

June 15, 1967

**Memorandum of Conversation between Assistant
Secretary of State M. Pešića with USSR Ambassador
I.A. Benediktov, June 15, 1967**

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Summary:

Minutes of conversation between Aid to the Yugoslav State Secretary Milorad Pesic and Soviet Ambassador to Yugoslavia Ivan A. Benediktov regarding Yugoslav Minister of Foreign Affairs Marko Nikezic's visit to India to discuss the Middle East crisis. The two leaders also discuss the opening of a direct communications line between Belgrade and Moscow.

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State Secretariat of Foreign Affairs
Cabinet of Assistant State Secretary
Conf. no. 422128
June 15, 1967

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Present: M. Karalyov, Secretary USSR Embassy and S. Petrović, aide in the Sector for the Soviet Union

Came for a courtesy visit

Without an introduction, he immediately asks what the results of Nikezić's visit to India are. Adds that the Indian ambassador here told him in a recent conversation that he does not consider Israel an aggressor. Benediktov wonders if this is the official position of the Indian government.

I say that the secretary of state's visit to Delhi is ongoing, and that comrade Nikezić had a meeting with Chagla yesterday, and that he will be received by Indira Gandhi today. I talk briefly about the results of the Nikezić-Chagla talks. I reiterate that on the occasion of the Israeli-Arab conflict, Chagla made a statement in the Indian parliament, followed by statements by Indira Gandhi and the Indian representative in the [UN] Security Council. All these statements are on the course of full Indian support for the Arabs.

Benediktov then talks about Chagla, with whom he had frequent meetings during his several-year-long stay in India. He thinks Chagla is a progressive man and to a certain degree favors cooperation with socialist countries. When he became the minister of foreign affairs, he underlined in his talks with Benediktov that India would continue to conduct progressive policy and strengthen its position as an independent country. This India's orientation is positive, but he thinks that it should not be lost from sight the fact that is necessary to continuously exert influence over Indira and other Indian officials because the US, by providing economic aid, puts intense pressure on India. The moral and political support of socialist and neutral countries is very important for India.

We talked about the Indian right's pressure on Indira and the current situation, particularly about Desai's stance who disagreed with Indira's statements on Israeli aggression. Benediktov says of Desai that after traveling to socialist countries he revised some of his views on India's cooperation with socialist countries. He has the impression that Desai has since become more constructive and ready to conduct national policy. After he became vice president, Desai assured him that no one should doubt India's continued policy of peace and nonalignment and to some extent expressed expectations that socialist countries would provide him with the necessary support. He argued strongly for the need for immediate disarmament efforts.

Allegedly, Desai also told him about the wrong and damaging theory of the Indian MFA that India's cooperation with the USSR, Yugoslavia, and socialist countries is one-sided, in favor of socialist countries that are at odds with China. Desai condemned these theories and underscored that friendship and comprehensive cooperation with socialist countries is necessary precisely for India, economically backward and insufficiently politically stable. Desai is an anticommunist, Benediktov says, but his foreign policy concepts contain acceptable settings.

Benediktov then asks if Boumediene was satisfied with the talks in Belgrade. I reply that, as far as I know, Algerians find being in Moscow useful in terms of clarifying positions, but one should keep in mind that Algerians have their own specific views on the entire Arab-Israeli conflict complex, especially Algeria's position.

Benediktov thinks reckless moves are often made in the Arab world, like this last one, Nasser's, and which have serious consequences, not only for the Arab world but also for socialist countries. This can make cooperation with the Arabs more difficult. Opinions and criticism are now being heard in the USSR, "particularly from above," that Arabs shouldn't have been given that much aid (particularly in military-technical material) because they are not capable to use it usefully and wisely. They had very modern Soviet weapons, but they suffered a heavy defeat in the war with Israel.

I ask Benediktov what impression Gromyko had of developments of the situation in

the Middle East during his recent visit to Cairo in May? Benediktov says that he is unaware of what kind of the impressions and opinions Gromyko returned from Cairo but adds that he knows for a fact that they warned the Egyptians of the dangers, but they did not believe them. At the same time, they advised Nasser not to start hostilities first. The USSR also warned Israel and the US, namely Johnson (Benediktov adds – a “hypocrite” whose words depart from deeds). It is obvious that Nasser misjudged his own position despite Soviet warnings. It is now very important that the Arabs, Benediktov says, don’t take any reckless steps, otherwise they would complicate the already difficult position of socialist countries, i.e., cause a change of balance of power of major powers in this region.

Regarding the upcoming extraordinary session of the UN General Assembly, Benediktov expects Yugoslavia’s role to be very significant.

He is looking forward to comrade Tito’s participation in the Moscow meeting on June 9 and in relation to that he says he follows writings of the world press.

From Moscow, he was instructed to transmit the following:

Regarding president Tito’s suggestion to Brezhnev to establish a special, direct government telephone line between Moscow and Belgrade, the Soviet side gives its principal consent and asks that an official request be submitted from the Yugoslav side. To my objection, whether this is necessary if the principal agreement is achieved, Benediktov says that it is needed because the [telephone] line to Belgrade goes via Romania and Bulgaria, and with these countries talks must be conducted.

Benediktov adds that in request we don’t have to invoke the proposal of the President of the Republic. He underscores that request is also needed because the Committee for State Security is in charge of this issue.

He also gives me a message for the President of the Republic, whom he could not visit because of his busy schedule:

In connection with the Soviet Air Force holiday, the USSR Ministry of Defense, The USSR Ministry of Civil Aviation, the USSR Ministry of Aviation Industry, and the CC of DOSAAF are inviting a Yugoslav delegation up to 5 people for 3 to 4-day visit to the USSR, which would attend an air show on July 9, on July 8 there would be a review of aviation technology on the ground. In the event of bad weather, the air show would be postponed, but by 8–10 days at most. The Soviet side asks for an reply.

Milorad Pešić

Delivered to: The General Secretariat of the President of the Republic

Cabinet of Comrade E. Kardelj

_____ Comrade K. Popović

_____ President of the Federal Assembly

_____ President of FEC

_____ Comrade M. Todorović

_____ Comrade I. Gošnjak

_____ State secretary of People’s Defense

_____ Comrade M. Nikezić

_____ Comrade N. Dizdarević

_____ Comrade M. Pavićević

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