

April 5, 1952
**Record of the Conversation of I.V. Stalin and
Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan**

Citation:

"Record of the Conversation of I.V. Stalin and Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan", April 5, 1952, Wilson Center Digital Archive, N.M.M.L., J.N. (S.4) Vol. No. 123 Pt. II, 294-297. Available on Revolutionary Democracy website on 11 December 2010.
<https://wilson-center.drivingcreative.com/document/119265>

Summary:

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Stalin discuss India's internal politics and stance on foreign policy. Radhakrishnan tells Stalin of India's recent elections and emphasizes that India shares the Soviet Union's stance against capitalism. Radhakrishna also puts forth the question of peaceful co-existence between capitalist and communist spheres, and the possibility for a neutral commission to replace the Cominform and UN. Stalin expresses doubt.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from MacArthur Foundation

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Transcript - English

TOP SECRET

Record of conversation at Ambassador Radhakrishnan's interview with Generalissimo Stalin on 5 April 1952.

The Ambassador began by saying that he wished to express his grateful thanks to the Generalissimo for receiving him at such short notice on the eve of his (Ambassador's) departure.

Stalin: When are you leaving?

Radhakrishnan: On Tuesday, the 8th.

The Ambassador went on to say that his stay of 2½ years in Moscow was most useful, and he had every courtesy and assistance from the Foreign Minister and his Deputies. He recalled the prompt and ready assistance which the Foreign Office and the Soviet government had rendered last year in the matter of the dispatch of wheat to India. When the Ambassador stressed that he was really grateful for the promptitude and readiness with which the Soviet Union had come to our aid in this, Stalin said: "There is nothing to be grateful about. We have only fulfilled our duty." The Ambassador remarked that many States did not have a proper conception of their duty, nor did they discharge it when they had.

The Ambassador then referred to the various Soviet delegations that had recently visited India and said that he felt that the Indian people got some idea of the Soviet achievements—what could be done by a people with determination and will.

Referring to internal matters, Dr. Radhakrishnan said that the country (India) was indeed passing through critical times. We had gotten rid of various forms of exploitation. We had rid ourselves of foreign domination, and we had gotten rid of princely rule. We hoped to tackle the problem of our landlords equally successfully.

"It would be good," said Stalin, "if you succeed in doing it."

The Ambassador then generally referred to our recent elections and said that for the first time in history, 175 million people were enfranchised of whom 105 million had voted.

"The women did not vote in your country," said Stalin, expressing doubt.

The Ambassador corrected the Generalissimo by stressing that not only did women actually vote in the elections, but the women voters had, if anything, shown a more progressive spirit. Dr. Radhakrishnan pointed out that we had a lady governor, a lady cabinet minister, and his own predecessor in Moscow, the Generalissimo would doubtless recall, had also been a lady. The elections, Dr. Radhakrishnan said, had been free and fair. There was no official interference of any sort, and many ministers were defeated.

On the political and economic situation in India, Ambassador Radhakrishnan said that India was as much against capitalist exploitation as Russia and it had the same economic objective. "But we wish to adopt peaceful parliamentary methods to achieve our aims, because our whole history has taught us that enduring progress should be of a peaceful character."

To this the Generalissimo said: "But the exploiters will never quit—they will very

seriously object to quitting.”

The Ambassador said that, in any case, we would try our own methods very hard, and if we succeeded it would be a great lesson to other nations.

Referring to our foreign policy, Dr. Radhakrishnan said that it was not unlike that of the Soviet Union in several matters—China, Japan, Korea, or, for that matter, the admission of other nations to the UN. “We are not with America and we are not with any power,” he stressed. “We act according to our sense of right and do not yield to any political or economic pressure.”

Since Stalin showed no hesitation to carry on the conversation, Dr. Radhakrishnan further said that Stalin was at one time reported to have said that if capitalism could adapt its production not to getting maximum profits, but to the systematic improvement of the masses of the people, then there would not be any crisis, but then that would not be capitalism. He asked Stalin if he was still of this view.

Stalin said that he once said something like this, but it was difficult for a capitalist to do without profits and it was a pity that the capitalists could not do without profits. If the capitalists gave up profits, he said, they would be giving up themselves.

Referring to the desirability of peaceful co-existence of the two systems, Dr. Radhakrishnan asked Stalin if the Soviet Union would be prepared to “give up the Cominform,” as it had at one stage given up the Comintern.

Stalin replied that this was of no importance whatsoever to the question of the co-existence of the two systems; the Cominform, he said, had not been created by the Soviet Union alone. Other countries had also shared in the creation of this body.

The Ambassador said nonetheless that in his view it would be a great gesture today if the Cominform were abolished.

Speaking about Germany, the Ambassador said that if the Soviet Union looked upon a UN Commission as necessarily pro-American, could they not agree to some sort of a neutral commission to see if conditions for free and fair elections existed in that country.

The Generalissimo said that the representatives of the four powers could appoint any commission they liked. The UNO had nothing to do with Germany, and only the four occupying powers according to the POTSDAM declaration could do these things. The UN had no right under its Charter to interfere.

The Ambassador asked whether Stalin would favor a neutral commission investigating the allegations of the use of bacteriological weapons in Korea.

Stalin said that he had not given thought to this. As far as they were concerned, he said, “to us it has been proved that they [the Americans] have attempted to try this out in Korea,” and said that a body of international lawyers had seen the evidence of this.

The Ambassador then asked if the Generalissimo would like to pose him any questions.

Generalissimo Stalin said that he had only one question, and that was about “our correspondent” in India. He turned to Vyshinsky and asked what “this complaint”

was. Vyshinsky explained that we had felt that Borzenko's articles were unfair and unnecessarily critical of the government of India, etc., and added that Prime Minister Nehru had also complained to Novikov^[i] about this (Perhaps this is not correct. We have been informed that the Foreign Secretary had seen the Soviet Ambassador).

"That is all right, recall him," Stalin said to Vyshinsky. "We will recall him," the Generalissimo said to the Ambassador, "If you don't like him, you tell us frankly. We assure you that he will be recalled" (Reading this, it may look like the dictatorial-touch; but this was said quite coolly and quite calmly and with no gestures whatsoever).

The Ambassador said that his own anxiety was that the good relations and friendship that we had built up here in Moscow should not be spoiled by Soviet representatives in India saying things which offend our national dignity.

"Are there such people?" Stalin asked.

"Yes," the Ambassador said, "that is how we feel about Borzenko and the Moscow Radio."

The Generalissimo again turned to Vyshinsky and quietly said, "Call him back."

The Ambassador then referred to his imminent return and his anxiety for preserving Indo-Soviet friendship. The Generalissimo said that he was glad of the latter. "Both you and Mr. Nehru are persons whom we do not consider to be our enemies. This will continue to be our policy, and you can count on our help." Then he went on, "Our people have been educated in the equal treatment of Asian people"—and he said this with some feeling. "The United States and Britain look at Asian peoples as backward and look down upon them. We treat all Asians as equals. It is this which helps us to conduct a correct policy. The Americans and the British treat them superciliously [sic]. Our policy helps us to have very different relations with the Asian peoples." The Generalissimo spoke these sentences slowly, deliberately, and with obvious feeling.

The Ambassador agreed generally with the sentiments expressed by the Generalissimo and said that Malaya, Indo-China, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, and Iran and South Africa are illustrations of a very different policy towards, what may be called, backward peoples. "Is this democracy?" he asked.

The Generalissimo smiled and said: "This is what they call democracy?"

The interview here ended with the usual greetings and with good wishes for the Ambassador on his return home.

^[i] Novikov was Soviet Ambassador in New Delhi at least from 1948 to 1952.