

October 29, 1964

**Conversation Record of Premier Zhou Enlai's
Meeting with the Five Ambassadors and Charge
d'affaires of Vietnam, Romania, Albania, Cuba, and
Korea**

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Summary:

Zhou Enlai evaluates Nikita Khrushchev's dismissal as Secretary of Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

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Contents:

Translation - English

Ministry of Foreign Affairs Top Secret Document

Conversation Record of Premier Zhou Enlai's Meeting with the Five Ambassadors and Charge d'affaires of the [Democratic Republic of] Vietnam, Romania, [People's Republic of] Albania, [Republic of] Cuba, and [Democratic People's Republic of] Korea to the [People's Republic of] China

(Not reviewed by Premier Zhou)

Request to the five ambassadors and charge d'affaires to convey to their respective party central committees and governments the suggestion by our party central committee and government for the 12 socialist countries to send their party and state representatives to the Soviet Union to celebrate the 47th anniversary of the October Revolution and to establish contact

Date and time: 29 October 1964, 7:00 p.m. to 8:10 p.m.

Venue: Fujian Room, Great Hall of the People

Guests: Vietnamese Ambassador Tran Tu Binh, Romanian Ambassador Dumitru Gheorghiu, Albanian Ambassador Nesti Nase, Cuban Ambassador Oscar Pino Santos, and North Korean Charge d'affaires ad interim Jeong Bong-gyu [Jong Pong Gyu]

Attendees: Wu Xiuquan, Qiao Guanhua, Yu Zhan

Interpreters: Liang Feng, Lu Jixin, Fan Chengzuo, Tang Bosheng, Tao Bingwei

Minutes: Xu Wende

Premier Zhou: I am very sorry to be late. I was held up by some unfinished discussions at another meeting. I invited the five ambassadors and charge d'affaires over to discuss the issue of changes that are happening in the Soviet Union. As of the 29th, it has been two weeks since the event occurred. We have some knowledge of the situation but very little understanding of what happened. Generally speaking, it is a good thing that Khrushchev has stepped down. Now, the Soviet party and government have criticized Khrushchev without naming names. A Pravda editorial touched on what Brezhnev and Kosygin said, and an official document will reportedly be issued, with word already spreading from the Italians. In short, there has been a change in the situation within the Soviet Union, and this change is not limited to the Soviet Union, but will also affect its fraternal countries and parties as well as the international communist movement and our common enemy—imperialism and its agents. To put it simply, change is a good thing.

There are also those among us who hold different views and I am referring to those among our people and party members, and not the party central committee. They have asked: is Khrushchev stepping down for real? Or is he going behind the scenes for now and returning again in future? This does not seem likely to us, as he had been stripped of all posts save for his party central committee membership. Only the party congress can revoke the central committee membership. Khrushchev's books have all been withdrawn. These few days, Khrushchev's books have also been withdrawn in the fraternal countries. For instance in Poland, all portraits of Khrushchev have been taken down. This is what can be surmised from the reports and articles, the stripping of his posts, and the removal of his books and portraits. All these prove that he had committed a mistake. Because he did something wrong, he was removed from his posts and criticized within the party, and he will be facing public censure. Hence, this does not seem to be a pretense.

We have people asking if there will be a second Khrushchev. We feel that it is impossible at the moment as he had just been criticized and no one would commit a greater error than he did. As for whether another Khrushchev will emerge in our fraternal countries several decades down the road, I cannot vouch for this. Perhaps your countries may dare to do so but not us. If we do not strictly educate the people and party members in Marxism-Leninism, another Khrushchev will emerge. We can now find little Khrushchevs and little revisionists in a given factory or local area. I am referring to the situation in our own party. Hence, what we are saying is, we think it is impossible for a second Khrushchev to emerge in the present Soviet Union.

A third view asks: Even if Khrushchev had been removed from his posts, the people (in power) now are still the ones who worked with him. Does this not make it a different broth but still the same old medicine (meaning that nothing had changed in essence)? We say that this argument is untenable. All of you here have probably never taken Chinese medicine before. If the medicine was not changed but the water was, the broth would have been diluted. Furthermore, we are now talking about removing a main component of the medicine. There are main and secondary ingredients in Chinese medicine, with one main herb and other supplementary herbs. If we removed the main herb, it would change the situation. Hence, the argument that this is a different broth but still the same old medicine is shaky.

There is a fourth view that sees the change as not too significant, not a 180-degree turn. It may not be so now but the direction has shifted. Those who studied trigonometry would know that with a slight change in direction, the lines would shift and would no longer be in coincidence (here, Premier Zhou used the word "coincidence" in English). Instead they would deviate and run in opposite directions. In short, there are changes, changes in position.

These are the views among our people and within the party and these are our responses. Due to such reasons, we have sent a congratulatory telegram to the new leaders of the Soviet Communist Party central committee and the Soviet government to convey our congratulations and hopes, and that is, we welcomed and supported such a move because it is a good thing. If we did not support this, we would have sent a telegram to persuade otherwise, and this was unconceivable. This is the first point. We gave them our support. As soon as we did so, we would have upset some people. First, our common enemy, the imperialists were very unhappy. The imperialist public opinion had plenty to say about this. This showed that they were afraid that the Chinese and Soviet Communist parties and the two countries, the various countries in the Socialist camp as well as the various parties in the Communist movement would reunite against the enemy and imperialism.

Indeed, [Cuban President Osvaldo] Dorticós happened to be in Moscow at the right time. Then came the Cuban-Soviet joint communiqué that criticized the American imperialist, opposed America's provocation of Cuba and endorsed Cuban [Prime Minister Fidel] Castro's five-point plan. The United States was very upset. Hence, the imperialists and their agents were very displeased. They saw this as a bad thing, not a good one. In contrary to our view, they were reluctant to see a change. They hoped that the change would have a limited effect and even reverse itself. The direction had shifted but they hoped that the lines would move back and be in coincidence once more. This is the attitude of imperialism and its agents.

Our rule of thumb is, whatever makes the imperialists happy does not benefit us. Whatever upsets them is to our benefit. Hence, we feel that since the imperialists and their agents hold such an attitude, we should have the opposite attitude. We support actions by the Soviet Union that have a positive meaning. That is the first thing. Second, we need to promote the development of this change. That is to say, now that the imperialists want them to revert to their original direction, we have to make them move like this (Premier Zhou gets up to walk in a perpendicular direction in

demonstration). The purpose of advancing this change is to reunite and face the enemy together, and this is of course on the basis of Marxism-Leninism and internationalism. This was also what we said in our telegram. To put it simply, the aim is to face the enemy together. Even if we cannot resolve the big issues, the enemy would be afraid and unhappy if we are united against them. As for whether the change is small, we would have to wait and see and this is permissible.

The Soviet Communist Party is now in a different predicament from us. Looking at what Brezhnev and Kosygin as well as the *Právda* editorial had said, there are both internal and external difficulties, and their situation is different from ours. Hence, change will happen slowly for them. We thus feel that we must move slowly on some things. This is workable, and it is a good thing so long as they gradually change. As all of you know, our party had adopted an erroneous line before, and correcting it was a gradual process and not something we could do in an instant. During the Zunyi conference in 1935 in which we reestablished the rightful leadership of Chairman Mao, he made a lot of effort to correct the mistakes made and went through a great deal of twists and turns. If you watch "The East is Red", a large-scale music and dance performance that we put up during our National Day, you will learn the vicissitudes of our history. Of course, the experiences of the Chinese Communist Party are not necessarily applicable in the Soviet context and no leader of such strength has emerged in the Soviet Union. But we should still do some work to drive them forward. This refers to what we had said about supporting them when they do something positive. Second, we must push them along the direction of positive change. Third, we have to adopt a "wait and see" stance on some matters. Of course, there would be some occasions when we might argue over the big issues, for instance during the General Council meeting of the World Federation of Trade Unions held in Budapest and the meeting of the Women International Democratic Federation held in Sofia, in which Romania and North Korea had participated in the debates. We cannot say that such debates about principle would not emerge and principles cannot be vague. But, for example in Beijing, our newspapers had stopped publishing articles about these debates since the 16th. This was because we wanted to wait and see. As for the prospects of development, we have to see how it goes. But our subjective efforts should be focused on developing in a favorable direction and uniting as one against the enemy. This is our view and it is entirely up to the fraternal parties to use it for your own reference and judgment. We have exchanged views on an individual basis in the past, and this time round, it is slightly more official, but it is still an exchange of views. Please convey them to your respective party central committees for their reference. Our party is also constantly studying and discussing this, but we are thinking of using an action to move this forward. Last night, Comrade Wu Xiuquan and myself represented our party central committee to speak to the Soviet Ambassador [Stepan V.] Chervonenko. I mainly said the following. I said: In accordance with the well wishes and hopes expressed in our congratulatory note, we are willing to establish contact with the party central committee and government of the Soviet Union. Our suggestions are: One, we are prepared to send a party and state delegation to commemorate the 47th anniversary of the October Revolution. If the Soviet party central committee and government are agreeable, we will decide whom to send. If the Soviet party central committee and government feel that there is some difficulty in this and are unwilling to receive us, we will offer a second suggestion: we hope to invite those in charge of the Soviet party central committee and government to come to Beijing for a meeting. As for the format of the meeting, whether it is open or otherwise, we urge the Soviet party central committee and government to give their suggestions, which we are willing to consider. This would fulfill our wish to establish mutual contact. Last night, I spoke with the Soviet ambassador and he said he would relay this home immediately. Today, our party central committee, after discussion, has sent Comrades Wu Xiuquan and Qiao Guanhua as well as myself to make a further suggestion to the five of you. The suggestion that we are making today, which is a proposal by the central committee of the Communist Party of China, is for the 12 fraternal parties and countries to take the initiative in sending party and state delegations to commemorate the 47th anniversary of the October Revolution and at the same time, make the necessary contact. The 12 socialist countries are: Cuba, North Korea, Vietnam, China, Mongolia,

Romania, Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland and the German Democratic Republic. The 12 countries shall all send party and state delegations. If everyone is agreeable, we can all make suggestions directly to the Soviet party central committee and government. Of course, you can also inform us at the same time. How senior should the representatives be? The central committee of the Chinese Communist Party thinks that it should preferably be someone at the premier level. We say "preferably" and not "definitely". For instance, we are not saying that it has to be Comrade Castro, we say "preferably" and not "definitely" because it is impossible for some countries to do so. Of course, we make this suggestion in light of some of the happenings this year. Why did we make this suggestion? We recalled Romania's invitation of the 12 countries to its National Day celebrations, and in this instance, we are swapping Romania for the Soviet Union. During China's National Day celebrations, we also took our Albanian comrades' advice to invite the 12 countries, i.e. substituting Romania for China (Premier Zhou tells the Romanian ambassador: You invited us, and we invited you in return). With these two instances, we think that there is a basis for such a suggestion and it is a reasonable one. There is one technical issue, which is, Romania was celebrating its 20th national day, and China, its 15th national day, and these were five- and ten-year milestones. The Soviet Union is celebrating its 47th anniversary and we think this is an issue of technicality. Our aim is to celebrate together so as to meet up and establish contact. We made contact in Beijing on 1 October and this makes it easy to explain. The motive overrides issues of technicality. The imperialists will fear when all 12 socialist countries congregate in Moscow. We all support the October Revolution without exception. As the large-scale music and dance performance "The East is Red" showed, when the first shot of the October Revolution was fired, the Chinese people embraced Marxism and all fraternal parties applauded. Hence, it is natural that we celebrate the October Revolution.

The second reason is that in the past, the Soviet party central committee and government under Khrushchev's leadership had broken all ties with our parties and governments. There is indeed this problem. For instance, our Romanian comrades had one condition: There can be contact only if Khrushchev admits his mistakes. Now that Khrushchev has stepped down, it means that he has admitted his mistakes. His portraits and books have been withdrawn and he has been removed from his posts. Objectively, he has been criticized for his mistakes, but to what extent, well, this is still the beginning. On this note, we really hope that our Albanian comrades can consider our suggestion. This is an opportunity for us to extend our hands forward and unite together to face the enemy, and we have taken the initiative. We have this suggestion, which we hope the five ambassadors and charge d'affaires can convey to your respective parties and governments. I would like to correct something that I said earlier. China is planning to send someone at the premier level. Please do not say that other parties should preferably send someone at the premier level. It is impossible for Cuba and North Korea to do so, because the premier is also the party leader. The circumstances are different for everyone. Let us put it this way instead. Please change it at your end. We have already mentioned the recent suggestion. Today, we inform you in advance of our further suggestion which we have yet to tell the Soviet ambassador. We will speak to the Soviet ambassador after informing all of you. I feel that this is an opportunity. Our party central committee has discussed this seriously and feels that it would be conducive to unity when confronting the enemy if we took the initiative. This is because our various parties have common faith that the overwhelming majority of the people, party members and cadres in the Soviet Union want revolution and that Khrushchev had stepped down and was removed from his posts precisely because of this. We go there now because we want to encourage the Soviet masses and cadres and make them feel heartened, while influencing their leaders and making the enemy—the imperialists and their agents—feel discouraged at the same time. Let us see if our comrades have any queries or doubts that they wish to raise about such a suggestion.

Cuban Ambassador: I wish to clarify one point. It was suggested that we should preferably send someone at the premier level. Who do you think is our best choice if not someone at the premier level?

Premier Zhou: The Chinese party has decided to send its premier over. It is up to the other parties whom they want to send. We have amended what we said as this request does not sound so appropriate. The central committee of the Chinese Communist Party had originally said it "hoped" [to see representatives at the premier level], but this is not too feasible. Do you all understand?

Romanian Ambassador: Yes we do, very much so.

Premier Zhou: Please convey this [to your countries]. Today is already the 29th, there is only one week left.

Vietnamese Ambassador: I would like to thank the Premier for sharing these words with us. We will relay this home immediately.

Albanian Ambassador: Should the further suggestion be conveyed to the Soviet ambassador?

Premier Zhou: We want the Soviet Union to extend the invitation. Our suggestion to the Soviet Union is to have them extend the invitation.

Albanian Ambassador: You told the Soviet ambassador that you would like them to extend the invitation.

Premier Zhou: We suggested that they extend the invitation. As for China, we are willing to go. Our party's vice chairman and premier will lead the delegation. We are only talking about China and we can only speak for ourselves. The premier level, which includes the vice premier in China's context, may not mean the same thing in other countries. Thus we have amended it. It may not be so for other countries. I will be leading the Chinese delegation.

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