From the Diary of Soviet Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Ya. A. Malik, record of the conversation with the Vice-President of India, S. Radhakrishnan, dated 26 July 1953

USSR EMBASSY

IN GREAT BRITAIN

No. 315

RECORD OF CONVERSATION WITH THE VICE-PRESIDENT OF INDIA, RADHAKRISHNAN[[1]](#footnote-1)

16 July 1953

On 16 July, I was invited for breakfast to the Indian High Commissioner in London, Kher[[2]](#footnote-2). The vice-President of India, Radhakrishnan, who passed through London on his way from the USA, was also present; he was in the USA, in his own words, around 4 weeks on matters related to UNESCO.

During the conversation, Radhakrishnan shared the following thoughts.

The whole American population wants peace. Only a small group of big American monopolists and their representatives in the Senate, like McCartney[[3]](#footnote-3), Knowland [[4]](#footnote-4), Taft[[5]](#footnote-5) and several others are interested in intensifying international war hysteria, the continuation of war in Korea, and the preparation for a large-scale war. President Eisenhower also supports peace and peaceful resolution of international problems; however, since his first days in power, after being elected President, he has been unable to deal with the reactionaries like McCartney, Knowland, Taft and others, and, therefore, he is at present under their influence. A lot will depend on whether he can manage to get rid of that influence in the future.

Regarding the Washington meeting of Foreign Ministers of the USA, Britain, and France, Radhakrishnan characterised it as a failure of British policy and a failure of British attempts to play a leading role in international affairs. Instead of agreeing to a meeting of four heads of state on a wide range of issues, as was proposed by Churchill in his parliamentary address of 11 May this year, Washington agreed to convene a meeting solely on the German question. Radhakrishnan considered that decision as a British surrender to the USA, who think it would be most difficult to achieve an understanding with the Soviet Union on the German question and it would be therefore easier to avoid a solution. The USA could reject finding solutions to all other international issues by referring to the unsuccessful solution of the German questions, and thus maintain the current level of tensions in international relations.

Radhakrishnan criticised US policy, which contradicts the peaceful resolution of contentious international problems against the wishes of all people in the world, and prefers to maintain the current levels of international tensions. Radhakrishnan considers Churchill’s proposal to convene the meeting of four heads of state as a strike against the whole range of US policies and, above all, against their policy to strengthen the North Atlantic bloc. This is how he explained the unwillingness of the USA to accept the proposal.

In conclusion, Radhakrishnan declared that bearing in mind the outcome of the Washington meeting and the appeal of the three powers to convene the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers solely for the purpose of discussing the German question, the Soviet Union should link the solution of the German problem with the proposal to enter the European Defence Community. Such a proposal from the Soviet Union would put the Americans in a very difficult position, added Radhakrishnan.

Regarding the Anglo-Egyptian conflict over Suez, Radhakrishnan stated that the British could not reach an agreement on this issue with the Americans, since before and throughout the Washington meeting, the Americans had taken a more pro-Egyptian, rather than pro-British stance, on this question. Radhakrishnan hinted that the Americans were inciting Naguib[[6]](#footnote-6) against the British, as they insinuated he could count on more than just moral support.

Regarding Churchill’s illness on the eve of the anticipated convention of the Bermuda summit, Radhakrishnan said that, bearing in mind the negative attitude of the USA towards Churchill’s proposal to convene a meeting with representatives of the four great powers, the latter had nothing better left to do than to fall ill suddenly. The negotiations between Foreign Ministers of three great powers in Washington and their outcome proved the widely spread view that Churchill’s illness was not simply the outcome of his elderly age and exhaustion.

During our conversation, Radhakrishnan reminisced with great satisfaction about his stay in the Soviet Union, his conversation with I.V. Stalin, and other political leaders of the Soviet Union, and commented rather positively on the economic successes of the Soviet Union and its peaceful foreign policy.

When Radhakrishnan touched upon the policy of the British government in Africa, he referred to the recent speech by Nehru, who decisively criticised the policy of terror and mass murder of Africans in Kenya and Nigeria[[7]](#footnote-7), who were fighting for national liberation of Africa and who stood for terminating colonial domination of Western power over the African people. Radhakrishnan declared rather decisively that if the British colonialists did not change their policy, then in no more than 10 years, they would be driven out from Africa.

Radhakrishnan said that US policy in general and policy towards Asian countries in particular violated the provisions of the UN Charter with regards to people striving for national freedom and independence and characterised it as policy of support for corrupt regimes. In Radhakrishnan’s words, he spoke about it directly in conversations with many Americans, including in a personal conversation with Eisenhower.[[8]](#footnote-8)

I raised a question as to how Eisenhower reacted to such statements, to which Radhakrishnan replied that Eisenhower remained silent, since he could not respond to that.

Regarding the role and consequences of long-term colonial domination in India, Radhakrishnan said that it clearly delayed the political, economic, and cultural development of India, but it also played a positive role as it introduced India to international society, international problems and contributed to independent India’s ability to take its proper place in the international family of nations.

Radhakrishnan underlined that the USA and Britain were losing the last remainders of democracy and that India represented a truly democratic and peaceful country. Radhakrishnan underlined that India firmly supports peace and peaceful resolution of all international issues, and that in this sense it is closer to the Soviet Union rather than to Western countries, which view the development of international relations solely in terms of preeminence of western powers over the peoples of Asia, the Arab East, and Africa.

USSR AMBASSADOR IN GREAT BRITAIN Ya.A. MALIK

[FPARF, f. 6, inv. 12a, fold. 217, file 47, pp. 61-64]

Keywords: Post-war order, Post-war Asia, Africa

1. Radhakrishnan, Sarvepally (1888–1975) – Indian philosopher, political figure and representative of Neo-Hinduism. In 1949–1952 he was the Indian Ambassador to the USSR; in 1946–1952 he was the head of the Indian Delegation at UNESCO; in 1952–1962 he was Vice-President of India; in 1962–1967 he was President of India. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Kher (transliterated here as “Kerr”), Balasaheb Gangadhar (1888–1957) – Indian lawyer and political figure, Prime Minister of the Bombay Province (1937–1939, 1946–1952); Indian High Commissioner in London (1952–1954). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. McCarthy, Joseph Raymond (1908–1957) – American political figure, Republican Senator for the State of Wisconsin (1947–1957). He played a significant role in the House Un-American Activities Committee, was renowned for its right-wing and anti-Communist views, and also for his active struggle against “Communist agents” at all levels of American society. The politics that grew from his initial efforts in 1950–1954 became known as McCarthyism. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Knowland, William F. (1908–1974) – American political figure, Senator for the State of California (1945–1959), leader of the Republican Party in the Senate (1953–1959), one of the leaders of the right wing of the Republican Party. He was known as a passionate opponent of the regime of Mao Zedong, a critic of the foreign policies pursued by H. Truman in Korea and Vietnam, and also as an advocate of the strengthening of NATO. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Taft, Robert Alphonso (1889–1953) – American political figure, Senator for the State of Ohio (1939–1953), in 1953 the leader of the Republican majority in the Senate, one of the leaders of the right wing of the Republican Party, an opponent of Roosevelt’s New Deal and an advocate of non-intervention in world affairs. On 10 July 1953, Taft passed the Republican leadership in the Senate to W. Knowland on account of his worsening health. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Naguib, Muhammad (1901–1984) – Egyptian military and political figure, Prime Minister of Egypt (1952–1954), first President of Egypt (1953–1954), one of the leaders of the Free Officers Movement which promoted the July revolution of 1952 that abolished the monarchy in Egypt. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The Mau-Mau Rebellion (for land and freedom) against British rule in Kenya continued throughout the period between 1952 and1960. In Nigeria the radicalisation of the independence movement was connected to Aminu Kano, who led the Socialist movement in the north of Nigeria. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The meeting took place on 22 May 1953 in Washington. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)