations with Kim Il Sung, and we remain good friends. As to the escape of the Dalai Lama from Tibet, if we had been in your place, we would not have let him escape. It would be better if he was in a coffin. And now he is in India, and perhaps will go to the USA. Is this to the advantage of the socialist countries?

Mao Zedong: This is impossible; we could not arrest him then. We could not bar him from leaving, since the border with India is very extended, and he could cross it at any point.

N.S. Khrushchev: It's not a matter of arrest; I am just saying that you were wrong to let him go. If you allow him an opportunity to flee to India, then what has Nehru to do with it? We believe that the events in Tibet are the fault of the Communist Party of China, not Nehru's fault.

Mao Zedong: No, this is Nehru's fault.

N.S. Khrushchev: Then the events in Hungary are not our fault, but the fault of the United States of America, if I understand you correctly. Please, look here, we had an army in Hungary, we supported that fool Rakosi - and this is our mistake, not the mistake of the United States.

Mao Zedong: How can you compare Rakosi to the Dalai Lama?

N.S. Khrushchev: If you like, you can to a certain degree.

Mao Zedong: The Hindus acted in Tibet as if it belonged to them.

N.S. Khrushchev: We know. As you know, Nepal wanted to have a Soviet ambassador, but we did not send there for a long time. You did the same. This is because Nehru did not want that Soviet and Chinese ambassadors were there. This should not come as a surprise - nothing else can be expected from Nehru. But this should not be a grounds for us for breaking off the relations.

Mao Zedong: We also support Nehru, but in the question of Tibet we should crush him.

N.S. Khrushchev: Why did you have to kill people on the border with India?

Mao Zedong: They attacked us first, crossed the border and continued firing for 12 hours.

Zhou Enlai: What data do you trust more, Indian or ours?

N.S. Khrushchev: Although the Hindus attacked first, nobody was killed among the Chinese, and only among the Hindus.

Zhou Enlai: But what we are supposed to do if they attack us first. We cannot fire in the air. The Hindus even crossed the McMahon line. Besides, in the nearest future [Indian] Vice President [Savrepalli] Radhakrishnan comes to China. This is to say that we are undertaking measures to resolve the issue peacefully, by negotiations. In my letter of 9 September to Nehru we provided detailed explanations of all that had occurred between India and us.

N.S. Khrushchev: Comrade Zhou Enlai. You have been Minister of Foreign Affairs of the PRC for many years and know better than me how one can resolve disputed issues without [spilling] blood. In this particular case I do not touch at all the issue of the border, for if the Chinese and the Hindus do not know where the borderline goes between them, it is not for me, a Russian, to meddle. I am only against the methods that have been used.

Zhou Enlai: We did not know until recently about the border incident, and local authorities undertook all the measures there, without authorization from the center. Besides, we are talking here about three disputed regions between China and India. The Hindus were the first to cross the McMahon line and were the first to open fire. No government of China ever recognized the McMahon line. If, for instance, the Finns attacked the borders of the USSR, wouldn't you retaliate?

M.A. Suslov: We do not have claims against the Finnish government.

N.S. Khrushchev: That the center knew nothing about the incident is news to me. I would tell you, what I was against. On 22 June 1941 Germans began their assault against the Soviet Union. Stalin forbade opening fire in response, and the instruction to open fire was sent only after some time. As Stalin explained, it might have been a provocation. Of course, it was Stalin's mistake. He simply got cold feet [on strusil]. But this case is absolutely different.

Zhu De: Hindus crossed the McMahon line that tears away 90 thousand square kilometers from China.

Chen Yi: After the revolt in Tibet there were several anti-Chinese, anti-communist campaigns in India. There were demonstrations against our Embassy in Dehli and the consulate in Calcutta; their participants reviled the leaders of the PRC and shouted anti-Chinese slogans. We did nothing like that, and the Indian Ambassador in the PRC had not the slightest pretext to claim [that we] were unfriendly.

N.S. Khrushchev: Our Soviet representatives abroad had much more fallen on them than yours. Since the establishment of our state not a few of Soviet ambassadors were killed abroad. And in the Soviet Union only a German ambassador was killed in 1918. True, at some point the windows in the embassies of the United States and Federal Republic of Germany were broken, but we organized it ourselves.

Chen Yi: Speaking of the effectiveness of efforts to pull Nehru to our side, our method will be more efficient, and yours is time-serving [opportunism-prisposoblenchestvo].

N.S. Khrushchev: Chen Yi is Minister of Foreign Affairs and he can weigh his words. He did not say it at random. We have existed for 42 years, and for 30 years we

existed alone [as a socialist country] and adjusted to nothing, but carried out our principled communist policy.

Chen Yi (in great agitation and hastily): The Chinese people evoked pity for a long time and during many decades lived under oppression of British, American, French and other imperialists. The Soviet comrades should understand this. We are now undertaking certain measures to resolve the conflict with India peacefully, and just one fact testifies to this, that perhaps Vice President of India Radhakrishnan will come to us in mid-October. We also have a certain element of time-serving. You should understand our policy correctly. Our line is firmer and more correct.

N.S. Khrushchev: Look at this lefty. Watch it, comrade Chen Yi, if you turn left, you may end up going to the right. The oak is also firm, but it breaks. I believe that we should leave this issue aside, for we have a different understanding of it.

Zhou Enlai: Comrade Khrushchev, even the Hindus themselves do not know what and how it occurred on the Indo-Chinese border.

Lin Biao: During the war between the Soviet Union and Fascist Germany, the Soviet Army routed the fascists and entered Berlin. This does not mean that the Soviet Union began the war.

N.S. Khrushchev: It is not for me, a lieutenant-general, to teach you, comrade Marshal.

M.A. Suslov: Comrade Lin Biao, you are trying to compare incomparable things. During the Patriotic War millions of people were killed, and here is a trivial incident.

Zhou Enlai: The Hindus did not withdraw their troops from where they had penetrated. We seek peaceful resolution of the conflict and suggested and do suggest to resolve it piece by piece.

N.S. Khrushchev: We agree with all that you are doing. It is what you have done before that we disagree with.

Zhou Enlai: The Hindus conducted large-scale anti- Chinese propaganda for 40 years until this provocation. They were the first to cross the border; they were the first to open fire. Could one still consider under these circumstances that we actually unleashed this incident?

N.S. Khrushchev: We are communists, and they are like Noah's Ark. You, comrade Zhou Enlai, understand it as well as I do.

M.A. Suslov: Noah's Ark in a sense that they have a pair of every creature.

Peng Zhen (in hasty agitation): Nasser has been abusing without reason the Soviet Union that delivers to him unconditional assistance. Here we should keep in mind the reactionary aspects of the national bourgeoisie. If you, Soviet comrades, can lash out at the national bourgeoisie, why we cannot do the same?

N.S. Khrushchev: Nobody says you cannot lash out - but shooting is not the same as criticism.

Peng Zhen: The McMahon line is a dirty line that was not recognized by any

government in China.

N.S. Khrushchev: There are three of us here, and nine of you, and you keep repeating the same line. I think this is to no use. I only wanted to express our position. It is your business to accept it or not.

Mao Zedong: The border conflict with India - this is only a marginal border issue, not a clash between the two governments. Nehru himself is not aware what happened there. As we found out, their patrols crossed the McMahon line. We learned about this much later, after the incident took place. All this was known neither to Nehru, nor even to our military district in Tibet. When Nehru learned that their patrols had crossed the MacMahon line, he issued the instruction for them to withdraw. We also carried out the work towards peaceful resolution of the issue.

N.S. Khrushchev: If this had been done immediately after the skirmish, the conflict would not have taken place. Besides, you failed to inform us for a rather long time about the border incident.

Liu Shaoqi: On 6 September I informed you through comrade [Soviet charge d'affaires in Beijing Sergei F.] Antonov about the situation on the border. Earlier we could not inform you, since we still had not figured it out ourselves.

Zhou Enlai: The TASS announcement was published before you received my letter to Nehru. It was passed to comrade Antonov on the afternoon of 9 September.

M.A. Suslov: It was probably done simultaneously, considering that the time difference between Moscow and Beijing is 5 hours.

A.A. Gromyko: The ambassador of India in the USSR told me that the Chinese letter not only fails to make things calmer, but also actually throws everything back.

M.A. Suslov: At the present moment the temperature has fallen and we can let this issue alone.

Mao Zedong (peevishly): The temperature has fallen thanks to your announcement?

M.A. Suslov: Not only, but also thanks to the decision of your parliament.

Liu Shaoqi: On 6 September I passed a message to you via comrade Antonov that within a week [we] would deliver retaliation to the Hindus.

M.A. Suslov: The decision of your parliament was considerably softer than your Note.

Peng Zhen: The delegates of the All-Chinese Assembly of People's Deputies asked me how one should understand the TASS announcement, was it that the senior brother, without finding out what was right and who was wrong, gave a beating to the PRC and India.

Wang Jiaxiang: But the first who began to fire were the Hindus, not us.

N.S. Khrushchev: Yes, they began to shoot and they themselves fell dead. Our duty is to share with you our considerations on the incident, for nobody besides us would tell you about it.

Zhou Enlai: There could be disputes and unresolved issues between the CCP and the CPSU, but for the outside consumption we always underline unity with the Soviet Union.

Lin Biao: The Hindus began to shoot first and they fired for 12 hours, until they spent all their ammunition. There could be a different approach to this issue, one might admit, but the facts are facts: 1) the Hindus were the first to cross the border; 2) the Hindus were the first to open fire; 3) the Hindus sustained fire during 12 hours. In this situation there might be two approaches to the issue: 1) the Hindus crossed the border and we have to beat retreat; 2) the Hindus cross the border and we offer a rebuff.

Mao Zedong: The rebuff was delivered on the decision of local military organs.

Lin Biao: There was no command from the top.

Mao Zedong: We could not keep the Dalai Lama, for the border with India is very extended and he could cross it at any point.

M.A. Suslov: You should have known in advance about his intentions and plots.

Mao Zedong: We wanted to delay the transformation of Tibet by four years.

N.S. Khrushchev: And that was your mistake.

Mao Zedong: The decision to delay the transformations was taken earlier, after the Dalai Lama visited India [in early 1959]. We could not launch an offensive without a pretext. And this time we had a good excuse and we struck. This is, probably, what you cannot grasp. You will see for yourselves later that the McMahon line with India will be maintained, and the border conflict with India will end.

N.S. Khrushchev: This is good. But the issue is not about the line. We know nothing about this line and we do not even want to know.

Mao Zedong: The border issue with India will be decided through negotiations.

N.S. Khrushchev: We welcome this intention.

Zhou Enlai: On 22 January you suggested to Nehru to conduct talks on the border issues. Then he disagreed with this. Today he agrees.

Mao Zedong: You attached to us two labels - the conflict with India was our fault, and that the escape of the Dalai Lama was also our error. We, in turn, attached to you one label time-servers. Please accept it.

N.S. Khrushchev: We do not accept it. We take a principled communist line.

Mao Zedong: The TASS announcement made all imperialists happy.

M.A. Suslov: Precisely on the contrary. This announcement and our recent measures promoted the relaxation of the situation. The imperialists would have been happy, had the relations between India and China been spoiled. We have the information

that Americans approached Nehru and offered him their services regarding the conflict between India and China. Our steps cooled the hot expectations of the reactionaries.

Lin Biao: The whole issue is about who was first to shoot, not who was killed.

Zhou Enlai: It follows from your reasoning that, if burglars break into your house and you beat them up, then you are guilty.

N.S. Khrushchev: Why may you criticize us, and the senior brother may not censure you. At one meeting with cde. Yudin you, comrade Mao Zedong, very sharply criticized the CPSU, and we accepted this criticism. Moreover, you left the session at the 8 th Congress of the CCP during the speech of comrade [Anastas] Mikoyan. This was a demonstrative gesture, and Mikoyan could have left also.

In fact, I can also pack my suitcases and leave, but I am not doing it. When the events in Hungary took place, comrade Zhou Enlai came to us and lectured us. He blamed us both for Bessarabia and for the Baltic countries. We received this lesson. It turns out that you may censure us, and we may not. There are even some members of the CC CPSU Presidium back home who say the following: there is a formula iothe socialist camp headed by the Soviet Union,lo but in reality one lacks even respect for observations of the CPSU. Aren't you talking to us too haughtily?

Mao Zedong: We expressed our observations to you in a confidential manner. And you this time expressed them in the same order. This is good. This will serve the right cause. But when you took a public stand (I have in mind the TASS announcement) this was not good.

A.A. Gromyko: The TASS announcement did nothing to push India away from the People's Republic of China (reads an excerpt).

Peng Zhen: We also must speak out. The Hindus were really the first ones to cross the border, to start shooting, they continued shooting for 12 hours. Comrade Mao Zedong has just said that nobody knew precisely what actually occurred on the Sino-Indian border.

N.S. Khrushchev: You do not tolerate objections, you believe you are orthodox, and this is where our haughtiness reveals itself. Chen Yi attached to us a label, and it is a political label. What ground does he have to do this?

Chen Yi: The TASS announcement was in support of India, in support of the bourgeoisie.

N.S. Khrushchev: You want to subjugate us to yourselves, but nothing will come out of it, we are also a party and we have our own way, and we are not time- servers towards anybody.

Mao Zedong: And what is then our way?

N.S. Khrushchev: We always believed and believe that you and we take one road and we regard you as our best friends.

Mao Zedong: I cannot understand what constitutes our mistake? Kerensky and Trotsky also escaped from you.

N.S. Khrushchev: The Dalai Lama escaped, and you are not guilty? Well, there were also similar mistakes and facts on our side. True, when we allowed Kerensky to escape from the USSR, it was our mistake, but one should keep in mind that this happened literally in the first days of the revolution. Lenin freed on parole generals Krasnov and Kaledin. As for Trotsky, it was Stalin who expelled him. Nehru may go over to the USA. He is among our fellow- travelers who go with us when it is to their advantage. When we delivered assistance to Nasser, we knew that he might turn against us. We gave him credits for construction of the high-altitude Aswan dam. This is tactics. Had we not given him this credit, Nasser would have ended up in America's embrace.

Mao Zedong: You only see our "threatening gestures," and fail to see the other side our struggle to pull Nehru over to our side.

N.S. Khrushchev: We are not confident that Nasser will hold out with us for long. There is only a very fine thread connecting us and it can break off at any moment.

Chen Yi: I am outraged by your declaration that "the aggravation of relationship with India was our fault."

N.S. Khrushchev: I am also outraged by your declaration that we are time-servers. We should support Nehru, to help him stay in power.

Mao Zedong: The events in Tibet and the border conflict - these are temporary developments. Better that we end here the discussion of these issues. Could we assess the relationship between us as follows, that on the whole we are united, and some differences do not stand in the way of our friendship?

N.S. Khrushchev: We took and do take this view.

Mao Zedong: I would like to introduce a clarification - I never attended the session at the 8th Congress when comrade Mikoyan spoke. I would like to speak to Mikoyan personally.

N.S. Khrushchev: You skipped that session precisely because Mikoyan spoke there. Zhou Enlai once delivered to us a fair lecture. He is a good lecturer, but I disagree with the content of his lecture.

Liu Shaoqi: We never told anybody about our disagreements, not to even any fraternal party.

N.S. Khrushchev: This is good, this is correct. You gave us the first lesson, we heard you, and you must now listen to us. Take back your political accusations; otherwise we spoil relations between our parties. We are your friends and speak the truth. We never acted as time- servers with regard to anybody, even our friends.

Chen Yi: But you also lay two political accusations at our door, by saying that both the aggravations of relations with India and the escape of Dalai Lama were our fault. I believe that you are still acting as time-servers.

N.S. Khrushchev: These are completely different matters. I drew your attention only to specific oversights and never hurled at you principled political accusations, and you put forth precisely a political accusation. If you consider us time-servers, comrade Chen Yi, then do not offer me your hand. I will not accept it.

Chen Yi: Neither will I. I must tell you I am not afraid of your fury.

N.S. Khrushchev: You should not spit from the height of your Marshal title. You do not have enough spit. We cannot be intimidated. What a pretty situation we have: on one side, you use the formula headed by the Soviet Union, on the other hand, you do not let me say a word. What kind of equality we can talk about? That is why we raised the question at the 21st Congress of the CPSU about the repeal of the formula the socialist camp headed by the Soviet Union. We do not want any Party to stand at the head. All communist parties are equal and independent. Otherwise one is in a false situation.

Mao Zedong (in a conciliatory manner): Chen Yi speaks about particulars, and you should not generalize.

Wang Jiaxiang: The whole matter is about wrong translation. Chen Yi did not speak of time-serving as some kind of doctrine.

N.S. Khrushchev: We shot down not only one American plane and always said that they crash by themselves. This you cannot brand as time-serving.

M.A. Suslov: Now you are moving toward negotiations between you and India. This is good.

A.A. Gromyko: Is there a need that the PRC makes a declaration that would promote a relaxation in the situation? I am making a reservation that I am saying this without a preliminary exchange of opinions with cde. Khrushchev.

Zhou Enlai: There is no need to make such a declaration. We informed the Hindus that Vice President Radhakrishnan might come to us at his convenience in the period from 15 October until 1 December.

N.S. Khrushchev: I would also like to express an idea that has materialized just now with regard to the question of the visit of the Vice President. Would there be no bewilderment, if it were the Vice President, and not the President and Prime Minister [i.e., Nehru], to come to the PRC?

Zhou Enlai: The Hindus themselves offered the candidacy of Radhakrishnan. The President and Prime Minister of India sent us best wishes on the 10th anniversary of the PRC. In reply to the address we will remind them again about the invitation of Radhakrishnan to come to the PRC.

Mao Zedong: "Pravda" published only an abridged version of Zhou Enlai's letter to Nehru, and the TASS announcement was published in full. Perhaps we now stop discussing this issue and shift to Laos?

N.S. Khrushchev: Good, let us do this, but I have not a slightest interest in this matter, for this is a very insignificant matter, and there is much noise around it. Today Ho Chi Minh came to see us and had a conversation with us about Laos. I sent him to you, for you should be more concerned with this. During the events in Hungary and Poland cdes. Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai came to us. Cde. Liu Shaoqi and I held different, sometimes diametrically opposed positions. During several days we could not work out a common opinion. Our positions shifted, but then we reached agreement and resolved the matter well.

Mao Zedong: We are against an escalation of fire in Laos.

N.S. Khrushchev: We are also against it.

Liu Shaoqi: The Minister of Defense of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam has a plan to expand the struggle in Laos. Ho Chi Minh is against this plan, against an expansion of military activities. We support his stand.

N.S. Khrushchev: We should not expand military actions in Laos, for in this case the Americans will come. Then they will stand on the border with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and will certainly undertake provocations against the DRV. Therefore, they will be located in the immediate vicinity of the DRV, while we are removed quite substantially from the DRV. If the situation gets complicated there, the Americans could very quickly crush the DRV and we would not have time to undertake anything. In our opinion, we should advise the Vietnamese comrades not to expand military actions in Laos.

Mao Zedong: Here we are in a complete agreement with you. We are in general against not only expansion of military actions in Laos, but also for preservation of the status quo in the area of Taiwan. I would like to repeat that in August 1958, when we began shelling the off-shore islands Jimmen [Quemoy] and Matsu, we did not intend at all to undertake any kind of large-scale military actions there.

Present at the conversation were Provisional Chargé d'Affaires of the USSR in the PRC, S.F. Antonov, Attaché of the Far Eastern Division of the Foreign Ministry of the USSR, R.Sh. Kudashev, and from the Chinese side interpreters Yan Min Fu and Li Yue Zhen. The conversation was recorder by S.F Antonov and R.Sh. Kudashev.

Signature: S. Antonov, 3 October 1959

R. Kudashev, 3 October 1959