

October 9, 1952

**Record of S. Radhakrishnan's Meeting with the FRG
President**

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Summary:

Radhakrishnan discusses German unification with the President of West Germany, touches on India's independent stances on foreign policy issues in China, Japan, and Korea, and speaks at length about Russia's internal policies. Radhakrishnan summarizes a previous discussion with Stalin, in detail, discussing Soviet approaches to religion (compared with Indian approaches), and Stalin's strong denial of accusations of aggression: Radhakrishnan says that he is "convinced that Stalin and Russia are gripped by sincere fears of a Western attack." Radhakrishnan concludes by expressing his hope that Germany can unify.

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Record

RE: Reception of the Vice President of the Indian Republic, Sir Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan

On 8 October 1952, the Federal President received the vice president of the Indian Republic, Sir Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, for a conversation lasting 45 minutes. Joining in the meeting were Indian Ambassador Subimal Dutt and, in addition, Department Head Dr. Kleiber, Section Head von Serwath and Section Members Bott and Dr. Werz.

First, Mr. R. conveyed to the Federal President greetings from the president of the Republic of India, the Indian government and the Indian people. They included the best wishes for the future of the federal president, the German government and the German people.

The Federal President cordially returned these greetings and wishes. After some introductory remarks, he asked the guest about the impressions he gained during his tenure as the Indian ambassador in Moscow.

Mr. R. said that his two and a half years in Moscow were twice interrupted by five-month teaching periods in Oxford, which had contributed to his physical and psychological health. In Moscow, he had better chances than ambassadors from other powers to establish contacts due to the special position held by the Republic of India. It had received its freedom from foreign dominance as late as 1947. In its foreign policy as well, it adopted independent positions, and particularly so on three most vital foreign policy issues of recent years: The question of the recognition of China, the Japanese peace treaty, and the Korea conflict. Due to the independence displayed on those issues, the Indian representative in Russia was not treated with the level of mistrust held towards others.

Following up, the federal president asked Mr. R. about the political situation in Russia. Its assessment is difficult for Germany, as it has no direct contacts and since apparently structural changes have occurred there.

Mr. R. emphasized that this process of changes is not yet over. Russia has still not arrived at its final form. An example for such structural changes is the position towards the church. He himself had asked Stalin why he had moved against the churches. Stalin responded to that: It was the objective of the Russian Revolution to eliminate Czarism and its political and psychological legacy. The Russian church resisted these efforts, and this is why measures had to be taken against it.

During World War II, Mr. R. continued, religion became a patriotic cause in Russia. According to his observations, today there are no longer any restrictions imposed on the practice of religion. On Sundays, and especially during Easter Holidays, churches are overcrowded like in no other country. He participated in a Baptist service attended by about 2,000 people, something he noticed nowhere in England.

Mr. R. had posed the question to Stalin whether dialectical-materialist Marxism is supposed to be an opponent of religion. Stalin responded to him with "no." Marxism is concerned with economic and political issues. A convinced Marxist can also be a religious person. As an example, Mr. R. mentioned the dean of Canterbury.

In this context, Mr. R. continued that a turn away from God is not a consequence of repressive measures by the state. As apparent in many countries on earth, such is a result of progressing materialism and the emptiness of a technological age. Many

churches had also gotten lost in superficialities and just turned into guardians of a certain social order. In contrast, founders of a religion like Christ, Buddha, and Gandhi were revolutionaries. Maybe, by applying its measures, the Russian state just wanted to finalize this process of turning away from God.

For 5,000 years India has been a country defined by religious feelings and the rejection of violence. For India, it is less important to achieve certain technological progress some years earlier than to cherish its spiritual and religious values which are, in Mr. R.'s opinion, the sole foundations of mankind's well-being. Buddha forsook all his personal wealth in order to save his soul. Gandhi covered himself with self-woven garments, fasted and did not speak a word for weeks in order to come closer to this state. For Pandit Nehru as well, material progress is not the only essential issue. It is also the attainment of spiritual values contained in Indian tradition, and in conjunction with what other religions and philosophers have to offer to the Indian people and the world. Nehru consequently follows this path and accordingly guides the course of Indian policy. He, Radhakrishnan himself, and the Indian government will undertake efforts to turn these guidelines into reality.

Pandit Nehru is a democrat indeed. Yet he has to be critical towards other democracies everywhere when practice is undermining democratic principles. As examples, R. mentioned South Africa and Indochina. India must insist that races are not oppressed, the weak are not suppressed and that violence may not be used.

For similar reasons, this Indian criticism is also addressed to Marxism. He posed the question to Stalin of why he suppresses individual freedom in his country. Stalin responded to that if you give peace and security to Russia, then I can in turn give freedom to the individual. Stalin remarked that the Russian Revolution was confronted by a coalition of fourteen states. Then Hitler attacked Russia with the pretext to fight Russian barbarism. Today, America is making efforts to form an alliance against Russia and rearm German and Japan in order to launch a new aggression against Russia.

Here, the Federal President interjected that aggression rather emanates from a power bloc with uniform tendencies consisting of Moscow and its satellite states than from an alliance of democracies with quite some differences in outlook and orientation.

Mr. R. stated that Stalin categorically denied any intentions of aggression towards him. If Russia really had wanted to attack, it could have done so during a much more favorable time when the Western countries were militarily significantly weaker. Mr. R. is convinced that Stalin and Russia are gripped by sincere fears of a Western attack. One has to find opportunities to alleviate this fear and build up a Russian perception of security.

In his conversation with Stalin, Mr. R. also hinted at the mistakes of Russian policy in Yugoslavia. Stalin responded to that at Yalta, Russia was conceded influence on the Balkan countries. Only when America attempted with its Marshall Plan to break individual countries like Yugoslavia and also Czechoslovakia from the Russian sphere of influence, Russia was forced to adopt respective countermeasures.

With strong emphasis, Mr. R. characterized problems like in the Balkans as peripheral in comparison to the fateful results of Germany's division. History has proven that dividing people who belong together will bear grave consequences. This had been the case in Ireland, it is showing in Korea and especially so in Germany. Germany is the most important nation in Europe, more so than France or Russia. Its reunification is relevant to the entire world. Despite military defeats and other temporary periods, Germany has in the past made major contributions to the world in technological, economic, scientific, and intellectual regards. In the future as well, it will be able to make such decisive contributions. In particular, India owes a lot to German science.

When he, Mr. R., studied for his M.A. in England, he read Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason" and subsequently a great number of works by German philosophers. India was connected to England for quite some time; still there are only two chairs for Indology in England, and they were filled with professors of German origin. In contrast, each German university has a chair for Indology. German philosophers have inspired Indian thinking.

The unfortunate division of Germany is sowing mistrust among the Germans. The Germans in the West become suspicious of the Germans in the East and vice versa. These tensions must be overcome. Peace in the world depends on whether Germany will be reunited. He will make his efforts and offers his prayers towards this reunification.

Bonn, 9 October 1952

[Signed] Werz