Chapter – VI

Dimensions of Indo – USSR relations
THE ADVENT OF JANATA TO POWER

Gromyko's visit to New Delhi and after

The visit of the Soviet Foreign Minister to the Indian capital on 25-27 April 1977 proved successful in creating a direct rapport between the leaders of the two countries. Wide-ranging talks were held between Gromyko and Vajpayee. Emphasizing the significance of Indo-Soviet cooperation, Gromyko observed that it was not detrimental to the growth of equally beneficial relations with other countries. After holding talks with Prime Minister Desai, the Soviet Foreign Minister remarked that they discussed not only how to preserve the level of relations between the two countries, "but also of the need to raise that level". The course for enriching the Soviet-Indian cooperation was "not affected by any consideration of the moment"—he added and expressed the hope that relations between these countries had "not only a good past, but also a great future".

The Indian Foreign Minister reciprocated the warmth of friendly feelings expressed by his Soviet counterpart. Referring to the bonds of friendship between the USSR and India, Vajpayee observed that they were "strong enough to survive the demands of divergent systems, the fate of an individual or the fortunes of a political party". He recalled the Soviet assistance to India's industrialization, and its consistent and principled support in her difficult times. Vajpayee assured Gromyko, "We remember all this and we shall continue to value our friendship with you". We had friendship before the Treaty was signed... we look forward to friendship even after twenty years"—he added.

Gromyko was the first dignitary of any foreign country to visit New Delhi after the advent of Janata to power. His re-assuring talks with Desai and Vajpayee set aside the apprehensions regarding deterioration in Indo-Soviet relations. The theme of continuity and consolidation of relations between India and the USSR was kept up by both the sides and thus speculations regarding any slow-down in Indo-Soviet cooperation were dispelled.

The joint communique, signed at the end of Gromyko's visit, touched upon the entire gamut of Indo-Soviet relations. The Soviet side praised the "increasing significant contributions" made by the non-aligned community to the common struggle for universal peace and security against imperialist aggression. Both the countries pledged to continue their effort to strengthen "equal and mutually beneficial cooperation in the spirit of Indo-
Soviet Treaty”. Calling upon the Asian countries to develop mutually beneficial cooperation, the Soviet Union welcomed "the efforts of India and other states" of this region to establish good-neighbourly relations and solve their disputes by peaceful means without outside interference. The Indo-Soviet joint communique noted the possibilities of further expansion of economic cooperation and trade prospects between the USSR and India.

The Soviet press highlighted the significance of Gromyko's visit to New Delhi. Writing in Izvestia, Skossyrev underscored its significance and observed that in the light of Delhi talks, "the calculations of the opponents of friendship between our peoples have been proved to be untenable. Pravda also lauded the outcome of Gromyko's visit to New Delhi in its weekly international commentary.

Gromyko's visit to New Delhi augured well for the furtherance of relations between India and the USSR. The leaders of the Janata Party reiterated on a number of occasions that Indo-Soviet cooperation in different fields should expand. In an interview to the French TV, Foreign Minister Vajpayee said that there should be greater depth in India's relations with Moscow.¹ "India's foreign policy, particularly its relationship with the Soviet Union, has evolved from a national consensus and there should be no change in it"—observed L.K. Advani, Union Minister of Information and Broadcasting, at the inaugural function of a Soviet exhibition in New Delhi. Later, he set aside conjectures in the US press that Indo-Soviet relations would be strained in the event of Janata victory. In his first interview to the Soviet TV, Prime Minister Desai emphasized the significance of India's valuable ties with the USSR.

The Soviet side also reciprocated the friendly warmth shown by the Janata leaders. On the eve of India's Republic Day celebrations, Izvestia described her progress as a befitting example to other young States. While applauding the vast changes made in the country since independence, Red Star expressed the hope that India would go ahead and make up for the losses in the past. In an article published in Sovietskaya Russia, L.Vladimirov paid tributes to India and observed that she had made notable contributions to the anti-imperialist struggle in close cooperation with the USSR. Pravda and Trud also spoke very high of India's successes in various walks of life. In their Independence Day greetings to the Indian Government, the Soviet leaders observed that India had earned
well-deserved recognition in the international arena by consistently following a peace-loving foreign policy based on the principles of mutual co-existence.

Desai’s Moscow Visit

Prime Minister Desai's visit to Moscow took place on 21-27 October 1977. At the banquet held in Kremlin, President Brezhnev spoke high of the Indo-Soviet "mutually advantageous cooperation" and made an indirect reference to his proposal of collective security in Asia. He maintained that one of the surest ways to detente and security in Asia lay through joint efforts of the Asian States taken in whatever form they consider as acceptable to them. The Indian Prime Minister Desai re-affirmed India's desire to strengthen Indo-Soviet relations and observed that the mutual desires in both these countries to promote their friendship was a demonstration of the fact that their relationship was not based either on personalities or on ideologies but on the foundation of equality. National interest and enlightened common purpose brought India and the USSR quite nearer—he added. He acknowledged with gratitude the consistent support extended by the Soviet Union to India on questions of vital concern to her. He further maintained that the Soviet economic assistance to India helped her to advance towards economic self-reliance. Indo-Soviet relations had stood the test of time, the Indian Prime Minister asserted and remarked, "the development of our relations with other countries will not be at the expense of established friendships". Desai expressed his confidence that mutually beneficial Indo-Soviet cooperation could be further enlarged.

The Indo-Soviet joint communique issued at the end of the visit laid emphasis on the development of personal contacts between the leaders of the two countries at the highest level. It re-affirmed that cooperation between India and the USSR would further develop in the spirit of the Indo-Soviet Treaty. The two countries recognized that mutually beneficial cooperation among countries of Asia must be developed in order to consolidate peace and stability in this region. Both the sides recorded that their relations had stood the test of time and were not subject to transient political considerations. The joint communique stressed the need to work out new and more effective forms of cooperation between India and the USSR in economic, scientific and technological fields.

In his report to the Lok Sabha on his Moscow visit, Prime Minister Desai referred to the "warmth and courtesy" of the Soviets "which exceeded the protocol requirements".
Setting aside all apprehensions expressed in certain quarters with regard to a slow-down in Indo-Soviet relations during the Janata regime, Desai observed that his talks with the Soviet leaders were "characterized by utmost frankness and cordiality". "There was "common determination to preserve and / strengthen our cooperation and friendship"---he noted. The Prime Minister added that his visit to the Soviet capital vindicated India's faith that notwithstanding differences in their social and political systems and approaches on some issues, relationship between India and the USSR would in no way suffer. "... this visit confirms the essential continuity of India's relationship with the Soviet Union ... the visit has in fact given a dimension of stability and strength to Indo-Soviet relationship. . ." Desai remarked.  

Combined with the geopolitical compulsions in the South Asian region, the economic considerations behind India's development programme and the strategic dimensions of the contemporary world situation made it imperative on both the countries to preserve intact the strong edifice of their time-tested relations. Any shift in India's attitude towards the USSR was considered detrimental to the national interests. In its relations with Moscow, the Janata Government devised a general framework of continuity, some occasional pronouncements about change in emphasis notwithstanding.

**Vajpayee-Gromyko Talks in Moscow**

Before undertaking his trip to Peking, Vajpayee paid a visit to the Soviet capital on 12-18 September 1978. Among others, the visit also had the objective to apprise the Soviet leadership of the latest development in Sino-Indian relations. He spoke of a high degree of trust and confidence characterizing the bilateral relations of India and the USSR. In his welcome address, Gramyko renewed the Soviet call for joint efforts do the part of the Asian nations to ensure stability in the continent. The Soviet Foreign Minister expressed his country's desire to convert Asia into a region of security, good-neighbourliness and mutually beneficial cooperation.

Vajpayee informed the Soviet leaders of India's efforts to normalise relations with all her neighbours including China and referred to the efforts of the Indira Gandhi Government to initiate the process of normalization in relations with Peking. He explained that it was just being continued by New Delhi under the Janata regime. In his talks with the
Soviet leaders, the Indian Foreign Minister emphasized that his impending visit to the Chinese capital would not the least affect Indo-Soviet relations.

Vajpayee's visit to Moscow proved successful. It was widely reported in the Indian press, which wrote laudatory editorials on the conclusion of Vajpayee-Gromyko talks, that the USSR Government showed its willingness to help India in case the USA refused supplies of enriched uranium.

India's efforts to improve relations with her neighbours in South Asia were in general positively evaluated by the Soviet press. Thus, Pravda praised New Delhi's peace efforts in the sub-continent. Izvestia, while welcoming such efforts, struck a note of caution against some forces which were trying to barter away Soviet-Indian friendship.

**Kosygin's Visit to India**

Soviet Premier Kosygin paid a seven-day visit to India on 9-15 March 1979 on the invitation of Morarji Desai. Kosygin in his address to the Indian Parliament emphasized the need for further coordinating the efforts of peace-loving forces like India to overcome the threat to peace on the Asian continent. In his banquet speech, the Soviet Premier called for "full and unconditional withdrawal of Chinese troops" from the territory of Vietnam. In this regard, he declared at the Red Fort reception that the Soviet Union would carry out her international obligations.

Prime Minister Desai expressed India's "grave concern" over the conflict between China and Vietnam which endangered international peace. Without naming any country, he reiterated India's well-known stand of opposition to "violation of frontiers wherever it has occurred" and urged "resort to peaceful negotiations and immediate cessation of conflict."

The Soviet Premier's visit to India proved successful. A long-term agreement for Indo-Soviet cooperation in economic, trade, cultural, scientific and technical fields was signed by the two Prime Ministers. Four separate agreements were also signed. Both the sides underscored the immediate need of the formation of Asia into a continent of durable peace through cooperative efforts among all Asian countries on the basis of recognized principles of inter-State relations.
Desaps Return Visit to Moscow

Shortly after the successful launching of Bhaskara into the earth's orbit from the Soviet cosmodrome on 7 June 1979, Prime Minister Desai visited the Soviet Union on 10-14 June 1979 for direct exchange of views with the Soviet leaders on some important issues. At the Kremlin banquet on II June, Soviet President Brezhnev, while deploring the Chinese talk of "teaching Vietnam a lesson" offered to normalise relations with Peking on the basis of peaceful co-existence. Brezhnev condemned the subversive actions against the Afghan revolution and observed that "The Afghan people have a right to build their life the way they wish". He offered to stand by the Afghan people.

In his brief reply, Desai welcomed Soviet desire to normalise relations with the People's Republic of China and referred to the dialogue that India had started in her own relations with this country.

At an important press conference, held in the Soviet capital on 12 June, Soviet Premier Kusygin demanded that Pakistan should not interfere in Afghanistan. He further added that friendship between India and Afghanistan, which was appreciated by the Soviet Union, would have a stabilizing impact in this region. The Soviet Premier expressed the hope that India should warn those who were poking their nose in Afghanistan's internal affairs.

Desai's Moscow visit yielded some tangible results. The Soviet Union agreed to consider the supply of 2.5 to 3 million tonnes of crude annually. As the Indian press reported, Moscow informally agreed to supply substantial quantities of heavy water to India for the development of her nuclear energy programme. Leaders of both the countries exchanged their views with regard to improvement in their relations with the People's Republic of China.

Political Changes in India

Relations between India and the USSR continued to develop as usual even in the wake of changes on the political scene in India when Charan Singh took over as the new Prime Minister in July 1979. Thanking the Soviet Premier for sending him greetings on his assumption of the office of Prime Minister, Charan Singh assured that his Government will try to strengthen all-round friendly relations with the USSR.
In December, when crisis erupted in Afghanistan leading to the overthrow of Amin's Government, and formation of the Government there by Babrak Karmal, the Soviet Government informed New Delhi that it felt constrained to despatch a military contingent to Afghanistan with a view to enabling this country to forestall outside aggression. In his talks with Foreign Secretary R.D. Sathe, the Soviet Ambassador maintained that the Soviet action was taken in response to a request of the Afghan Government and it fell well within the ambit of the provisions of the Afghan-Soviet Treaty of December 1978 and Article 51 of the UN Charter. Sathe told the Soviet Ambassador that India was still assessing the situation in Afghanistan.

In consultation with Prime Minister Charan Singh, the Ministry of External Affairs released a brief statement in support of "the sovereign rights of the Afghan people to determine their own destiny free from foreign interference-. "India has always opposed any outside interference in the internal affairs of one country by another", the statement observed and expressed the hope that "no country or external power would take steps, which might aggravate the situation and that normalcy could be restored there early”

The aforementioned statement was precisely aimed at maintaining peace in the area and hence it restrained itself from apportioning blame on any particular country. This event of far-reaching geopolitical consequences had actually placed India on the horns of a dilemma and hence she maintained official reticence. On 30 December, however, the Government of India expressed its concern at the US decision to speed up her delivery of military equipment to Pakistan.4 Prime Minister Charan Singh received the Soviet Ambassador on 31 December. Drawing the Soviet envoy's attention to the resumption of US arms supply to Pakistan and the consequent intensification of big power rivalries in the Indian sub-continent, Charan Singh asked for immediate withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan. Ambassador Vorontsov maintained that the Soviet Government was keen on withdrawing its forces after meeting its treaty obligations.

**Return of Indira Congress**

With the return of Indira Congress to power in New Delhi early in January 1980, the political scenario of the country underwent a radical change. Pravda, which had cautiously reported on the conduct of elections in India, informed its readers about the election results on 10 January. Referring to the multi-faceted economy of India and her
unique socio-economic structure, the Soviet daily ascribed the reason of Janata's defeat to its inner conflict and the fact that it did not fulfil the hopes of the Indian peoples. Further, it expressed the hope that "the new balance of forces in Parliament and throughout the country as a whole will create favourable conditions for the restoration of political stability".

In response to Soviet greetings on her grand victory in the recent elections, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi expressed her keen desire for having closer ties with the Soviets. Pravda prominently referred to Indira Gandhi's statement in New Delhi portraying the Soviet Union as India's trusted friend who supported her on many important international problems.

Moscow's growing concern on the spell of political instability in India came to an end with the installation of a strong government at the centre. But it was precisely by this time that the conditions prevailing in Afghansitan assumed alarming proportions. Both India and the USSR felt impelled by the circumstances to deal with the events taking place in their immediate neighbourhood at a very critical time.

**India's Initial Perception of Soviet Action in Afghanistan**

The Government of India, under the leadership of Indira Gandhi, took a more realistic stand on Soviet action in Afghanistan. It was at her instance that when this issue was raised in the General Assembly of the UNO, India's permanent representative, Brajesh C. Mishra expressed his Government's disapproval of attempts of the external forces to interfere in Afghanistan's internal affairs. In the third meeting of the General Assembly, held on 11 January, Mishra observed that India was "deeply concerned and vitally interested in the peace, security, independence and non-alignment of this traditionally friendly neighbour. He further maintained that "India cannot look with equanimity on the attempts by some outside powers to interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan by training, arming and encouraging subversive elements to create disturbances inside Afghanistan. Referring then to the Soviet assurances of withdrawal in the event of Afghanistan's request, he said, "We have no reasons to doubt such assurances, particularly from a friendly country like the Soviet Union, with whom we have many close ties. “...Indian hopes that the people of Afghanistan will be able to resolve their internal problems themselves without any interference from outside. India hopes that the Soviet
Union will not violate the independence of Afghanistan and that Soviet forces will not remain there a day longer than necessary”—Mishra concludingly remarked. India abstained from voting on a draft resolution asking for immediate withdrawal of the Soviet forces. The draft was sponsored by 24 countries at the behest of Pakistan, China and the USA.

India’s perception of the Afghan crisis was largely determined by the attitude adopted towards this problem by Afghanistan and the Soviet Union. In the first meeting of the sixth emergency session of the General Assembly held on 10 January, Shah Mohammed Dost, the Foreign Minister of Afghanistan, observed that "the recent developments in Afghanistan, including the Soviet military assistance, requested by the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, are entirely domestic and bilateral issues. "The limited contingents of the Soviet Union's armed forces in Afghanistan will be immediately withdrawn ... when the threat of foreign aggression, the armed attacks and the interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan cease to exist”—declared the Foreign Minister of Afghanistan. In the second meeting of the General Assembly held on 11 January, the Soviet representative fully supported the views of the Afghan delegate and added that since April 1978, Afghanistan was made "a target of direct and flagrant intervention by certain Western powers and China."

In order to assuage the negative reactions in certain circles about the Indian stand on Afghanistan, Indira Gandhi stated at the press conference in New Delhi on 16 January that India stood against interference by any foreign power in the internal affairs of any country. While seeking an understanding of some anxiety in certain circles about the presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan one should not ignore the impact of Anglophile historiography in the country on the thinking of the ruling elite in India. The British as well as some Indian historians, largely nurtured in this fashion, have tended to project the Khyber pass as the sole source of threat to the security of the sub-continent in order to sidetrack the Western threat that came from the sea. It should, however, be said to Mrs Gandhi’s credit that she did not hesitate to call a spade a spade. At the same press conference, she also unequivocally declared that "Moscow had acted only after being requested by Kabul.

Later on, in the discussion on a motion of thanks to the presidential address in the Lok Sabha, Mrs Gandhi observed that there were "reports of armed attacks from bases
outside the country". Categorically opposing "foreign presence on intervention anywhere in the world" and keeping away from "one-sided condemnation", Mrs Gandhi asked for a "speedy withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan". "... There is a deliberate effort to label us as pro-this or pro-that. We are not pro-any country except pro-India and that is what we intend to remain"—she maintained and further added that India judged such issues "from the point of view of ... national interest" and from what she considered to be "in the interest of world peace. The Prime Minister expressed her deep concern over "the training of armed bands, providing bases, entering of armed troops across the border and inhabiting another that such activities do not create confidence among neighbours and India felt disturbed by the reaction of some powers over these developments in Afghanistan including the US commitment of aid amounting to hundreds of millions of dollars and the pledge of China "to provide arms and other necessary assistance to Pakistan".

Moscow appreciated India's general stand on the Afghan issue. Pravda observed that India's fears regarding the US and Chinese attempts at the "encirclement" were justified. Writing in the Soviet daily, V. Shirokov paid rich compliments to India for her true perception of the Afghan problem and underscored the significance of the Prime Minister's above-mentioned speech in the Indian Parliament in which she had criticised the US position in this matter and thrown light on the circumstances which had necessitated the despatch of Soviet troops to that country.

**Gromyko's Visit to New Delhi: Exchange of Views on Afghanistan**

Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko visited New Delhi on 12-14 February 1980 with a view to appraising the Indian leaders of Moscow's stand on the Afghan issue and enlisting New Delhi's support for dancing the crisis. At the banquet hosted in honour of Gromyko, India's Minister of External Affairs P.V. Narasimha Rao laid stress on "utmost restraint" by countries of this region at a "critical hour" so as to maintain regional peace and ensure a political and peaceful solution of the problem.6

In his reply to Rao's banquet speech, the visiting Soviet Minister went at length to accuse the USA, China and Pakistan of complicating the situation in the whole of the South West Asian region. He justified Moscow's action in Afghanistan on the ground of its obligations under the Soviet-Afghan Treaty of 1978. Gromyko warned that if Pakistan fell
in line with the "imperialist manoeuvres", it would undermine her position as an independent State. He paid rich tributes to India for her peace-loving policy. Characterizing her as a "great Asian power", Gromyko called for evolving a common Indo-Soviet approach against Sino-Pak-US collusion in this part of the world.

The central theme of discussions between India and the USSR was the situation in Afghanistan. But the joint communique which was issued at the end of Gromyko's visit on 14 February did not refer to this issue. Asked as to why Afghanistan was not mentioned in the Indo-Soviet statement, a spokesman of the Government of India reportedly observed that since it was a matter between the USSR and Afghanistan, it was not included in this document.

Re-Assertion of New Delhi's Stand on Afghan Issue

India's stand on Soviet action in Afghanistan was reiterated on several occasions by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi herself. In an interview published in a Paris daily on 3 March, and reported by the Indian press, she said that at a moment when the national interests of the Soviet Union were "at stake" and when the Afghan rebels were being armed by West-backed Pakistan, the Soviets did not have any other alternative than to intervene. "One of the real reasons for the crisis is the rapprochement between China and the US against the Soviet Union which feels encircled", Mrs Gandhi added.

During her brief official visit to Dar-es-Salaam in April, the Indian Prime Minister observed that the prospects of the Soviet pull-out from Afghanistan will improve, if other countries stop condemning Moscow and give the assurance not to threaten its genuine interests. Mrs Gandhi made it clear that there are a lot of double standards in the world." "Those who are talking most loudly about the interference of Soviet troops did not say a word when China attacked Vietnam".

In a brief statement made before the Lok Sabha on 17 June, Foreign Affairs Minister Rao referred in detail to the talks that he had held in Moscow with his Soviet counterpart on the issue of Afghanistan. He observed that in Moscow there was appreciation of the fact that as a non-aligned country, it was but natural for India to have a different perception on this question. He said that Soviet action in Afghanistan was exaggerated by the outside forces and that aggression against this country still continued with the help of well-trained and well-armed insurgents based on Pakistani territory. He
suggested that "ways and means other than military, should be devised to bring about a solution to the problem...-. Referring to his recent talks with the Soviet leaders on the Afghan issue, the Foreign Minister said that they expressed their"readiness to withdraw troops once a political settlement had been reached".

From the account of India's attitude towards Soviet presence in Afghanistan, it becomes evident that she looked upon it with enough circumspection and moderation, because it was considered desirable in the enlightened self-interest of the country. On the one hand New Delhi took into account the actual potential of the dangerous situation prevailing in South-West Asia, whereas on the other hand it did not fail to scrutinise the malafide intention of Pakistan behind overplaying the whole episode with a view to enlisting the moral and material support from the oil-rich Muslim countries. India watched closely as to how Islamabad was making capital out of the Soviet presence by managing the lifting of US embargo on arms supplies to Pakistan in the wake of the Afghan crisis.

The Government of India did not close its eyes on the ever-growing Sino-US military cooperation and diplomatic hobnobbing in the recent past. India knew it well that the Afghan insurgents were being trained in Pakistan and Iran and provided with US and Chinese arms. She was fully aware of the impending cold war, which was looming large on the horizon ranging from events in Kampuchea, war in Vietnam and conditions in Afghanistan. This was happening when the U.S. military presence in the Persian Gulf area and in the Indian Ocean had vastly increased.

While formulating her attitude towards the Afghan crisis, India considered all the important facts referred to above and came out with the proposal of a political solution. Mrs Gandhi had to carry a united non-aligned movement with her position. And it was obvious that both India and the USSR viewed the Afghan situation from their own angles and points of view. Naturally therefore, they came to have some differing perceptions of this issue. But in spite of their varying approaches to a common problem, both of these countries agreed to the point that complete military disengagement in Afghanistan from all the sides was an essential prelude to a negotiated political settlement which could be arrived at through collective efforts on regional basis.
Brezhnev's Visit to India and After

Brezhnev's visit to India on 8-11 December 1980 offered opportunities to the leaders of both the countries for direct talks on matters of bilateral importance. Welcoming the Soviet President as a true and reliable friend at the banquet ceremony. President Sanjiva Reddy raised among others the issue of the security of the South Asian region. Without referring to events in Afghanistan, he expressed his concern at India "being surrounded by areas of new tensions" and hoped that the conflicts in this region would be terminated without any delay in the spirit of the five principles of peaceful co-existence and through negotiated political settlement. He expressed his deep anxiety over the "upward spiral of competitive naval presence of non-littoral States in the Indian Ocean and on the efforts of some powers to change the non-aligned character of most of the littoral countries through various measures including the acquisition or strengthening of military bases such as Diego Garcia."

In his reply to Reddy's banquet speech, Brezhnev paid glowing tributes to the leadership of Indira Gandhi, "the outstanding political and State figure of contemporary Asia", and observed that his country attached paramount importance to relations with India. "India and the Soviet Union have remained friends in good times and in odd, in rain and in shine"—he noted.

In her speech at a civic reception held in the Vigyan Bhavan on 9 December, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi made a reference to conflicts in the "vicinity" of India and demanded a just and quick solution through negotiations. She further said that the solution should be in keeping with "the integrity and non-aligned status of the countries in this region". Referring to the Indo-Soviet friendship, Mrs Gandhi said that none of these countries ever tried to impose its view on the other. "Our common positions on vital questions outweigh our differences and we have been able to resist all attempts made to create misunderstanding between us"—the Prime Minister remarked and expressed the hope that the independence and non-aligned character of the States in South Asia should not be subjected to pressures or threats because of conflict or interference.

In his address to the Indian Parliament on 10 December, the Soviet President in very clear terms declared that his country stood for complete political normalization in South-West Asia including the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. He mooted
a 5-point peace plan for the Persian Gulf area and offered to negotiate a "doctrine of peace and security" with the USA, West, China and Japan with declarations that the USSR had no intention of encroaching either upon the Middle East oil or its transportation routes.

India's views on the Afghan issue and her role in finding out a universally acceptable formulation on this problem during the Non-aligned Foreign Ministers' Conference held in New Delhi on 9-13 February 1981 were not received well in the West. It was largely at the initiative of India that this Conference called for "a political settlement on the basis of the withdrawal of foreign troops and full respect for the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-aligned status for Afghanistan and strict observance of the principle of non-intervention and non-interference". While not referring to the Soviet Union by name and not mentioning the role played by the USA, China and Pakistan in the present crisis in South-West Asia, this declaration meticulously narrowed down the prevailing differences of opinions by evolving symbolic reference to the Soviets as "non-intervention" and others as "non-interference".

As expected, reactions in the West were sharp. Times observed that "as a host country, India has been partly to blame for trying to mute criticism of the Russians...". Washington Post also echoed similar sentiments. It complained that the non-aligned movement gave credence to the view of India and some other countries that "the Soviet invasion was caused by foreign backing of Afghan rebel hands, meaning thereby the People's Republic of China, the USA and Pakistan'. New York Times also criticised New Delhi for accommodating the views of the Soviet-supported countries in the deliberations of the Conference.

Pravda, however, expressed its satisfaction with the New Delhi Declaration of the Foreign Ministers of the Non-aligned countries and observed that this document proved to be a befitting rebuff to Sino-US attempts at splitting the non-aligned movement. India continued to receive Soviet attention. In the report to the 26th Congress of the CPSU held on 23 February 1981, India's "increasing role" in international affairs was applauded and the "deep-rooted popular tradition" of friendship between these two countries was hailed. Hope was expressed that "...joint action with peace-loving and independent India will continue to be one of the important areas of Soviet foreign relations".9
Referring to the resumption of US arms supplies to Pakistan as a measure to turn this country into a spring-board of aggression against India and Afghanistan, Izvestia expressed its anxiety on "the new US-Pak flirtation and Islamabad's nuclear ambitions". The Soviet daily drew attention towards China's $2 billion arms assistance to Pakistan since 1965 and the resultant bellicosity of Islamabad against both New Delhi and Kabul. It blamed Pakistan for the "political impasse" in South-West and South Asia and wondered as to how this country, having remained for long "a prisoner of both its Pan-Islamic policy and its friendship with the USA and China", could stand legally entitled to join the non-aligned movement. Both Rao and Gromyko shared common views with regard to the military build-up in Pakistan in the course of their discussions in Moscow on 16 July.

Moscow used the tenth anniversary celebration of the Indo-Soviet Treaty to renew its pledge of support to New Delhi on various issues of regional, bilateral and international significance. Izvestia paid tributes to the Indira Gandhi Government for defending peace in Asia. In a Pravda article, devoted to the Indo-Soviet Treaty, Gromyko observed that "no one at present can build up a policy with regard to the Soviet Union or to India without taking this Treaty into consideration". Pravda maintained that Indo-Soviet relations were "marked by a high degree of stability in a wide variety of political situations" and observed that "relations between India and the USSR came to from an important element in the mighty solidarity front of socialist and non-aligned countries, a front that is opposed to the aggressive policy of the most reactionary circles of imperialism and the great power aspirations of the Peking hegemonists ...". Expressing concern over the ever-growing US-Chinese military cooperation, the Soviet daily declared that "no one should have any doubt that the Soviet Government will be able to stand up for itself and for its allies and friends". Further it shared New Delhi's anxiety on US-Pak agreement of $3 billion aid, since it would disturb the balance of forces in this region and undermine the already difficult process of the normalization of Indo-Pak relations. "In the light of the present international situation, foreign policy cooperation between the Soviet Union and India ... is very important"—Pravda stressed.

**Indira Gandhi's Moscow Visit**

The much awaited visit of the Indian Prime Minister to the Soviet capital took place in September 1982. At the dinner speech on 20 September, the Soviet President dwelt at length on the naval build-up in the Indian Ocean. He expressed the Soviet desire
not to send major naval units or to hold military exercises there and demanded that the non-littoral countries should not enlarge their military bases in the Indian Ocean. He offered to resume the process of negotiation with the USA on the issue of limitations and reduction of military activity in this area. In order to create a favourable situation for holding the UN-sponsored international conference on the Indian Ocean in 1983, he urged the countries concerned to refrain from any steps that might complicate the situation in the region.

In her reply, Mrs Gandhi laid emphasis on the problem of the militarization of the South Asian region. She offered to seek enduring friendship with neighbours and settle differences through negotiations. She assured the Soviet President, “You can count on understanding from India in solving the problems that confront you...”. She spoke in praise of the Soviet stand on disarmament and the arms reduction.

During discussions held on 21 September, Indira Gandhi directly referred to the Afghan issue. Recalling the New Delhi Declaration of the Non-aligned Foreign Minister's Conference held in February 1981, Mrs Gandhi emphasized the need to arrive at a political solution. Regarding India's efforts to normalize relations with China, she said that no significant progress was recorded on account of differences on the border question. New Delhi's efforts to improve relations with Peking would not be at the cost of trusted and tested friendship—she reiterated. During his talks with the Indian Prime Minister, the Soviet President said: "The USSR would like to see greater unity among the non-aligned nations". He added that his country would continue to make every effort to strengthen India. Expressing his deep concern over India's anxiety on the supply of sophisticated arms to Pakistan by the USA, he pledged the fullest possible Soviet assistance to New Delhi.  

While reiterating India's old stand on Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan at her press conference in Moscow on 22 September, Mrs Gandhi observed that such a withdrawal can take place only when the insurgents stop their armed actions and the flow of outside assistance to them ceases. She further observed that the Afghan issue had two sides: one, the Soviet entry and the other, external interference. The whole question should be viewed in its totality—she asserted and added that it was for the Afghan Government to ask for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the country. "But how can they do so, when they are constantly under attack and the rebels are assisted in all ways, including weapons”—the Prime Minister said. The Indo-Soviet joint communique, issued at the end
of Mrs Gandhi's visit on 26 September, however, did not have any direct reference to the Afghan issue. Fully accommodating India's standpoint in this matter, it observed that the problems of the South-West Asian region demanded peaceful political solution having full respect for "the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and the non-aligned status of the countries of the region". The joint communique condemned any attempt to build foreign military base in the Indian Ocean.

The result of Indira Gandhi's visit to Moscow was positive. The USSR accommodated India on the issue of political settlement of the Afghan issue on regional basis. In an effort to further expand Indo-Soviet economic cooperation, the USSR offered her 1000 MW nuclear power plant and a 800 to 1000 MW thermal power plant. The fullest possible Soviet assistance to India was pledged for the further development of her basic industries such as steel, non-ferrous metals, heavy engineering and energy. During talks with the Indian and Soviet leaders, it was decided to record 1.5 to 2-fold increase in the volume of Indo-Soviet trade by 1986.

**The Andropov-Chernenko Interlude**

Brezhnev died a few weeks after Mrs Gandhi's visit to Moscow. Yuri Andropov took over as General Secretary of the CPSU on 13 November 1982. After taking part in the funeral of the departed leader, the Indian Prime Minister held brief talks with Andropov. The Soviet Union is a trusted friend and has helped India in many difficult moments of her history—observed Mrs Gandhi and told the newly elected Soviet party chief that a great deal had been done to strengthen this relationship. She hoped that the new leader shall continue the policy of peace and helping friends. Yuri Andropov assured to continue the course chartered by the late President and accepted the Prime Minister's invitation to visit India.

India received considerable Soviet attention even during the very short period of Andropov's stewardship. Red Star paid tribute to New Delhi for its successful foreign policy and greeted India on the eve of the Seventh Non-Aligned Summit which was to be held in New Delhi from 7 to 11 March 1983. Pravda justified India's deep concern at the ever-increasing warlike postures of Pakistan, which was getting open support from Washington. Expressing its anxiety over America's gift of electronic equipments to Pakistan which were designed to receive and decode pictures transmitted by the spy
satellites of the USA, Red Star observed that Washington was transforming this country into an electronic intelligence base in South Asia.

Yuri Andropov died on 10 February 1984. In his talks with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi held in Kremlin on 14 February, Konstantin Chernenko, the newly elected General Secretary of the CPSU, assured her that the Soviet leadership would further strengthen and develop all round relations with friendly India. He sought close cooperation with New Delhi with a view to lessening international tension and ensuring world peace.

The Soviet media devoted considerable attention to India's mounting internal problems and expressed friendly concern on the rapid increase in the activities of the extremist forces. It expressed the hope that the democratic and nationalist forces of India will be able to pool their efforts with a view to resisting the intrigues of internal and external forces, which were working against the unity and territorial integrity of their nation.

**Under Rajiv Gandhi**

In Moscow the news of Indira Gandhi's assassination on 31 October 1984 was received with utmost grief and sympathy, Prime Minister Tikhonov, who took part in the funeral of the departed leader, expressed the hope that "the youthful and dynamic" leadership of Rajiv would contribute to the further strengthening of Indo-Soviet relations. "Great are the services of Mrs Gandhi; a champion of non-alignment, in the struggle to strengthen World peace and security, to curb the arms race and avoid the threat of nuclear catastrophe"—wrote Red Star on the eve of the 67th birth anniversary of Indira Gandhi. Remembering her as "a great friend of the Soviet Union" and "a leading architect of unbreakable friendship between the Indian and the Soviet peoples", the Soviet daily maintained that the cause for which Indira Gandhi gave her life should triumph. It expressed the confidence that Indo-Soviet friendship would further develop. The Soviet Union has been and will remain a reliable friend of India"—noted the Politbureau of the CPSU at its meeting held on 23 November. It re-affirmed "the Soviet desire to strengthen and develop mutually advantageous cooperation in all spheres in the name of social progress and peace among nations".

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was not new to Moscow. He had cultivated good rapport with the Soviets during his visit to the Soviet capital in July 1983 in his capacity as
the General Secretary of the INC. The provisions of the Soviet protocol were relaxed in order to show a rare gesture to Rajiv (then only a member of the Indian Parliament), who was received at the airport by A.P. Shitikov, Chairman of the Supreme Soviet. Izvestia introduced him as "an eminent Indian politician." During his stay in Moscow, Rajiv Gandhi held discussions with important Soviet leaders like Foreign Minister Gromyko, Defence Minister Ustinov and Foreign Trade Minister Patolichev. Other important Soviet dignitaries with whom Rajiv discussed bilateral matters were Kuznetsov, the First Deputy Chairman of Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and Arkhipov, First Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR.12

In its message of warm congratulations to Rajiv on his grand electoral victory in December 1984, the Council of Ministers of the USSR re-affirmed its support to the Indian people. Hailing Rajiv Gandhi as a firm follower of the course of Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi, the Soviet Government expressed the hope that under his able leadership, the traditionally friendly relations between India and the Soviet Union would continue to develop in all directions. The Soviet Union responded positively to the six-nations' appeal for disarmament made at the initiative of the Indian Prime Minister.

Kostantin Chernenko died on 11 March 1985. Rajiv Gandhi visited Moscow to take part in the funeral of the departed Soviet leader. In his talks with Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the CPSU, the Indian Prime Minister expressed the hope that his country's relations with the Soviet Union would continue to develop. Moved by the Soviet leader's warmth and amiable disposition, Rajiv Gandhi observed that Gorbachev was "a man with a clear perspective". He observed that under Gorbachev's leadership the USSR would emerge stronger. Referring to the attempts by some countries to create misunderstanding between India and the Soviet Union, Rajiv reiterated that India was committed to the time-tested policy of friendship with Moscow.

Rajiv-Gorbachev Talks

The Soviet Union was the first country on the foreign itinerary of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. In an interview with the Press Trust of India correspondent in Moscow, Gorbachev referred to the "personal relationship" with Rajiv and observed that his visit would be "a big event in the life of our two States". "We think that a united, strong and peace-loving India is essential to the world today"—General Secretary of the CPSU.
remarked and termed the outcome of Indo-Soviet friendly relations as "a unique, priceless heritage. In his interview with the TASS, Rajiv observed that he welcomed the peace-loving policies of the Soviet Union and the initiative taken by her to resume discussions with the USA on disarmament.\textsuperscript{13}

Rajiv Gandhi's six-day visit to the USSR (21-26 May) gave ample opportunities to leaders of both the countries to have direct exchange of views on matters of bilateral and international significance.

At the Kremlin dinner in honour of the Indian Prime Minister on 21 May, Mikhail Gorbachev spoke at length about various aspects of Indo-Soviet cooperation and expressed his keen desire to raise it to a qualitatively new level in many areas. After pointing out to the dangers of the "Star Wars" programme of Washington and the risk of the nuclear war, the Soviet leader applauded the emergence of the non-aligned movement "as a major factor of world politics".

While mentioning the continuation of "detente" in Europe as a tangible result of the post-Helsinki initiatives, Gorbachev revived the earlier Soviet proposal on "the problem of security in Asia". In a positive reference to China, General Secretary of the CPSU put forward his re-assertion regarding Asian security by emphasizing the fact that "both the nuclear powers situated in the Asian continent—the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China—have pledged not to make first use of nuclear weapons".

Mentioning the various initiatives for ensuring peace and security in Asia, Gorbachev pleaded for a common and comprehensive approach to the problem of security in Asia and a possible pooling of efforts by Asian States in this direction. He proposed "bilateral talks and multilateral consultations—up to the holding, at some time in the future, of an all-Asian forum for an exchange of opinions and a joint search for constructive solutions" to the problems of security in Asia. Gorbachev expressed the hope that "India as a great power enjoying much prestige and respect both in Asian countries and throughout the world can play a very important part in this process".

In the course of his banquet speech, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi observed that friendship and cooperation with the USSR was an integral element of the foreign policy of India which regarded the Soviet people as friends "who have stood by them in times of need. While assuring the Soviet leaders that he would continue the "splendid record of
Indo-Soviet relations" built over the last three decades the Prime Minister highlighted the present-day tensions and dangers of a nuclear holocaust.

Rajiv Gandhi voiced his deep concern over the militarisation of the Indian Ocean. He affirmed India's keen desire to promote harmonious relations in South Asia and her firm opposition to all kinds of intervention or interference anywhere. Welcoming Moscow's positive response to the Delhi Declaration and the resumption of the Soviet-US negotiations on disarmament in Geneva, the Prime Minister reiterated that in the nuclear age peace was the basic yearning of all the peoples of the world. He referred to the substantial and principled support of the Soviet Government to. India's economic development and added that it looked forward to a rapid enlargement of this cooperation.

Rajiv Gandhi expressed his opinion on various issues confronting the foreign policies of India and the USSR during the press conference held in Moscow on 22 May. He contradicted a speculation that the Soviet leader had demanded some sort of commitment from India on her policy towards the West. While expressing his serious concern over Pakistan being close to developing nuclear weapons, he complained that the USA, which could do more in stopping Islamabad from developing a nuclear weapon, was actually turning a "blind eye" to this problem and rather making the only exception to the Symington Agreement by allowing concessions to this country.14

The Prime Minister touched upon the issue of Asian security as well. He termed it as an "old concept". Asian nations had their own proposals, he observed and added, "We do not want Asia to become a hotbed of tension and ships prowling in our areas and shores". We are really for nations not interfering or intervening in areas outside their own—Rajiv emphasized. On the issue of Afghanistan, he said briefly that India was against any foreign intervention or interference in the internal affairs of a country.

On 22 May, Rajiv and Gorbachev signed two documents which contained basic guidelines for economic, trade, scientific and technical cooperation between the USSR and India for the period ending the year 2000. As a result of these two agreements, India got a massive Soviet credit of about Rs 1100 crore to finance a package of important projects like oil, machine-building, energy and coal industry. These agreements provided for the participation of Indian organizations in industrial projects in the USSR in a form and
manner to be mutually decided in specific cases where such cooperation would be deemed necessary. The two sides considered cooperation in their joint ventures in third countries.

Rajiv's visit to Moscow was an event of great significance in many ways. It was practically the first intimate personal contact between the new top leadership of the two countries in the wake of a change over from the older to a younger generation. The visit helped the two leaders to acquire a greater understanding of each other's perspectives and strategies to usher their respective countries into the twenty first century through their pursuit of a course of modernizing their economies.

**Friendship with Soviets - Sheet-Anchor of Rajiv's Foreign Policy**

The euphoria generated in some circles with regard to an impending shift in India's foreign policy on the eve of the Prime Minister's visit to the USA in June did not last long. India's emphasis on private sector economy and her search for high technology in every field, including defence production, might have tempted Washington to pull New Delhi away from Moscow. Subsequently the beginning of a definite and an overall improvement in Indo-US relations has been recorded. But there is nothing to conclude that there is any move by Rajiv in the direction of a sudden change in the course of the country's foreign policy as chartered by his predecessors. India's traditional friendship with the Soviet Union continues to be the sheet-anchor of her foreign policy under Rajiv's stewardship.

In an interview to Time on 13 October 1985, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi referred to his recent meeting with Mikhail Gorbachev and spoke high of his "young and dynamic leadership". "I thought he was very open. He spoke frankly. He has got lots of new ideas for the Soviet Union"—he observed and added that the General Secretary of the CPSU was "tough as a leader", was "not a pushover" and had "sufficient backing within the system to do what he thinks has to be done". Rajiv further remarked, "I liked him. There is certain warmth and openness about his personality that most people like". While referring to the development in Indo-US relations, however, the Prime Minister said that the "US has been too demanding of its—what should I say—allies. Demanding in an undemocratic way".

**Prime Minister's Moscow Detour**

Rajiv's decision to visit the Soviet capital for a brief meeting with Gorbachev after the Indian embassy at the Hague received an important message from Moscow indicates
the further strengthening of the high level of personal rapport between the top leaders of the two countries. After attending the commemorative session at the UN and concluding his five-nation tour, the Indian Prime Minister flew to Moscow on 26 October to hold wide-ranging talks with General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev. The Soviet leader also reportedly cut short his visit to Sofia to be available at home.

Rajiv Gandhi appraised the Soviet leader of his discussions with President Ronald Reagan in New York on the international situation. He further informed Gorbachev of the deliberations of the Commonwealth Heads of Governments Meetings (CHOGM) held in Nassau, at the Bahamas.

In his turn, Gorbachev informed Rajiv Gandhi of the deliberations at the meeting of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact held at Sofia. He highly evaluated India's contribution to the realisation of peace and international security. The General Secretary then drew attention of the Prime Minister to the constructive Soviet proposals, which would lead to fundamental changes in the development of international relations, the end of arms race on the earth and the prevention of its extension to outer space. He stressed the determination of the USSR to achieve the solutions of the most urgent problems facing mankind in the present. In his talks with the Soviet leader, Rajiv Gandhi declared his support to nuclear disarmament, the prevention of the militarisation of outer space and reduction of strategic arms.

As reported in the Indian press, both the leaders exchanged views on the threat to the security of the Indian sub-continent and expressed their concern over Pakistan's nuclear designs. Gorbachev's consultations with Rajiv on the eve of the forthcoming Geneva summit, his frank discussions with the Indian Prime Minister on several important questions including Pakistan's nuclear designs and the situation in Afghanistan indicate the closeness in rapport between the leaders of the two countries. Rajiv-Gorbachev talks revealed that India and the USSR had some common perceptions of the dangers created by the military build-up in Pakistan with massive US assistance. There was much coincidence in the approaches of these two countries to many international problems including the situation around Afghanistan and the danger posed by the nuclear arms race.

Referring to Pakistan in the course of the press conference in New Delhi on 28 October, the Indian Prime Minister observed that his talks with Gorbachev and Reagan
reinforced his fears regarding Pakistan's nuclear designs. He appreciated the categorical Soviet stand in this respect "that the implementation of the nuclear programme in Pakistan is now in full swing and that the end product of the programme will be the bomb". Rajiv Gandhi found Gorbachev "very understanding", whereas from Reagan he received far less reassuring response. In reply to a question on the Afghan problem, the Prime Minister said that he discussed it with both Gorbachev and Reagan. He, however, stressed that unless the US gave firm guarantees of non-interference, it would be difficult for the Soviet Union to withdraw her troops from Afghanistan. As to the Soviet views on arms limitations and the disarmament issue, which were coming on the agenda at the forthcoming Geneva summit, Rajiv remarked that he found the Soviet Union "very understanding", her proposals "positive" and deserving serious consideration. The Indian Prime Minister, who mobilised favourable world opinion on the eve of the Geneva summit during his visit to several world capitals, thus used his Moscow detour to exchange his views with the Soviet leader on several issues of both bilateral and international importance.

A Notable Gesture

Rajiv's appreciation of the Soviet leadership was reciprocated warmly by the Central Committee of the CPSU, which sent a message of greetings to the INC on the eve of the latter's centenary celebrations in December. Referring to the powerful impetus that Indo-Soviet relations had received as a result of meetings between the General Secretary of the CPSU and the Prime Minister of India, the message paid eloquent tributes to India on her achievements since her independence and on her championship of the policy of non-alignment. The USSR and India stand among those front rank countries, which are well aware of the importance of the responsibility of the moment, when it is not advisable to lose time in the struggle for bringing about the fundamental changes in the world—it observed.

The CPSU sent a delegation to the centenary session of the INC. Viktor G. Afanasyev, member of the Central Committee and chief editor of Pravda, led this friendly delegation. Congress President Rajiv Gandhi appreciated it as "a rare gesture". The INC equally reciprocated this warmth and sent the first-ever delegation to the 27th Congress of the CPSU (25 February-6 March 1986), which was led by Arjun Singh, Vice-President of the party.
Gorbachev for Closer Ties with India

In his famous speech at the presentation ceremony of the Order of Lenin to the city of Vladivostok on 28 July 1986, Mikhail Gorbachev made a moving reference to "Great India" and looked "at international policy from the Asian-Pacific viewpoint". He highlighted the need to improve relations with the People's Republic of China in the interest of both the countries. The General Secretary announced the withdrawal of six regiments of Soviet troops from Afghanistan before the end of 1986.

Gorbachev spoke high of the role of the non-aligned movement in world affairs in "overcoming the world's division into military blocs", "in looking for ways to diminish the nuclear threat", "in rejecting and condemning exploitation as well as the policy of aggression and neo-colonialism". The Soviet leader further observed that "Great India, with its moral authority and traditional wisdom, with its specific political experience and huge economic potentialities, is the recognized leader of this movement."

Highly praising India's "contribution to assessing standards of equitable co-existence and justice in the international community", the Soviet leader asserted that "friendly relations between the USSR and India became a stabilising factor on a worldwide scale". Recounting the "favourite methods" of imperialism such as "economic blackmail, intrigues and plots against the leadership of the country" and "interference in internal problems", Gorbachev held that "it maintains separatists, finances and even directly arms counter revolution and terrorists". Among the various examples, which show as to "how the contemporary mechanism of imperialist intervention and diktat operates", he listed "Punjab" and "the Tamil problem" as "attempts being made to turn this one against India too".

While elucidating his views on Asian security, the General Secretary laid stress on the fact that "the Soviet Union is also an Asian and a Pacific country". He referred to the complex problem of this vast region and named India as "one of the major states of the world", "situated on the enormous expanses of this territory spreading over almost half of the earth". Gorbachev dwelt at length on the significance of this "giant part of the world with a mass of diverse nations and people". The Soviet leader expressed his anxiety on "the preservation of conflict situations" in this area and the coming up of "the militarised triangle of Washington, Tokyo and Seoul".
The General Secretary set aside any "claim to privileges and special position" in the Asian-Pacific area and offered not to make "egoistic attempts" to strengthen security of the USSR "at someone else's expense". "Our interest is in the pooling of efforts and in cooperation, with full respect for each people's right to live as they choose and resolve their problems on their own in conditions of peace. We are in favour of building together new, fair relations in Asia and the Pacific"—Gorbachev observed. He further added that "the Soviet Union will seek to lend dynamism to its bilateral relations with all countries situated here without exception".

The General Secretary held that the Soviet "views about the security in the Asian-Pacific region have not come of thin air", rather "they take account of the experience of the -past and the modern times". "The principles of Panch Sheel and of Bandung have not sunk into oblivion. The positive examples of the truce in Korea, the 1954 Geneva meeting on Indochina, the Indo-Park agreement in Tashkent, live on in the diplomatic experience.

Gorbachev spoke at length about the "noticeable improvement" in Sino-Soviet relations and declared that the "Soviet Union is prepared—any time, and at any level—to discuss with China questions of additional measures for creating an atmosphere of good neighbourhood ".

As regards Afghanistan, the Soviet leader declared that "six regiments will be returned home from Afghanistan before the end of 1986 ... to the areas of their permanent deployment in the Soviet Union and in such a way that all those who take an interest in this could easily ascertain this". He demanded that "so serious a step", which was taken by the Soviet Union to speed up political settlement and to give it another impetus", "must be answered by the curtailment of outside interference in the affairs of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan". "If the intervention against the DRA continues"—Gorbachev warned—"the Soviet Union will stand up for this neighbour".

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi made a reference to Gorbachev's speech at Vladivostok in the course of the press conference held in New Delhi after his return from Ixtapa summit in Mexico. In reply to a question at the press conference held on 8 August at the venue of the summit, the Prime Minister expressed the hope that the recent announcement of Soviet withdrawal of some troops from Afghanistan before the end of the year would reduce tension in that area.
Speaking high of Gorbachev's leadership in a press conference held at Bangkok on 20 October, Rajiv Gandhi observed that his Vladivostok speech gave a new dimension because the Soviet leader was interested in easing out tensions. "It is time for the rest of the world to take advantage of the situation and improve relations with the Soviet Union"—the Prime Minister said.

**Indo-Soviet Cooperation in Nuclear Disarmament**

India and the USSR hold largely identical views on the question of universal security without nuclear weapons. It was in keeping with the New Delhi Declaration of the Seventh Non-Aligned Summit (1983) that the Heads of State and Government of six countries met at New Delhi to launch some initiatives for nuclear disarmament in January 1985. Being the Chairman of the non-aligned movement, India played a vital role in the preparation of these initiatives on behalf of these six nations now commonly called the Delhi Six. The USSR positively responded to the call of these countries from the four continents. (These countries are Argentina, Greece, India, Mexico, Sweden and Tanzania.) The initiatives of the Delhi Six are directed at the relaxation of international tension, limitation of arms race on the earth and its prevention in the outer space.

The ideas outlined in the Declaration of the Delhi Six have been widely acclaimed in the Soviet Union and they are very much in consonance with her view on the creation of a comprehensive system of international security. Both India and the USSR thus stand for complete and irreversible liquidation of all types of nuclear weapons everywhere.

Mikhail Gorbachev came forward with a unilateral declaration of moratorium on nuclear tests for five months with effect from 6 August 1985, i.e. the fortieth anniversary of Hiroshima holocaust. In a statement issued on this occasion, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi made a forceful plea for complete elimination of nuclear weapons. Further, he deplored the nuclearisation of weapons in any form in a message to the Non-Aligned Foreign Ministers Conference which was held in Luanda early in September. Talks held between Rajiv Gandhi and Gorbachev during the Prime Minister's stop-over in Moscow in October 1985 further testify to the fact that India and the USSR were quite willing to cooperate with each other and other likeminded countries, which were ready to offer wholehearted support to the cause of nuclear disarmament and prevention of the militarisation of outer space.
In an important policy statement on 15 January 1986, Mikhail Gorbachev paid compliments to "India and other members of the non-aligned movement" for their contributions to nuclear disarmament. He referred to the decision of the Politbureau of the CPSU demanding measures for "curbing the nuclear arms race on earth and preventing it in outer space-for-an overall reduction of the war danger". He proposed "a concrete programme aimed at the complete elimination of nuclear weapons throughout the world within a precisely defined period of time". Gorbachev mentioned three stages of nuclear disarmament and called upon "all people and states, and, naturally, above all nuclear states, to support the programme of eliminating nuclear weapons before the year 2000". While offering "mutually acceptable and strictly verifiable agreements", the Soviet leader unilaterally extended moratorium on all nuclear explosions beyond 31 December 1985 and asked the USA to join this initiative.\textsuperscript{15}

Gorbachev offered to follow "international procedures including on-site inspections-and "appropriate verification of compliance with the moratorium". Agreeing to the non-aligned proposal that "consultations be held with the aim of extending the 1963 Moscow Treaty", he declared that "ensuring security in Asia is of vital importance to the Soviet Union", whose "programme for eliminating nuclear and chemical weapons by the end of the current century is harmonious with the sentiments of the peoples of the Asian continent...". "We highly appreciate the constructive initiatives put forward by the socialist countries of Asia, by India and other members of the non-aligned movement"—observed the General Secretary. He added that the Soviet proposal was "a contribution to a search, together with all the Asian countries, for an overall comprehensive approach to establishing a system of security and lasting peace on this continent."

Mikhail Gorbachev again reverted to his proposals of nuclear disarmament in the course of his political report to the 27th Congress of the CPSU. He declared that "the struggle against the nuclear threat, against the arms race, for the preservation and strengthening of universal peace remains the fundamental direction of the party's activities in the international arena". While listing a series of unilateral steps of the Soviet Government including "a moratorium on the deployment of intermediate-range missiles in Europe, reduction in the number of these missiles and ban on all nuclear explosions", the Soviet leader referred to his recent talks with leaders and members of the governments of
many countries. "The Soviet-Indian, Soviet-French and Soviet-US summits were necessary and useful steps"—he added.

While speaking in a press conference held in New Delhi on 5 March, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi observed that the nuclear arms race was a major threat to world peace and the only solution lay in total disarmament. Referring to the Geneva summit, he expressed happiness over the recent meeting between the two leaders. Rajiv Gandhi said that though much had come out of their talks, it did not amount to a "major breakthrough" but the two leaders sat together and understood each other better.16

In an assessment of the current international situation, India prepared a draft of a political declaration. This was presented at the Non-Aligned Foreign Ministers Conference, which was hosted by New Delhi in April and inaugurated by the Prime Minister. The draft declaration welcomed the programme put forward by the Soviet Union as "comprehensive and timely". It noted that the objectives and priorities mentioned in the Soviet proposal were in consonance with the position taken consistently by the non-aligned countries on this issue. Outer space is a common heritage of mankind and it should be used for peaceful purposes only—the draft observed and added that nuclear disarmament is an issue of human survival. It particularly welcomed the time-bound nature of the Soviet programme asking for complete elimination of all types of nuclear weapons at the end of the century. Pending negotiations on a nuclear weapons test ban treaty, the draft resolution demanded that there should be moratorium on all tests, production and deployment of nuclear weapons.

India's view of nuclear disarmament thus clearly indicates that there has been much similarity between her stand and the Soviet position in this matter. Mikhail Kapitsa, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister visited New Delhi on 17 July for an exchange of views on various aspects of the nuclear problem which was to be discussed by the heads of governments of the six countries at the forthcoming Mexico summit scheduled to be held early in August.97 While referring to the Soviet initiatives on nuclear disarmament in his Vladivostok speech on 28 July, Mikhail Gorbachev expressed satisfaction on the positive response from the "friendly countries" for having supported the Soviet proposals. "We need peace, we again and again are issuing the call for putting an end to the arms race, stopping nuclear madness and eliminating nuclear weapons..." he said.
And when the Mexican Declaration calling for an end to all nuclear explosions by the USSR and the USA was adopted at the Ixtapa summit on 7 August, the Politbureau of the CPSU came forward to extend the unilateral moratorium on nuclear explosions until 1 January 1987. In his statement on Soviet television on 18 August, Gorbachev referred to the appeal of the Delhi Six reiterated at Ixtapa and called for measures "to change the world armed to the limits into a world free of weapons".

Further, in his reply to the message of the Delhi Six, Gorbachev wrote among other signatories of the Declaration to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi that he was "in full agreement with the conviction" in the Delhi Declaration and shared their "appreciation of the fatal consequences" of nuclear arms. While agreeing to the measures which would "halt the qualitative improvement and quantitative growth of the nuclear arms arsenals", he proposed to link with it the "beginning of the process on the road leading to a nuclear-free world.

"It is my profound conviction that if the USA joined the Soviet moratorium and our extension of the moratorium gives it an extra chance to do so—a serious and responsible step would be taken towards stopping the improvement of the most destructive weapons and their stockpiling”—the Soviet leader observed. He further wrote to Rajiv, "a meeting of experts from the six countries and Soviet and American experts as proposed by you would make a valuable contribution towards the accomplishment of the goal of comprehensive nuclear test ban and set the stage for energetic and businesslike talks on these problems".

Gorbachev assured the Indian Prime Minister that he was ready to make use of the proposal of the Mexican Declaration with regard to offering "assistance in verifying the suspension of nuclear testing, including on site inspections". "It would be of course useful jointly to discuss your next proposals and look for mutually acceptable solutions to the problem of verification of the suspension of nuclear testing”—the General Secretary added. He observed that the signatories of the Mexican Declaration and the USSR "approach in the same manner the serious consequences with which the opening of outer space as a new scene of the arms race is fraught". Gorbachev welcomed the question of another Soviet-American summit to which a reference was made in this Declaration.
It is thus apparent that the Soviet view of nuclear disarmament has got tremendous support from the non-aligned movement. Similarly the appeal of the Delhi Six for nuclear disarmament, which was further reiterated at Ixtapa, has evoked positive response from the USSR. While referring to the six-nation summit at Mexico in the course of the press conference held at the New Delhi air-port on 1 August, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi regretted the tendency of the nuclear weapon force not to go in for disarmament. He, however, observed, "We have been supported by the Soviet Union, particularly by the Soviet Communist Party leader, Gorbachev now and earlier". In reply to a question put by the editor-in-chief of the Czechoslovak newspaper Rude Pravo on 8 September, Mikhail Gorbachev listed the Harare Conference of the non-aligned movement and the leaders of the Delhi Six among those, who "have expressed support for the Soviet moratorium". It goes without saying that India has played a vital role in shaping the attitude of the non-aligned countries and the Delhi Six towards the issue of nuclear disarmament—a cause championed so ardently by the Soviets.

New Delhi closely watched the Reykjavik summit which broke down on 12 October over the US refusal to stop its Star Wars research outside the laboratory. At a banquet that was hosted at Jakarta in his honour by President Suharto of Indonesia on 13 October, Rajiv Gandhi said that the failure of talks between Gorbachev and Reagan at the Icelandic capital was disappointing. He, however, hoped that "all is not lost" and "something can be rebuilt" on arms control proposals. Rajiv expressed the hope that the time-table for the continuation of comprehensive negotiations should be agreed upon.

In reply to the welcome speech by Bob Hawke, the Australian Prime Minister, without naming any country Rajiv Gandhi critically remarked at some power, which assumed that the use of nuclear weapons could be prevented by escalating their destructive power, stocking and deploying them in large numbers. "This they call deterrence—he quipped. The Indian Prime Minister told the National Press Club in Canberra on 15 October that the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI), programme of the USA would lead to the escalation of the armed race and there were "inherent dangers" of a "holocaust" in it. Commenting further on the Soviet-US summit, Rajiv Gandhi said that the SDI came in the way of an agreement on nuclear disarmament. India supports the Soviet stand, which appears to be "correct"—he added.
The development of Indo-Soviet relations under Rajiv Gandhi and Mikhail Gorbachev thus shows that friendly ties between these two countries have attained several new heights. Cooperation between India and the USSR has increased in both bilateral and international affairs. Both the leaders have come forward to give fresh impetus to friendly ties between the two countries. Their views on several vital issues including security environment in South Asia and nuclear disarmament are almost identical.

No better occasion could be available for the reaffirmation of the common desire to strengthen Indo-Soviet friendship than the visit of the General Secretary of the CPSU to New Delhi in November 1986.

While drawing attention to Gorbachev's impending visit to the Indian capital in the course of a press conference at Auckland on 17 October, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi observed, "We are looking forward to much stronger relationship with the Soviet Union". "We are looking towards the visit to improve our economic relations and our understanding of each other".

**Gorbachev's Visit to India**

Mikhail Gorbachev's four-day visit to New Delhi on 25-28 November, 1986 proved a landmark in Indo-Soviet relations both in their depth and dimensions. The General Secretary of the CPSU was given an unprecedented and a rousing welcome. He was warmly received by Rajiv Gandhi as a "crusader for peace". In his welcome address, the Prime Minister referred to the USSR as a tried and trusted friend in India's hour of need. He observed that relations between India and the Soviet Union developed despite differences in their economic and social systems." "Our friendship is testament to the historical imperative of a world order based on coexistence and cooperation" — Rajiv Gandhi added. In his reply, Mikhail Gorbachev expressed the desire that Indo-Soviet relations should have "still greater dynamism". "The creative energy inherent in Indo-Soviet cooperation is derived from the fact that it was built on trust, equality, respect and careful consideration of each other's special needs and interests" — he remarked.

In the first round of talks on 25 November, the two leaders called for a new approach to issues of peace, international security and nuclear disarmament. At this plenary session, Rajiv Gandhi welcomed Mikhail Gorbachev "not only as a world statesman, but, most of all, as a friend". He described the General Secretary's visit to India
as "a historical one" and expressed the hope that "it would be a turning point" in the further strengthening of bilateral relations between the two countries, for mutual benefit and for world peace. Referring to the new thrust of the economic policy in the Soviet Union, he observed that India should benefit from the exchange of experience with the Soviet Union in this context.

In reply to Rajiv's address, Mikhail Gorbachev observed that relations between the USSR and India were marked by high degree of goodwill and cooperation. While recalling the legacy passed on to the present leaders of the two countries by their predecessors, he observed that both the Soviet and Indian societies had entered the period of important changes, and this opened additional new opportunities for the widening of cooperation and substantially raising its quality.

Welcoming General Secretary Gorbachev at the dinner on 25 November, Rajiv Gandhi reiterated India's resolute opposition to the militarisation of the outer space and her firm desire to remain in the forefront of the movement for the abolition of the nuclear arsenals.

Recalling Mikhail Gorbachev's "thought-provoking reflections" on the "complex and historically specific problems of peace and, stability in Asia and the Pacific region" at Vladivostok, Rajiv Gandhi maintained that "for decades the people of India cherished the vision, of a resurgent, prosperous Asia...". "The profound richness and diversity of the Asian tradition, the ancient wisdom of our societies, and of our vital urge to transform our social and economic conditions for the welfare of our peoples give us a promising starting point for a new pattern of peace and stability, development and cooperation in our continent, he added. Further the Prime Minister laid emphasis on "greater exchanges of ideas at all levels" "as a basis for cooperation in diverse fields" which would ultimately move towards the objective of harmonious relations in the Asian continent based on freedom, equality and justice. Rajiv termed Gorbachev's proposal in this direction as "a major contribution".

Referring to the Indo-Soviet Treaty, Rajiv Gandhi observed that "its importance has increased in the context of the current world situation and recent events in our part of the world". He attached more importance to the opening of new vistas in Indo-Soviet economic relations especially in the field of frontier technologies.
Mikhail Gorbachev in his turn maintained that there was "every reason for Soviet-Indian relations not only to remain good but to make constant headway on the solid foundation of mutual respect, mutual benefit and common aspirations for peace". He expressed the desire that Soviet-Indian friendship should be made "a still more influential factor in international life for the benefit of peace, disarmament and development".

On 26 November, Rajiv Gandhi and Mikhail Gorbachev resumed their talks on regional issues. They had an all-round discussion on nuclear arms control, disarmament, problems of peace and security in the Asian-Pacific region and the entire gamut of Indo-Soviet relations as well.

In the speech delivered at the House of Soviet Science, Culture and Art on 27 November, Mikhail Gorbachev emphasised that "the 1971 Treaty is fully consistent with the national interests of both the countries and serves as an instrument of peace and stability in Asia—and beyond it". Referring to the Indo-Soviet relations, he observed that "they represent an important asset in their own right" and further declared, "we shall not make a single step in our foreign policy that could damage India's real interests". The Soviet Union strongly condemns all the intrigues and plots against India as well as any attempts to undermine her integrity and unity" — he added. Referring to "the high degree of interaction between the USSR and India", Mikhail Gorbachev remarked that it will make for "greater potential of the forces of peace and for a more secure future in the world" and demonstrate that it was possible "to counter imperial claims and ambitions and the selfish neo-globalist schemes". "Soviet people are well aware of the efforts that the people and the Government of India have to make to defend their sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity ... the louder India's voice in the world, the more attractive the example of its independent foreign policy which rejects imperialist diktat and interference..." — the General Secretary observed. "No one will be able to call in question, let alone diminish, India's real and tremendous contributions to the contemporary development of Asia and of the world civilization".18 — he added.

The General Secretary of the CPSU addressed members of the two Houses of the Parliament on 27 November. He outlined three major proposals for the launching of a "Star Peace" programme, the demilitarisation of the Indian Ocean and the enhancement of the authority of the United Nations.
Referring to the Soviet programme for a phased elimination of all nuclear arms and other weapons of mass destruction before the end of the twentieth century, Mikhail Gorbachev observed that it was in consistence with the position of the "Delhi Six" and India's policy. "A breakthrough can be made" and "the nuclear threat can be removed" — he added. The Soviet leader further said that "the Soviet Union and India share the same approach to the idea of establishing a comprehensive system of international security ... stability and security in Asia are a common concern for both India and the Soviet Union". Declaring that "space, this common property of mankind, should be exclusively peaceful" and what the mankind needed was Star Peace and not Star Wars, the General Secretary further proposed to establish, with the help of the leading space powers, an international centre to carry out joint research and develop space technologies at the request of developing countries.

Mikhail Gorbachev called for enhanced military and political stability in the Indian Ocean area and offered to begin negotiations with the US and non-littoral states on the substantial reduction in the size and activities of the naval forces there.

The Soviet leader asked for the enhancement of the role of the UNO in view of the significant growth of its membership and independent attitude of its members. While observing that international institutions and organisations, such as the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organisation of African Unity, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and others have acquired greater significance, he maintained that "in these circumstances the work of the UN becomes even more important".

Speaking highly of "the proximity of positions held by the Soviet Union and the great India on the fundamental problems" of the day, Mikhail Gorbachev observed that political thinking manifested itself internationally for the first time" in relations between these two countries. Referring to the Indo-Soviet Treaty, the Soviet leader held that "the Treaty has not just opened broad prospects for a steady development of mutually beneficial ties and contacts; its supreme meaning lies in the reciprocal commitment to act, should a complicated situation arise for one side or both". While stressing that "friendship and cooperation between the Soviet Union and the Republic of India have stood the test of time", he maintained that when "such situations did arise, both the Soviet Union and India have remained faithful to their commitments and acted in accordance with the spirit and letter of our reaty".
Four important documents were signed on 27 November. Mikhail Gorbachev and Rajiv Gandhi signed a Delhi Declaration on the principles of the nuclear-weapon-free and non-violent world. It declared that "the nuclear arms build-up and the development of space weapons undermine the common conviction that a nuclear war should never be fought and can never be won". The Declaration enumerated ten principles of building a world free from nuclear weapons and violence and laid stress on the propagation of peaceful coexistence, mutual understanding, political and economic independence of every country, diversion of the resources spent on arms race to plans of socio-economic development and the replacement of the "equilibrium of fear" by "comprehensive international security". The historic Delhi Declaration expressed the hope that the total transformation of the world scene was possible because there already existed a large coalition for peace in the non-aligned movement, the six-nation initiative and peace-loving people throughout the world. International relations should be restructured so that confrontation is replaced by cooperation and conflict situations resolved through peaceful political, and not military, means.

The agreement on festivals of the two countries was signed by the Human Resources Development Minister, V.V. Narasimha Rao, and the Soviet Foreign Minister, Eduard Shevardnadze.

The economic and technical cooperation agreement as well as the consular convention were also signed. The Soviet Union offered to India a credit of 1,500 million roubles (approximately Rs 2,000 crore) for the purpose of supporting four major programmes in the steel and energy sectors. The agreement included construction of a dam and hydro-power project in the Tehri region, modernisation of the Bokaro steel plant, development of four coking coal mines in the Maria coal-fields and exploration of hydrocarbons in an on-shore area of West Bengal. It provided for several new features in the nature of the Soviet credits.

The Indo-Soviet joint statement, signed by Rajiv Gandhi and Mikhail Gorbachev, was issued on 27 November. On 28 November, the two leaders addressed a joint press conference.

From the various rounds of talks held between the leaders of India and the USSR and the agreements signed by them, it becomes clear that the visit of the General Secretary
proved successful in giving more meaningful shape and deeper content to their traditional ties in almost every sphere.

The Indo-Soviet economic relations which were developing some bottlenecks got a boost up. Various sorts of innovations have been introduced into the fabric of economic relations between these two countries. The involvement of India's private sector has been envisaged. In addition to the expansion of Indo-Soviet cooperation in traditional items like steel, power, oil and coal, many new potential ventures have been identified. Co-production arrangements have also been conceived. Joint ventures, which have been figuring for the last twenty years in Indo-Soviet economic negotiations only in principle, have been given priority for the first time in the agreement, signed during Gorbachev's visit to India. The Soviet credits have been given to India on an unprecedented scale. The largest economic agreement ever signed between the two countries consists of several new and more attractive elements like the local cost financing and the turn-key approach. Searches are being made to look at new areas and new modes of economic cooperation. Bilateral trade is to quadruple in just six years.

Both the countries decided to give a qualitative thrust to science and technology cooperation. While taking perhaps an altogether new approach in this core sector, India and the USSR agreed to promote joint research projects in frontier technology areas so as to move further to production stage.

At a time when both India and the USSR are facing several problems in the economic field, when both these countries are poised for accelerating the rate of their economic development and modernising their technologies, the visit of the General Secretary has opened up many new vistas to invigorate the present stage of their cooperation.

Gorbachev's visit has proved a well-timed diplomatic feat in recent times and a great morale-booster to India at a difficult juncture when New Delhi was feeling isolated. It has immeasurably increased the relevance of the further development of Indo-Soviet political relations in the context of the induction of US sophisticated arms into Pakistan. The acquisition of US air and naval base facilities in Pakistan, its ever growing nuclear capability, the impending AWACS delivery as well as F-16 deals between these two countries have fuelled further the old tensions and rivalries in the sub-continent. India used
the Soviet leader's visit to re-affirm her close ties with the USSR and to demonstrate to the world that she was not alone in the fast changing security environment in the South Asian region. In reply to a question as to what was his view of the militarisation of Pakistan by the US, Mikhail Gorbachev replied that neighbours like the USSR, India and Pakistan should always live in peace and build their relations in the spirit of understanding.

The Soviet leader made use of his visit to assure India that improvement in Moscow's relations with Peking would not detract it from developing its relations with New Delhi. "Our steps in that field will never harm her. We will expand our relations with India and the current visit is a proof of it" declared the General Secretary in the course of his press conference on 28 November. In reply to a question as to how did he view the Chinese intrusion on the north-eastern border of India and what was the Soviet stand on this, he maintained that "both sides have a desire to settle border disputes in the spirit of mutual understanding, through a political process". "This is a correct approach and we for our part welcome it." Further he expressed the hope that the tendency for normalisation and better relations in Asia, including relations between China, India and the Soviet Union, should get momentum.

Some of Mikhail Gorbachev's statements made during his visit to India demonstrated the Soviet desire for improving its relations with China, Japan and the ASEAN countries. His reference to the "topical problems of Asia, the Indian and the Pacific Ocean region" in his speech made soon after his arrival in India testified to Soviet concern for an overall improvement in relations among countries of this vast area in its immediate neighbourhood. Nevertheless the Soviet leader's visit to India reaffirmed the importance Moscow attached to its relations with New Delhi. By visiting India first in the Third World countries, Gorbachev kept the tradition set up by the Soviet leadership in the past. New Delhi is thus held as the centre piece of the General Secretary's Asian policy./While addressing the Parliament on 27 November, the Soviet leader declared that India was "an acknowledged leader of the non-aligned movement" and "a major world power".

Keeping pace with the new realities regarding security arrangement in the sub-continent both the leaders gave new thrust to the Indo-Soviet Treaty in a manner which was not observed in many years. It was referred to with added strength by Rajiv Gandhi in his banquet speech and by Mikhail Gorbachev in his address to the Indian Parliament. The
Indo-Soviet joint declaration also laid emphasis on its importance by maintaining that "the Treaty contributes significantly in all spheres towards strengthening and deepening their mutual trust and confidence in the context of the changing world situation and characterising their common commitment to international peace and cooperation". The relevance of the Indo-Soviet Treaty has been thus rightly emphasized by the top leaders of the two countries at a right time and a right place. This is no doubt a significant fall-out of the summit.

Mikhail Gorbachev's visit to India set the tone for a well-designed peace initiative. Once again it confirmed the fact that the leaders in the two countries hold identical views on the vital question of world, peace and nuclear disarmament.

Right after the arrival of the General Secretary on the Indian soil on 25 November, the Prime Minister welcomed him as a "crusader for peace" and shared "a firm belief in nuclear disarmament as the essential precursor of a peace that is durable and guaranteed". In his speech at the dinner for Mikhail Gorbachev, Rajiv Gandhi declared that India resolutely opposes the militarisation of outer space. He reiterated that "with the non-aligned countries" she "has been in the forefront of the movement for abolition of the nuclear arsenals". While offering his concluding remarks at the joint press conference on November 28, Rajiv Gandhi asked the world leaders to move foreign relations "up from the red level of real-politik" "to a meaningful relationship between countries" for the maintenance of "true peace".

In his very first statement on arrival in New Delhi, the General Secretary also referred to the danger of nuclear threat and the problem of survival. He expressed the desire that cooperation between India and the USSR should work as a factor of peace and universal security. While addressing the activists of the Indo-Soviet Cultural Society and the Friends of the Soviet Union on November 27, Mikhail Gorbachev felt "gratified to see that today, in the efforts now under way to prevent nuclear war and ensure the survival of mankind, the Soviet Union and India are making their indispensable, major contribution to this noble cause". In his address to the Parliament, the Soviet leader observed that he came to New Delhi "in order to promote, together with the leaders of India, the reaffirmation of the concept of peace and the supreme and universal human value". "We highly appreciate the position taken by the Government of India on the issue of the complete cessation of all nuclear weapons tests — he added. "The Soviet Union and India consider it the task of
tasks to deliver the world from nuclear weapons, overcome tension, and cool the hot spots of the planet” declared Mikhail Gorbachev at the joint press meet.

It is thus evident that the central theme of several rounds of discussions between the leaders of the two countries invariably touched upon universal peace and nuclear disarmament. The two leaders have rightly summed up their views in this matter in the historic Delhi Declaration, which has gone a long way to mobilise world opinion in favour of peace. Aimed at changing the existing world situation and building of a nuclear weapon-free world, the Delhi Declaration remarkably maintains, "pending the elimination of nuclear weapons, the Soviet Union and India propose that an international convention banning the use or threat of use of the nuclear weapons should be concluded immediately".

The Delhi Declaration, as Rajiv Gandhi correctly observed in the press conference, embodies a comprehensive new framework for international relations, based on freedom, equality and non-violence...". While sharing the Prime Minister's views, the General Secretary also maintained that "it reflects the role of the Soviet Union and India in world affairs...".

Seen in the backdrop of the outcome of the Reykjavik summit, the Indo-Soviet accord on nuclear disarmament, as is evidenced by the Delhi Declaration, has definitely increased the prestige of these two countries in the comity of nations. It augurs well for the future of humankind. The accent of this Declaration on the acceptance of humanitarian principles, human rights and non-violence as the basis of community life is a noteworthy development in the field of Soviet foreign policy which India also shared with equal conviction. This bears testimony to the new style of Soviet leadership under Mikhail Gorbachev, who thinks of an integrated and inter-dependent world. Close cooperation between India and the USSR —the two large neighbours and traditional friends on the Euro-Asian landmass —has thus become very vital for the maintenance of world peace and complete nuclear disarmament.

The timing of the General Secretary's sojourn to New Delhi, the parleys held between the leaders of the two countries and the various documents signed by them, testify to the fact that it was much more than a symbolic visit. Summing up the outcome of this visit, Mikhail Gorbachev rightly termed it as a "landmark" in Indo-Soviet relations. While endorsing the results of the General Secretary's friendly visit to India, the Politbureau of
the Central Committee of the CPSU also maintained that "cooperation between the Soviet Union and India in bilateral and international affairs reached qualitatively new milestones as a result of the summit meeting".

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, while referring at length to the historic significance of Mikhail Gorbachev's visit to New Delhi in the course of his statement in the Parliament on December 2, observed that it was "an important milestone" in the relationship between India and the USSR. He maintained that during the Soviet leader's visit, the broad outlines of future cooperation and relationship in a longer term perspective were examined. Rajiv Gandhi further added that rich experience of India's cooperation with the USSR in the past enabled them to explore new avenues to raise their bilateral cooperation to a qualitatively higher level. In reply to the question as to whether the USSR shared India's perception regarding the security environment in the South Asian region in the event of Pakistan getting ultra sophisticated weapons from the -US and reaching the stage of being a nuclear weapons power, he mentioned about Mikhail Gorbachev's reference to the Indo-Soviet Treaty which helped the Soviets stand by India. 20

With preparations going on in both the countries on a huge scale for celebration of the fortieth anniversary of the establishment of their diplomatic relations and the holding of the Festival of India in the USSR and the Festival of the USSR in India, the two countries are dressing up themselves for injecting more fruitful elements into the body-politic of their ties.
References

11. These offers were made by Prime Minister Nikolai Tikhonoy in the talks with Gandhi on 21 September. See Hindustan Times. 22 September 1982.