

**Minutes of the conversation between Comrade N. S. Khrushchev and U.S.  
Ambassador to the Soviet Union L. Thompson  
September 8, 1960**

After greeting each other, Thompson says that N.S. Khrushchev is probably aware of his conversation with A. A. Gromyko regarding the RB-47 aircraft incident.

N. S. KHRUSHCHEV answers affirmatively.

L. THOMPSON says that in this case he is not going to repeat the contents of that conversation. However, he would like, under the instructions of his government, to point out that the United States takes the situation of the captive RB-47 pilots held by the Soviet Union rather seriously. He further mentions that he was fully aware of the differing opinions of the U.S. and Soviet governments regarding the RB-47 incident. The U.S. government believes that the aircraft in question had not crossed the Soviet border. The American government is seriously concerned about this incident. Despite its hopes to reach an agreement regarding the disputes dividing the two countries, the U.S. government believes that the issue with this aircraft is making a negative impact on Soviet-American relations.

Further, the Ambassador thanks N. S. Khrushchev for seeing him despite his (Khrushchev's) imminent departure. That is why, he says, I will not take much of your time.

N. S. KHRUSHCHEV asks what Thompson meant by saying that the U.S. government takes the release of the RB-47 crew very seriously. Is that a threat?

L. THOMPSON answers that it is not a threat. However, the U.S. government does not believe it is possible to avoid a deterioration in relations between the Soviet Union and the United States considering American public opinion regarding further captivity of the pilots.

N. S. KHRUSHCHEV says that the Soviet government would be content if the U.S. government had not given it reason to capture these pilots. It is not our fault that the pilots are held captive but rather the U.S. government is to blame for sending its planes inside the Soviet borders.

We shot down this plane to protect our borders. Your position implies that we have no right to shoot down American planes, but as Secretary of State Herter stated and President Eisenhower confirmed, your policy is to deploy American aircraft to cross Soviet borders. That means you do not respect our sovereignty, our borders. So we *are* taking measures to protect our sovereignty and we will continue to do so.

L. THOMPSON says he does not think that President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Herter expressed the right of the U.S. government to follow such a policy. The President may have said that there would be no more flights like that of the U-2 aircraft.

N. S. KHRUSHCHEV mentions that in that sense the President did keep his word, because this time it was not a U-2 but an RB-47 model. Yet we do not care what aircraft model crosses our borders. We are against violations of our sovereignty in general. We abide by and respect certain international regulations.

L. THOMPSON answers that, according to the U.S. government, there is a big difference between the two flights in question. The U-2 flight over Soviet territory was deliberate, whereas the RB-47 aircraft had strict orders not to fly over Soviet territory. According to the U.S. government, the plane obeyed the orders and did not fly over Soviet territory.

N. S. KHRUSHCHEV says that this opinion does not correspond with reality. If the RB-47 had not flown over Soviet territory, it would not have been shot down. You are well aware of the fact that the Soviet Union does not possess any aircraft carriers, continues Khrushchev, and that is why its fighter jet could not have shot down a plane flying over open water. The RB-47 was shot down by a Soviet MiG fighter jet that took off from one of the airfields built to defend Soviet borders. This is yet further proof that the RB-47 in fact invaded Soviet airspace, and that we were forced to shoot it down as a defensive measure.

L. THOMPSON points out that fighter jets can fly far out to sea.

N. S. KHRUSHCHEV responds that fighter jets have a limited range, something that the Ambassador is certainly aware of. Bombers can indeed fly that far, but fighter jets cannot.

Further, N. S. KHRUSHCHEV asks Thompson how far from the United States the RB-47 was shot down.

L. THOMPSON answers that it happened far from the USA.

N. S. KHRUSHCHEV asks that if that was the case, whether the plane had gotten lost. The United States should not act like this. This is not right. The USA had given itself the right to fly over foreign territory, thus imposing on all people all over the world. The U-2 flew over Afghanistan, and had intentions to fly over Finland. American aircraft had flown over India. The U.S. condescends to everything and everyone. During the situation in Lebanon, American aircraft flew from Germany to Lebanon over Austria, who signed a neutrality treaty with the Soviet Union, as well as the United States. The USA openly provokes the USSR. It must be understood that the Soviet Union is not Afghanistan, a nation which can only protest but not protect its territory. The Soviet Union relies on international law, but it is also able to defend its right to sovereignty through its own power.

L. THOMPSON says that this was all he was instructed to tell the Prime Minister. However, he would like to volunteer some personal remarks. As N. S. Khrushchev knows, he (Thompson) was trying in every way to facilitate positive relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. He has been in the Soviet Union for a long time and he can understand the Soviet government's point of view, but that he would also like

for the U.S. government's point of view to be better understood. He is convinced that the people, as well as governments, of both countries wish for peace and positive relations. And yet, both sides are acting based on pre-existing mistrust and concerns regarding each other. Each side is convinced that it wants peace, and thus both sides think that everything they do is defensive and therefore justified. The opposite side considers such measures provocative and threatening. Honestly speaking, continues Thompson, I don't see a way out of this vicious circle.

Prime Minister Khrushchev advocates the United States treating the Soviet Union equally, and points out that in reality the USA is disrespectful towards the USSR. According to Thompson, many U.S. actions can be explained by its concerns over increased Soviet power, and also by how the Soviet Union might apply that power. Thompson expresses hope that sooner or later mutual understanding between these two countries *will* be reached. In his opinion, it is here and now, when there are so many difficult situations in the world, such as the Congo question, the Cuba question, etc., that it is necessary to refrain from any actions that could possibly lead to constraints on the path to mutual understanding.

N. S. KHRUSHCHEV is wondering what steps taken by the Soviet Union prevent amelioration of relations between the two countries. It is the United States who is actually taking such steps. To understand the steps taken by the USA is to simply accept its insults directed at the Soviet Union. How is it possible to relate U.S. actions to its promises? President Eisenhower invited me, continues N. S. Khrushchev, and we had an amicable conversation. I made a public statement about it in front of the Soviet people, in front of the whole world, upon returning from my trip to the United States. The Soviet Union was going to extend President Eisenhower its hospitality. Suddenly, just before the meeting in Paris, the United States announced its right to fly over Soviet territory, and tried to justify this right by saying that the USSR is keeping secrets.

As it is known, the United States attempted not once, but twice to fly deep into Soviet territory. The first attempt was on April 9, and it went unpunished, as our military did not shoot down this plane. After this first flight, Allen Dallas, probably elated by success, wanted to make another attempt. This time though, our military was informed and the plane was shot down. From now on we will take such actions against possible provocative acts by the USA.

It is unheard of that the head of the United States would openly announce the right to fly of its planes into Soviet territory, for reason of defense. This may very well promote the U.S. defense, but it violates Soviet national security.

In any case, continues Khrushchev, this is not the way to establish good relations. We also spend money on improving our security. The Soviet Union could just as well announce its right to launch missiles with blank charges into the United States for target practice. We could make a similar argument based on our defense interests, and announce that this is nothing but a friendly gesture. What would come out of that? It would be a mad house!

Later Khrushchev notes that he acted rather liberally having previously announced that the President in all probability was not aware of the planned U-2 flight, and that it was Allen Dallas' and the military's provocation. I still believe that President Eisenhower was not aware of this flight. At some point Allen Dallas probably made a report regarding this flight, and even showed the President photo shots of Soviet land taken from the plane. The President apparently complimented him on that.

The Soviet Union, continues Khrushchev, has always been opposed to such U.S. acts. Though previously we were not able to shoot down American aircraft because we did not have the necessary means. Then later, the Soviet government pressed its scientists and engineers, and they created missiles capable of reaching those aircraft. However, on April 9 some scatterbrains missed an American airplane, but on May 1 it was shot down. If the U.S. had not taken such actions, then there could have been a productive meeting in Paris, and we would have received President Eisenhower as a guest of honor. Could I have acted differently in Paris, continues N. S. Khrushchev, since we were insulted in front of the whole world and they wanted to humiliate us? The President stated he had given an order to cease such flights. But that's not enough! In the past, when our planes accidentally flew into foreign airspace, we gave a public apology. And those were neighboring countries! The United States is not our neighbor, it is literally worlds away from the Soviet Union.

The USA takes such actions deliberately to ruin the relations that were being developed. This being said, N. S. Khrushchev expresses his belief that the President was not aware of the flight on May 1. He asks Thompson not to pass this to the President. I have said enough harsh words about him, he notes. I respected President Eisenhower. Some people even criticized me for my attitude towards him, whom they called an imperialist. He indeed represents imperialist circles' interests. At the same time he has many positive, humane qualities. And yet, being an inexperienced political leader, he does not concern himself much with real work, but instead plays golf. When he used to be in the military, the command staff did all the work for him, and nowadays various government committees do that. The reconnaissance flight plan over the Soviet territory was apparently confirmed a while ago, several years in advance. If he had been asked, he would have probably spoken against the deployment of the U-2 flight just prior to the meeting. If we had an intelligence strategy, then for the sake of improving relations between our countries, we would to have amend it. However, the United States did not do this, and President Eisenhower was not informed about the upcoming flights. After the aircraft was shot down, continues N. S. Khrushchev, the President was faced with a choice: whether or not to admit the fact that he was aware of the U-2 flight. He chose to admit guilt. What an absolute disgrace to prepare for a visit and at the same time to deceive the person you are going to visit.

The Soviet government and our Communist Party believe that such bad days will come to a certain reconciliation. Apparently though, this is not going to happen while President Eisenhower is holding office. The USA is acting very irresponsibly. Everyone says what they please: Kennedy says one thing, Nixon says another, just like at a bazaar. You have

a certain internal system, and it's your own business. The Soviet government is keeping a low profile and is not interfering in the U.S. election.

I do not sympathize, nor do I antipathize, says N. S. Khrushchev, towards either one of the presidential candidates. However, honestly speaking, I do not feel sympathy towards Nixon. Right after my arrival I told Eisenhower that Nixon had given a really foolish speech to the New York Dental Association. The President told me at that time that he had not read the speech, to which I responded, Good then, don't read it. It's a bad speech. Nixon, unlike Eisenhower, is a rather off-beat person, a careerist and a smooth operator. As for Kennedy, continues N. S. Khrushchev, I don't know him very well. I only exchanged a couple of words with him in Washington at the meeting with the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

One candidate, says N. S. Khrushchev, represents the Democratic Party, and the other one – the Republican party, both of which are the same to me; both of them represent monopolistic capitalism. The United States doesn't have a Labor Party, does it? American capitalists do not allow the establishment of such a party. I recall visiting a Mesta Machine Company's iron and steel plant in Pittsburgh. They don't even have a labor union. Those labor unions that do exist in the USA are mainly headed by people like Reiter. They are all sellouts; monopolistic capitalist appointees. Thus the American working class, in our opinion, is still in its gestation. Though it's your own business. We are not going to fight you because of that. However, we have confidence that the working class will have its say in due time.

I'm not only a party leader, continues Khrushchev, but also a public figure. Our government wants to live in peace with all countries, including the United States. The USSR still supports the policy of peaceful co-existence with the states of different social systems and will continue to hold this position. Certain communists even use this against us to criticize us and claim that Khrushchev and his allies go about on an imperialist leash. However, the USSR is unanimous. Some people talk nonsense about Suslov but this is just foolish. Suslov is an educated man, and we have no disagreements with him, just as we have none with Mikoyan, Kozlov, Furtseva, and Ignatov; basically, with any of the Soviet leaders. Even Malenkov, Bulganin, Kaganovich, and Molotov, despite the fact that the latter is weighed down by the past, support the idea of peaceful co-existence. Stalin held the same position. This is in fact an old position promoted by Lenin. We just gave it life and brought it to the forefront.

We are accused of, continues Khrushchev, using war as a means of achieving social change in other countries. This is not true. Imperialists bring about war. If they declare war, we will use it to the advantage of the working class. The Russian working class did it during World War I and this could happen again. If American imperialists are going to bring about war, then there will be conflict on U.S. territory as well, and the American working class will have its say. This is their own business though.

They say, continues N.S. Khrushchev, we want to bury capitalism. It's not us who will do it. Capitalism is creating contradictions and it will bury itself. Is it not a contradiction

that the United States is using only 53% of the iron and steel industry, but that there are about 5 million unemployed people in the country? Is it not a contradiction that you don't know what to do with the bread you produce?

Surely, you don't agree with me, continues N.S. Khrushchev, but I'm not asking you to do it. Just look at the situation in the Soviet Union. I was once a worker myself and I grew together with my country from a locksmith to prime minister. Nowadays our country produces twice as many engineers as you do. And this is not just me saying that. It was Senator Humphrey. He is a smart person, and I respect him even though I criticized him for his loose tongue after returning from his visit to the Soviet Union. However, this might be a habit of all American political leaders. In any case, it was a pleasure talking to him.

Think, for instance, about our economy. Its output ranks second worldwide. In 1970 our output per capita will have caught up with the United States. How can we explain such fast growth? Certainly not because Uzbeks, Ukrainians, and Russians are smarter than Americans, but rather because we have a different social system. About 30 years ago I read a book written by an American (I cannot recall his last name at the moment). It was called *The Squandering of America*. The author conducted comparative analysis of the socialist and capitalist economy, pointing out where capitalism is losing and socialism is winning. This being said, he was advocating the elimination of capitalist vices while keeping the capitalist system itself. Now Harriman and even Kennedy are making similar statements. Harriman is a very intelligent person, pleasant to talk to. While criticizing the current American government, Harriman points out that under Truman, output-growth rates were higher and he urges us to take measures to boost overall production. However, production under Truman was not increasing rapidly because of him, but because the United States was supplying Western Europe and Asia after the war. Nowadays Germany and Japan are our competitors. Thus, the change in the rate of production cannot be explained by Truman's past, Eisenhower's current, and Kennedy's future presidencies. Having been Ambassador to the Soviet Union for three years, you can judge for yourself how far we have progressed.

L. THOMPSON agrees with this statement.

N. S. KHRUSHCHEV says that in 1965 the USSR will produce more consumer goods than all European and Asian countries combined. By 1970, our production levels will reach that one of the United States. Then Americans will be convinced of the advantages of the socialist system. Even now they raise their voices against Americans being given tourist visas to go to the USSR. Somebody in the United States is apparently afraid that visiting the Soviet Union will shed a different light on it. When Powers got his first shock – and he is a politically educated person – he was sitting in a car. It was a holiday, he saw the city, the Soviet people having a good time, and he was taken aback. Before that he misunderstood our country and our people, thinking that they just about literally live in caves.

Here is a good example: two young Americans Mitchell and Martin, who just gave speeches at the press-conference, came to the Soviet Union. We didn't convert them.

They made this decision on their own. And they are not the only ones. Others change sides too. How many more of those living in the United States think the same way we do?

In the future, mankind will recognize our system is the right one, and then Communism will triumph. We don't know yet whether it will happen through a revolution or otherwise. I repeat: it will not be us to bury capitalism but the people of capitalist countries. Capitalism will be buried as a result of historical changes, just as capitalism replaced feudalism. You believe that capitalism is everlasting (at least this is what Rockefeller says). But we believe this is just a transitory period and that in any case your grandchildren will live under Communism.

So let us live in peace and resolve any controversial issues only amicably.

L. THOMPSON says that N. S. Khrushchev mentioned many controversial issues, and that he would like to make some remarks. He, Thompson, is glad that N. S. Khrushchev, while considering Communism the best social system, supports peaceful competition between the two systems. He is particularly glad that N. S. Khrushchev supports peaceful competition as opposed to a violent solution to the problem. And yet, he personally does not agree that Communism is a better system and N. S. Khrushchev did not convince him otherwise.

N. S. KRUSHCHEV says that he is not going to waste his time trying to convince Thompson.

L. THOMPSON offers to send N. S. Khrushchev two articles with the tallied results of research conducted by the U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee on the U.S. and Soviet systems. He believes these articles may be of some interest to N. S. Khrushchev. In particular, they point out that U.S. heavy industry growth rate is slower than that of the Soviet Union. The United States has reached a level where there is no need for the same high rate as in the Soviet Union. The USSR wants to catch up with the U.S. in butter output, but the United States has as much butter as it needs to meet demand, and thus does not have to increase its production.

N. S. KRUSHCHEV notes that he will gladly have a look at the mentioned articles.

L. THOMPSON says he would further like to point out that, to the best of his belief, the Soviet Union simplifies the situation a bit too much, believing that all foreign policy is defined by class struggle. You have seen our country, he says, you have seen that we have disadvantages as well as advantages just as you do. In any case, you would be wrong thinking that our foreign policy is based on the desire to suppress the working class. Perhaps, at times such interests play a certain role, though, in any case, they do not dominate.

Speaking of N. S. Khrushchev's statements regarding Nixon's speech at the Dental Association, Thompson says that shortly before this speech Nixon made a public appearance in front of the Veterans of Foreign Affairs. You would find such an organization reactionary. This organization wanted to pass a resolution calling for a

protest opposing N. S. Khrushchev's visit to the USA, but Nixon talked them out of it. He was later accused of being soft on Communism, and, being a political leader, he gave a speech at the Dental Association to balance things out.

Further, Thompson says that he knows both candidates and is on friendly terms with them, yet he holds a nonpartisan stance. According to him, even though Nixon holds a sharply anti-Communist position, he does, however, advocate peaceful co-existence with the Soviet Union and the peaceful settlement of international disputes. In Thompson's opinion, Kennedy shares this attitude.

Then Thompson says that, as N. S. Khrushchev understands, even though it pains him to speak about the U-2 incident, he would still like to make one observation to clear up any possible misunderstanding. It is possible that Herter made a rather ambiguous statement regarding this issue. Thompson, however, does not think that he meant to continue with such flights. The U.S. government believed that the Soviet government was blowing the situation, the issue of violating the Soviet border, out of proportion, and was purposefully using it to its advantage. When immediately upon arriving in Paris N. S. Khrushchev passed to President de Gaulle the memorandum on this issue (that sooner or later would be published), the U.S. representatives considered it Soviet unwillingness to reach agreement and settle the U-2 incident. Thompson notes that though it is possibly careless of him to speak this way, as far as Thompson understands it, President Eisenhower was definitely not aware of the U-2 flight.

N. S. KHRUSHCHEV asks Thompson to keep in mind that he will never use Thompson's words against him.

L. THOMPSON then says that the election campaign in the USA is a complicated process and that he would not want any presidential candidate to say something that would postpone or jeopardize the settlement of disputes between the Soviet Union and the USA.

N. S. KHRUSHCHEV agrees with that and says that it is reasonable. The Soviet government, on its part, is acting very carefully and will not do anything that would exacerbate the situation or in any way put the presidential candidates in a predicament. This being said, he notes that Lodge expressed similar ideas in his conversation with V.V. Kuznetsov in New York.

Well, basically, asks N.S. Khrushchev, all this means that you do not want us to try the RB-47 crew until the U.S. elections?

L. THOMPSON replies that he wants them released, and to begin a new era of the relations between the two countries.

To which N. S. KHRUSHCHEV says that this is a completely different question. The release of the pilots without a trial before the election would harm the Soviet Union's reputation. Holding a neutral position, meaning bringing the matter to court or postponing it otherwise until after the election so as not to heat things up, continues N.S.

Khrushchev, would make more sense. In any case, our government will discuss this issue, and I believe that, most likely, we will hold the same stance as you.

L. THOMPSON replies that his position is to have these pilots released before the election.

N. S. KHRUSHCHEV notes that this is Thompson's first choice, however, there should be a compromise that should probably be accepted.

L. Thompson bids N. S. Khrushchev's farewell and wishes him a safe trip. He tells him to expect stormy seas caused by a recent hurricane in Puerto Rico that is moving towards the north.

N. S. Khrushchev asks Thompson, in a joking manner, to take precautions against any hurricanes.

In attendance were: Deputy Director of the Americas Section, USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs S. R. Striganov.

The conversation was recorded by: S. R. Striganov and V. M. Sukhodrev.

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