CHAPTER II

INDIA'S RELATIONS WITH SOUTHEAST ASIA: A HISTORICAL REVIEW
To know my country one has to travel to that age, when she realized her soul and thus transcended her physical boundaries, when she revealed her being in a radiant magnanimity which illumined the eastern horizon, making her recognized as their own by those in alien shores who were awakened into a surprise of life.

The above lines of Rabindranath Tagore vividly portray the multifaceted cultural interaction between India and Southeast Asia down the corridors of time. The common links in the field of culture had always been a positive factor in India's relations with Southeast Asian countries. Unlike China, the United States (U.S.), the United Kingdom (U.K.), France, Holland, Spain and Japan which evoke memories of war and bloodshed, political conquest and cultural degradation in the Southeast Asian minds, the image of India, save the solitary incident of Chola invasion in A.D. 1025, had always been that of a benign neighbour which

1. Indian Council of World Affairs, Asia: A Souvenir Book (New Delhi, 1947), p.29

2. For the details of the Chola invasion see G. Coedes, The Indianized States of Southeast Asia (Honolulu, 1971), pp.142-3
played a positive role in the cultural and political evolution of Southeast Asian peoples. Acknowledgement of this cultural indebtedness has repeatedly come from Southeast Asian leaders themselves. For instance, the greatest of the Indonesian nationalist leaders, President Sukarno, wrote in 1945:

In the veins of every one of my people flows the blood of the Indian ancestors and the culture we possess is steeped through and through with Indian influences. Two thousand years ago, people from your country came to Jawadvipa and to Suvarnadvipa in the spirit of brotherly love. They gave the initiative to found powerful kingdoms such as those of Sri Vijaya, Mataram and Majapahit. We learnt then to worship the very Gods that you now worship still and we fashioned a culture that even today is largely identical with your own. Later, we turned towards Islam, but that religion too was brought to us by people coming from both sides of the Indus.3

Lying between India to the west and China to the north the countries of Southeast Asia were subjected to Chinese and Indian cultural influences from very early times. The mountainous ranges running through the middle of Vietnam marked the dividing line between Indian and Chinese spheres of cultural influences.

3. The Hindu, 4 January 1946

The territories to the north and east of this line came under the cultural domination of China and were Sinicized; the cultural strands in territories to the west and south of the line show the vitality of Indian cultural influences. Whereas China spread its cultural influence in East Asia through political conquest and domination, the spread of Indian cultural influence reveal a diametrically opposite development. The transmission and assimilation of Indian culture was not due to political domination; it took place through peaceful means and was due to the courage and zeal of Indian princes, priests, merchants, artists and poets. The process of "Sinicization" was met with frequent revolts and uprisings, especially in Vietnam; on the other hand Indianization was peaceful and was welcomed by rulers and ruled alike in Southeast Asia. The overall Indian cultural influence in Southeast Asia has been beautifully summed up by the great historian, Coedes:


6. V.Suryanarayan "India and Southeast Asia", India Quarterly (New Delhi), vol.34, p.263. See also B.R.Chatterji, "Southeast Asia in Transition" Ibid., vol.12, p.389

Farther India ... received over the centuries contributions from the great spiritual currents of India .... Without India, its past would be almost unknown; we would know scarcely more about it than we know about the past of New Guinea or Australia.

India's cultural relations with Southeast Asia have been analyzed exhaustively by Indian, Western and Southeast Asian historians alike. Under the impact of Indian influences

8. Coedes, n. 2, p. 252

9. For a detailed account on Indian influences in Southeast Asia see (1) Benjamin Rowland, The Art and Architecture of India (Middlesex, 1954); (2) Calumbur Sivaramamurthi, Art of India (New York, N.Y. 1977); (3) B.R. Chatterji, History of Indonesia: Early and Medieval (Meerut, 1967), edn. 3; (4) G. Coedes, n. 2; (5) Social Sciences Committee of Vietnam: History and Culture of Southeast Asia (Hanoi, 1981); (6) Kolidas Neg, India and the Pacific World (Calcutta, 1941); (7) N.J. Kr. m, The Life of Buceho on the Stupa of Borobudur (Varanasi, 1976); (8) Le May, n. 4; (9) K.C. Majumdar, India and Southeast Asia (New Delhi, 1975); (10) K.C. Majumdar, Hindu Colonies in the Far East (Calcutta, 1963); (11) K.C. Majumdar, "Colonial and Cultural Expansion in Southeast Asia", in "Classical Age", in R.C. Majumdar, ed. The History and Culture of the Indian People (Bombay, 1952) pp. 642-55; (12) Maung Htin Aung, A History of Burma (New York, N.Y. 1967); (13) K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, History of Sri Viyaya (Madras, 1949); (14) Paul Wheatley, The Golden Khmeranee (Kuala Lumpur, 1966); (15) Phillip Raison, Indian Asia (New Delhi, 1979); (16) H.B. Sarkar, Some Contribution of India to the Ancient Civilization of Indonesia and Malay (Calcutta, 1970); (17) D.P. SinhaI, "Suvarnabhumi: Asianization of Indian Culture", in India and World Civilization (Bombay, 1972), vol. 2 and (18) Harman E. Lee, A History of Far Eastern Art (Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1964)
a large number of Indianized kingdoms whose culture and polity bore Indian imprint developed in different parts of Southeast Asia from the first century A.D. Funan (first century to seventh century A.D.), Champa (sixth to fifteenth century), Ovaravati (seventh to thirteenth century), Srikshetra (seventh to ninth century), Sri Vijaya (seventh to fourteenth century), Angkor (ninth to thirteenth century), Sailendras (eighth to twelfth century), Pagan (eleventh to thirteenth century) Kediri (twelfth to thirteenth century), Singhasari (thirteenth to fourteenth century), Sukhothai (thirteenth to fourteenth century), Ayuthia (fourteenth to eighteenth century) and Majapahit (thirteenth to sixteenth century), to name the more important ones, were the centres from which Indian cultural forms spread throughout Southeast Asia. Theories of kingship and administration, religion and philosophy, language and literature, art and architecture, dance and drama - all these show the unmistakable imprint of Indian influences. The royal practices associated with the monarchy in Thailand and the Sultanates in Malaysia, Sanskrit words in all Southeast Asian languages, the living Ramayana tradition in all Southeast Asian countries, monuments
like Borobudur, Lasa Dongrung, Angkor and Pagan — all these are a testimony to India's abiding cultural contributions to Southeast Asia. As Jawaharlal Nehru mentioned "if you want to know the heights old Indian art had reached, you will have to go out of India for that purpose. You will have to go to Java and other places because it reached, perhaps, greater heights there than even in India". Paul Wheatley, the distinguished historian, has aptly described the Indian impact on Southeast Asian societies:

In the early centuries of the Christian era there occurred a significant change in the relations between India and Southeast Asia. Throughout the old realm of Suvarnabhumi there emerged kingdoms with conceptions of royalty based on Hindu or Buddhist cults. The arts practiced in these states, and the customs of at least the nobility, were also Indian, while Sanskrit was the sacred language.

THE IMPERIALIST PHASE:

The friendly and fruitful ties between India and the countries of Southeast Asia not only got served, but underwent a fundamental change in the era of European domination. India was the base from

10. The Hindu, 10 August 1949
11. Wheatley, n.9, p.185
which most of the European powers extended their power 12 and domination over Southeast Asia. The Portuguese, who were the pioneers in the field, captured Goa in 1510 and an year later led a successful naval expedition which brought the rich and prosperous 13 entrepot centre of Malacca under their sway. The sixteenth century has been rightly described by a well 14 known historian as the "Portuguese century". The Dutch, following the Portuguese, established their settlements in the early seventeenth century at Masulipatnam, Pulicat, Surat, Nagapattanam and Cochin and proceeded to Ceylon and the Indonesian archipelago in search of

12. For a good account of European colonialism in Southeast Asia see John F. Cady, Southeast Asia (New Delhi, 1976), Reprint; (2) J.S. Furnivall, Colonial Policy and Practice (New York, N.Y, 1956); (3) D.G.E. Hall, A History of Southeast Asia (London, 1968), edn. 3; (4) Nicholas Tarling, Imperial Britain and Southeast Asia (Kuala Lumpur, 1975); (5) K.R. Panikkar, Asia and Western Dominance (London, 1970), Impression 5 and (6) D.J.M. Tate, The Making of Modern Southeast Asia (Kuala Lumpur, 1977), Reprint, vol. 1


spices. In the bitter struggle with the Portuguese and later with the British for the control of the archipelago, the Dutch finally emerged victorious. For a short spell during the Napoleonic wars, the East Indies came under the control of the East India Company, but was given back to the Dutch after the Congress of Vienna in August 15 1814. The British who successfully consolidated their power in the Indian subcontinent in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, also embarked on the "perilous road of conquest and annexation in the East for the benefit of the U.K., but of course at the expense of the Indian tax payer". Trade with China and spice islands compelled the British first to control Singapore and later Penang and Malacca. The three Straits settlements of Singapore, Penang and Malacca were under


16. Panikkar, n. 12, p. 82
the control of the East India company till 1858 and later came to be administered directly by the British Crown. The prospect of reaping enormous profits through the development of tin mining and rubber plantations brought the Federated Malay States and the Unfederated Malay States, under British control. Thus by 1914, the whole of the Malay peninsula came under British domination. Lying to the east of India, Burma could not escape British imperialist intrigues. As a result of the three Anglo-Burmesse wars, Burma was incorporated into British India, and remained so until 1937. The French designs to control India were thwarted by the British, but France did not


18. For the British colonization of Burma see (1) John F.Cady, A History of Modern Burma (Ithaca, N.Y. 1958); (2) W.S.Desai, A Pageant of Burmese History (Calcutta, 1961); (3) D.G.E.Hall, Europe and Burma: A Study of European Relations with Burma to the Annexation of Thibaw's Kingdom, 1886 (London, 1945) and (4) Suchanau Bimal Mukherji, Burma and the West (Agra, 1975)
face much opposition in Indo-China. Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia came under the French control by early 19th century. The Philippines came first under Spanish and later under American domination. Even Thailand, which retained its independence, was obliged to accept colonial dictates in respect of the fixation of its boundaries.

An important consequence of colonial development was the large scale migration of Indians to Burma and Malaya, and to a lesser extent, to Thailand, Indo-China


21. For the general history of Thailand see (1) James Ball, Thailand: Land of the Free (London, 1971); (2) Walter F. Vella, Siam under Rama III, 1824-1851 (New York, N.Y. 1957) and (3) W.A.R. Wood, A History of Siam (Bangkok, 1933)
and the East Indies. Since the indigenous people did not provide labour for the development of the colonial economy, the British government turned to India for cheap labour. In contrast to the early Indian settlers who represented the best traditions in Indian polity, religion and art, the new immigrants who flocked to Malaya and Burma were docile illiterate labourers. Following the labourers, a number of Indian money-lenders, belonging mainly to the Chettiar community, also went to Southeast Asia to carry on their lucrative enterprise. In the 1930's large number of teachers, doctors and white-collar workers also migrated to Burma and Malaya. Indian capital, labour and enterprise have undoubtedly played a significant role in the economic transformation of

22. Detailed accounts of Indians overseas are provided in:
(1) Anirudha Gupta, Indians Abroad: Asia and Africa (New Delhi, 1971); (2) S. Arasaratnam, Indians in Malaysia and Singapore (London, 1970); (3) I. J. Eshidur Singh, ed., The Other India (New Delhi, 1974); (4) N. R. Chakravarti, The Indian Minority in Burma (London, 1970); (5) S. K. Chatterjee, Malayan Adventure (Mangalore, 1948); (6) B. K. Dadasanji, The Indian National Congress and Indians Overseas (Bombay, 1946); (7) Hugh Tinker, The Banyan Tree (New York, N. Y., 1977); (8) Hugh Tinker, Separate but Unequal (Delhi, 1976); (9) Karmal Singh Sandhu, Indians in Malaya: Immigration and Settlement, 1786-1957 (London, 1969); (10) C. Kondo, Indians Overseas, 1938-1949 (New Delhi, 1955); (11) M. N. Nair, Indians in Malaya (Kuduvayar, 1957); (12) N. Raghavan, India and Malaya (Bombay, 1954); (13) N. V. Rajkumar, Indians Outside India (New Delhi, 1951); (14) Ravindra K. Jain, South Indians on the Plantation Frontier in Malaya (Kuala Lumpur, 1970); (15) Usha Mahajani, The Role of Indian Minorities in Burma and Malaya (Bombay, 1960) and (16) Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff, Minority Problems in Southeast Asia (Stanford, 1955).
Burma and Malaya from subsistence economies into
developed commercial economies. As Kernial Singh
Sandhu writes, in Malaya the Indians were

the principal labourers and security guards
and, together with the Tamils from Ceylon;
the main administrative and technical
assistants. At the same time, Indian
financiers and entrepreneurs, quite apart
from their own direct contributions, were
the saviours and grub stakers of many a
latter day Chinese millionaire, successful
British planter and Malay aristocrat. 23

Explaining the commendable role of the
Chettiar in the development of Burma, the Burma
Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee, 1929-39, mentioned:

they have not only rendered a service in the
past, playing in the development of Burma a
necessary part which no other class has
offered to play; without their support,
or the substitution of some other banking
system towards which no steps have yet been
taken, the internal and external trade of
the country would break down and the rice
crop could not even be produced. 24

23. Sandhu, n.22, p.303

Committee, 1929-30 (Rangoon, 1930), vol.1, p.190
The uneasy co-existence of an alien Indian minority, consisting of poor labourers, rich Chetties and a talented middle class, with a politically awakened indigenous people had its disastrous effects for the Indian community, especially in Burma. The Burmese nationalists were not only opposed to the continuation of the British colonial rule but also Indian domination of the economy which they characterized as "colonialism within British colonialism". In the 1920's and 1930's Burmese nationalism had a pronounced antipathy towards Indian minority. The nationalists demanded "independence from India" as a first step towards independence from the British. Independence from India meant externally separation from India and internally emancipation from the economic stranglehold of the Indian business community. But in the overall context of Southeast Asia, it must be pointed out that the Indians were in a relatively better position compared to the "Overseas Chinese".

25. Mahajani, n.22, p.21
26. Ibid., p.48
The nearly twelve million overseas Chinese spread throughout Southeast Asia, controlling trade and commerce in most of these countries, culturally exclusive and politically aggressive, were disliked more by the indigenous people than the one and a half million Indian inhabitants.

INDIAN NATIONALISTS AND SOUTHEAST ASIA—THE EARLY PHASE:

A tragic corollary of the era of colonialism was the isolation of the people of India from the peoples of Southeast Asia. There were hardly any links among the intellectuals of these countries. The emerging elite was trained in the language and political culture of the imperialist countries and, more often than not, in the universities of the colonial overlords. Even then in the nineteenth century some of the Indian intellectuals like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Kesab Chandra Sen were deeply conscious of the common colonial experience and the necessity to inculcate pan-Asian

27. V. Suryanarayan "India and Southeast Asia", in K.P. Misra, ed. Janata's Foreign Policy (New Delhi, 1980), p.95
sentiments among their followers. These feelings received an added stimulus with the successful lecture-tour of Swami Vivekananda to Japan and other Asian countries where he emphasized the common cultural bonds and the spiritual unity of Asia.

The founding of the Indian National Congress in 1885 was not only an important landmark in India's national movement but also in India's relations with countries undergoing the same fate of colonial domination. The Congress leaders viewed the Indian national movement as part of a wider struggle against colonialism and imperialism. The proceedings of the Indian National Congress were replete with resolutions expressing opposition to and condemnation of imperialist

28. In his lecture on *Asia's Message to Europe*, delivered in 1893, Kesab Chandra Sen proudly declared: "I am a child of Asia. Her sorrows are my sorrows, her joys are my joys. From one end of Asia to another, I boast of a vast home, a wide nationality, an extended kinship...To me the dust of Asia is far more precious than gold and silver". Birendra Prasad, *Indian Nationalism and Asia, 1900-1947* (Delhi, 1979), p.27

machinations and sympathy and support for nationalist movements. It is interesting to note that in the plenary session of the Indian National Congress in 1885 the Indian National Congress dissociated itself with the British imperialist policy and deprecated the annexation of Burma. Pherozeshah Mehta, who moved the resolution, characterized the annexation as unjust, immoral and unwise. At the annual session of the Indian National Congress held in 1891, Gisnshaw Wacha again criticized the annexation of Burma and characterized the year of annexation as the year of calamity. Mahatma Gandhi expressed the agony and anguish of the Indian nation, some years later, when he wrote in Young India: "I have never been able to take pride in the fact that Burma has been made part of British India. It never was and never should be".

30. K. Iswara Dutt, Congress Cyclopaedia: The Indian National Congress, 1885-1920 (New Delhi, 1968), vol. 1, p. 17
31. Prasad, n. 28, pp. 29-30
32. Ibid., p. 30
33. The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi (New Delhi, 1966), vol. 22, p. 246
The Indian National Congress repeatedly condemned the use of Indian soldiers and resources in military campaigns outside India to serve British imperialist interests. In a resolution passed in 1892 the Congress declared:

That having regard to the fact that the abnormal increase in the annual military expenditure of the Empire since 1885-1886 is principally owing to the military activity going on beyond the natural lines of the defences of the country, in pursuance of the imperial policy of Great Britain in its relation with some of the Great Powers of Europe, this Congress is of opinion that, in bare justice to India, an equitable portion of that expenditure should be borne by the British treasury, and the revenues of India should be proportionately relieved of that burden.

The Indian National Congress passed similar resolutions in 1895, 1897, 1898, 1899 and 1902. The Tibetan expedition of 1902, which was described by K.M. Panikkar as "the high water mark of the 'Empire State' in India", was condemned by the Indian National Congress as it "threatens to involve India in foreign entanglements".

34. N.V. Rajkumar, *The Background of India's Foreign Policy* (New Delhi, 1952), p.33
35. Ibid., pp.34-36
36. Panikkar, n.12, p.125
37. Rajkumar, n.34, p.37
The Japanese victory over Russia in 1905 was undoubtedly a source of great inspiration to the nationalists in all Asian countries. The victory was a symbol of what an Asian country can accomplish, given the will and determination, against the superior might of European powers. The myth of the invincibility of Europe was shattered; it also gave a fillip to Asian national self-assertion. Describing the Asian reaction to Japanese victory Rabindranath Tagore wrote:

The victory won by Japan over Russia in 1905 gave an added impetus to the Swadeshi movement. On the day the Treaty was signed we lit a big bonfire in the middle of our football field and sang songs all night long to celebrate the awakening of Asia. 38

With the emergence of Gandhi as the undisputed leader of the Indian national movement, the global outlook became still more pronounced. Gandhi asserted the right of the Indians to decide what kind of relations India should develop with the outside world. In 1921 Gandhi observed in Young India:

We are bound to consider and define our foreign policy. Surely we are bound authoritatively to tell the world what relations we wish to cultivate with it... We must not be afraid to speak our mind on all that concerns the nation.39

Gandhi was fully conscious that the British conquest of India led to the enslavement of peoples in different parts of Asia. British control over India not only helped to strengthen their Empire in the East, but also led to the suppression of Asian peoples. Mahatma Gandhi wrote in 1927:

India is the key to the exploitation of the Asiatic and other non-European races of the earth. She is held under bondage not merely for the sake of her own exploitation but that of her neighbours near and distant.40

Gandhi, therefore, urged Indians that they have a duty, not only to free India, but also free the world from colonial oppression. To quote Gandhi:

39. The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi (New Delhi, 1966), vol.27, p.316
40. Ibid., (New Delhi, 1969), vol.33, p.41
My ambition is much higher than independence. Through the deliverance of India, I seek to deliver the so-called weaker races of the earth from the crushing heels of western exploitation in which England is the greatest partner. 41

Under the inspiring leadership of Gandhi the Indian National Congress expressed solidarity with the oppressed peoples of Asia. Gandhi led the Khilafat movement in 1919, protesting against the Alliss' plan to dismember Turkey, a fellow Asian country. In a resolution, passed in 1920, the Indian National Congress expressed Indian desire to co-operate and develop friendly relations with all neighbouring countries. In 1927 the Indian National Congress expressed solidarity and supported the Chinese "in their fight for emancipation". In 1928 the Indian National Congress sent fraternal greetings to the peoples of Egypt, Syria, Palestine and Iraq "in their struggle for emancipation from the grip of western imperialism".

41. Ibid., (New Delhi, 1969), vol.35, p.457
42. Rajkumar, n.34, p.4
43. Jawaharlal Nehru, The Discovery of India (London, 1956), edn.4, p.423
44. Rajkumar, n.34. p.45
45. Ibid., p.48
Indian attempts for promoting Asian solidarity were facilitated by Rabindranath Tagore’s visit to East and Southeast Asian countries in 1924, 1927 and 1929. The poet was accompanied by three great intellectuals, Nandalal Bose, Kshitimohan Sen and Kalidas Nag. Tagore was given a warm welcome in all the countries he visited. During his visit to Burma in April 1924 Tagore was greeted by the citizens of Rangoon with great enthusiasm; he was hailed as one who represented the spirit of reborn Asia and a bridge of future understanding between Asia, Europe and America. In the course of his tour of Java in 1927 Tagore met Sukarno, who became in later years the great leader of the Indonesian nationalist movement. In Thailand also the poet was warmly received. Tagore visited Indo-China in 1929. Addressing a gathering of the Vietnamese, Tagore said:

Before human joys and human miseries, my heart always beats with the same rhythm as that of those of my predecessors who

46. Prasad, n.28, p.87
48. Ibid.
in the most distant past lived among you ...
I bring you the greetings of that radiant India, who lavished her light on this land as well as the message of sympathy and brotherhood of present India who lives separated from you by geographic distance and by the dead solitude of her own darkness. 49

The visits of Tagore were very useful in reviving the cultural ties which remained snapped for centuries between India and the countries of East and Southeast Asia. Since his visit cultural missions were occasionally exchanged between India and these countries. Men of academic interest from various Asian countries visited Visva Bharati and took great interest in its activities. It is interesting to note that the popularization of the Indonesian batik in India was the work of Javanese artists who stayed 50 in Santiniketan.

The Indian nationalist horizon widened and interest in international affairs became more intense with Jawaharlal Nehru emerging as the "acknowledged


50. Kripalani, n.47 See also Kalidas Nag, "Tagore in Asia", n.49, p.345
Congress spokesman on foreign affairs in 1927. Through his speeches and writings Nehru influenced the Indian National Congress to pay greater attention to international affairs. Nehru underlined the need for a "reorientation" of Indian outlook on world affairs and was mainly instrumental in making the Indian National Congress take a clear-cut stand on issues relating to freedom from colonial domination and fight against Fascism and Nazism. As Nehru said:

The struggle in India is essentially and fundamentally an anti-imperialist one. As such it is also opposed to Fascism which vigorously supports the imperialist philosophy. While India is keen on getting out of the imperialist hold and with this aim carries on her struggle, she has no desire to support the expansionist drive of the fascist powers merely on account of the manifestations of clashes within the imperialist camp. To do so would not only arrest the progress of the Indian movement but may also produce dangerous consequences for it.


52. Rajkumar, n.34, p.2

53. Report of a talk with the correspondent of Amrit Bazar Patrika in Prague, S.Gopal, ed. Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru (New Delhi, 1979), vol.9, pp.19-20
The international perspective became further crystallized with Indian participation in international conferences of exploited and oppressed peoples. In February 1927 Jawaharlal Nehru attended the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities in Brussels as the representative of the Indian National Congress. This Congress was the first of its kind and was attended by 174 delegates from 31 countries. Nehru had the opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with distinguished Asian nationalists like Sun Yat-sen, Mohammed Hatta and Ho Chi Minh and renowned European crusaders against imperialism like Einstein and Romain Rolland. Nehru mentioned that he was happy to find "much in common" in the struggle of the various "subject and oppressed people". Addressing the Brussels Congress on 10 February 1927 Nehru made a scathing attack on British imperialism. To quote from his speech:

"We in India have felt the full weight of imperialism... Indeed, if you want a typical example to enable you to understand

the results of imperialism I doubt if you could find a better one than India. In India's internal condition, you see the way in which British capitalism has suppressed and exploited the workers. Whatever phase of imperialism you study, you have a wonderful example in India.55

Nehru characterized the employment of Indian troops by the British imperialists for oppressing the peoples of China, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Tibet, Burma and other countries as shameful. Pointing out the importance of Indian freedom for Asian and other countries in the world Nehru said:

I want you to appreciate that the Indian problem is not a purely national problem, but that it affects a large number of other countries directly and the whole world indirectly.... I do submit that the exploitation of India by the British is a barrier for other countries that are being oppressed and exploited. It is an urgent necessity for you that we gain our freedom.57

55. "Speech at the Brussels Congress", Ibid., p.272
56. Ibid., p.275
57. Ibid., pp.275-5.
The contacts which were established at the Congress in Brussels became very useful to forge closer links with Southeast Asian countries in later years. The Congress of Oppressed Nationalities itself came under communist domination in later years and Nehru and Hatta were expelled from the League against Imperialism and National Independence as "National Reformers". However it must be stated that the Congress played an important role by bringing together for the first time nationalists struggling for their freedom from different parts of the world. The common struggle and goals were highlighted and they gave a powerful internationalist orientation to nationalist movements in Asia.

The Indian interest in world affairs found institutional expression when the Indian National Congress established a separate Foreign Department in May 1936 under the direction of Jawaharlal Nehru.

58. Dr. Mohammed Hatta (Interviewee). Recorded by Indian Embassy, Jakarta, September 1972, (Oral History Interview, Nehru Memorial Museum Library, New Delhi), p.2
The Foreign Department was the training ground in diplomacy for many Indian nationalist leaders like, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia and Acharya Kripalani and was also the crucible on which many new ideas were tested and perfected. The Foreign Department of the Indian National Congress can be rightly characterized as the precursor of the Ministry of External Affairs of independent India. The global situation had undergone rapid changes with the rise of Fascism and Nazism in Europe and the clouds of war gathering in the European horizon. In Asia Japanese militarism was getting strengthened and China had become the first victim of Japanese aggression. The Indian nationalists naturally could not remain quiet and expressed their strong feelings. The Indian National Congress not only attacked Fascism and Nazism, but also expressed its solidarity with the victims. The rape of Abyssinia, the murder of Spanish Republic, Nazi aggression in Czechoslovakia, Japanese attack on Manchuria — on all these vital issues the Indian National Congress articulated clear-cut points of view. Expressing its sympathy for Abyssinia the Indian National Congress passed a resolution in 1936 in which it said:
This Congress expresses the sympathy of the Indian nation for the Ethiopian people who are so heroically defending their country against imperialist aggression and considers Abyssinians fight as part of the fight of all exploited nations for freedom. 59

In a resolution passed in 1937 the All India Congress Committee condemned Japanese aggression and expressed solidarity with the Chinese:

The All India Congress Committee view with grave concern and horror the imperialist aggression of Japan in China attended with wanton cruelty and the bombing of the civil population. The committee express their deep admiration for the brave and heroic struggle which the Chinese people are conducting against heavy odds for maintaining the integrity and the independence of their country ... The committee offer their heartfelt sympathy to the Chinese people in their national calamity and on behalf of the people of India assure them of their solidarity with them in their struggle for maintaining their freedom. 60

59. Rajkumar, n.34, p.50

60. Ibid., p.53. For resolutions passed by the Indian National Congress condemning German aggression in Czechoslovakia and sympathizing with the people of Spain see Ibid., pp.51-56
The Indian nationalists were also highly critical of British policy of appeasement which was encouraging the aggressive postures of Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany and Fascist Japan. The Indian National Congress completely dissociated itself from the British policy and in 1939 affirmed:

The Congress records its entire disapproval of British foreign policy culminating in the Munich Pact, the Anglo-Italian Agreement and the recognition of rebel Spain. This policy has been one of deliberate betrayal of democracy, repeated breach of pledges, the ending of the system of collective security and co-operation with governments which are avowed enemies of democracy and freedom.61.

Even though Indian nationalists paid much attention to the deteriorating world situation, they also gave equal consideration to the development of nationalist movements in Southeast Asia. The Indian leaders were elated at the passage of Filipino Independence Act in 1932 by the American Congress. Though by this Act independence was not conceded immediately to the Filipinos, Mahatma Gandhi expressed

61. Ibid., p.58
his happiness because the Filipinos got the "substance of independence". In April-May 1937 Jauharlal Nehru visited Burma and Malaya. The visit enabled Nehru to have a better understanding of the situation in these countries. Indian anxiety about Southeast Asia became intense with the entry of Japan in the war on the side of the Axis powers. In December 1941 the Congress Working Committee expressed sympathy with Malaya, Burma and the East Indies in their hour of trial. In spite of their preoccupation with the nationalist movement in India which was taking a dramatic turn, Indian nationalists continued to pay considerable attention to Southeast Asia. In the 'Quit India' resolution passed on 8 August 1942 the Indian National Congress declared:

The freedom of India must be the symbol of and prelude to this freedom of all other Asiatic nations under foreign domination. Burma, Malaya, Indo-China, the Dutch Indies, Iran and Iraq must also attain their complete freedom. It must be clearly understood that such of these countries as are under Japanese control now must not subsequently be placed under the rule or control of any other Colonial power.


63. The Hindu, 31 December 1941

As the war came to a close, Indian nationalists began to give serious thoughts to the issue of decolonization. In a memorandum submitted to the San Francisco Conference on 4 May 1945, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit demanded the immediate declaration of not only Indian freedom but also of the Southeast Asian countries:

I speak here for my country because its national voice has been stilled by British duress. But I speak also for those countries which like India are under the heels of alien militarists and cannot speak for themselves. I speak in particular for Burma, Malaya, Indo-China and the Dutch East Indies all bound to my own country by the closest ties of historical and cultural kinship and which cherish aspirations to national freedom like our own. Liberation from Japan should mean for them, I submit, liberation from all alien Imperialism so far as this conference is concerned.65

**INDIAN COMMUNITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA:**

The Indian National Congress also took keen interest in the problems of the Indians overseas. It was not surprising because Mahatma Gandhi started his political career in South Africa defending the interests of the Indian indentured labourers and tried to

65. For the text of the memorandum submitted by Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit to the San Francisco Conference see *The Hindu*, 6 May 1945
instil in them dignity and self-respect. The early nationalist leaders like Gopala Krishna Gokhale, Pherozeshah Mehta and subsequently Jawaharlal Nehru and Ram Manohar Lohia were sensitive to the problems of Indians overseas and championed their cause. The problem of Indians overseas were better understood as representatives of Indian organizations abroad like Malayan Indian Congress, and All-Burma Indian Congress started regularly attending the annual sessions of the Indian National Congress.

The growing interest of the Indian National Congress in the Indians overseas found expression in the resolutions passed urging the British government to take suitable measures to redress the grievances of Indians abroad. In a resolution passed as early as 1903, the Congress observed:

This Congress views with concern and regret the hard lot of His Majesty's Indian subjects living in the British colonies... and it prays that, in view of the great part the Indian settlers have played in the development of the colonies ... the Government of India will be pleased to ensure to them all the

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66. Rajkumar, n.22, p.7
rights and privileges of British citizenship in common with the European subjects of His Majesty.... 67

Since indenture system was responsible for the sad plight of the Indians, the Congress Party demanded that the system be abolished forthwith. The demand was reiterated frequently by different sections of public opinion in India and the British government finally abolished the system in January 1920. In order to protect the interests of Indians in Malaya the Government of India also appointed an Agent in 1922.

In Burma, Indians became the victims of the British policy of 'divide and rule'. The British administrators exploited the anti-Indian sentiments of the Burmese and sowed the seeds of communalism. The Sea Passengers' Tax Bill and the Expulsion of

67. Ibid., p.43

68. In a resolution passed in 1913 the Congress said: "That owing to the scarcity of labour in India and the grave results from the system of indentured labour, which reduces the labourers, during the period of their indenture, practically to the position of slaves, this Congress strongly urges the total prohibition of recruitment of labour under indenture, either for work in India or elsewhere". Ibid.,p.53. Similar resolutions were passed by the Congress in 1914, 1915, 1916 and 1917. Ibid., pp.53-54

69. Ibid., p. 13

70. Arasaratnam, n.22, p.23
Offenders' Bill passed in 1922 by the Burmese legislature were two examples of the imperialist game of the British. The Indian National Congress expressed its anguish in a resolution adopted in 1925:

>This Congress regards the Expulsion of Non-Burman Offenders Bill and Tax on Sea Passengers Bill of Burma to be an attack on the liberty of the citizen. In the opinion of the Congress, the first bill imperils the vast interests of Indian resident in Burma in as much as it exposes innocent men to the mercy of the executive. The Congress is of opinion that the Bills should not receive the Viceregal sanction.71

The Congress was deeply stirred over the racial riots of 1937 in which Burma Indians suffered heavy loss of life and property. Nehru visited Burma in May 1937, to make an on-the-spot study of the Burmese situation and also to provide consolation to the disheartened Indians. During his visit Nehru repeatedly advised Indians to identify with Burmese aspirations and to "live in co-operation with the Burmese, for their future was tied up with that of the latter". Besides providing consolation and

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71. Rajkumar, n.22, p.55
72. "India and Burma", Gopal, n.53, p.651
comfort to the disheartened Indians, Nehru also held discussions with the Burmese nationalists to assuage their fears and misgivings. When Burma was separated from British India, the Government of India appointed an Agent in 1937 to look after the interests of the Indian community. Before the wounds of 1937 riots could be healed, the anti-Indian riots again erupted in 1938 resulting in large scale massacre of Indians and looting of Indian property. The Congress was deeply moved by the "deplorable riots". In a resolution passed in 1939 while urging the Government of Burma to hold "a thorough and impartial inquiry into the causes of the riots and the amount of damage done to life and property", the Congress asked for the assurance of safety of life and property of "the large Indian colony (sic) many of whom have settled in Burma for generations without let or hindrance".

73. Rajkumar, n.22, pp.55-56
Indian National Congress showed equal interest in promoting the general welfare of the Indians in Malaya. Nationalist opinion was highly critical of the method of recruitment and the general treatment meted out to Indian labourers in Malaya. The British government was compelled to respond to Indian opinion and appointed in 1936 Srinivasa Sastri, a liberal leader in the Central Legislative Council, to enquire into the conditions of Indian labour in Malaya. In his report submitted in 1937 after a tour of Malaya, Srinivasa Sastri recommended revision of wages for Indian labourers working in the plantations. He praised the Malayan Labour Department and the estate managers in general for showing interest in the labour problems of Malayan Indians. In the concluding part of his report, Srinivasa Sastri pointed out that Indian labour was better off in Malaya than in India. Sastri's report was severely criticized both in Malaya and in India, for, it failed to deal with the major issue of wage disparity among the various

74. Arasaratnam, n.22, p.61
75. Mahajani, n.22, p.126
ethnic groups. Sastri also did not make any concrete suggestions for the improvement of the general welfare of Indian labourers. In a publication released in 1938, the Indian National Congress assailed Sastri because he failed to judge the living conditions of Indian workers specifically in the Malayan context. The publication pointed out that comparison with conditions in India only would lead to the perpetuation of the unhappy state of affairs and continued exploitation of Indian labourers.

Nehru's visit to Malaya in 1937 was a manifestation of growing interest of the Indian nationalists in the problems of Indians overseas, especially in Southeast Asia. As Nehru himself said, his visit was primarily "to see my countrymen and understand their problem". During his visit, Nehru exhorted the Indians to live in harmony with the major communities of Malaya. He urged upon the Indians in Malaya "to develop the closest co-operation with the Malayans and the Chinese as well as others living

76. Ibid.
77. Gopal, n.72, p.668
in the country". He also reminded them of three duties they had to discharge, namely "their duty to India, their duty to Malaya, their duty to themselves". He advised them to consider Malaya as their own home so that they could win the goodwill of the people of the soil. Nehru was distressed to learn about the existence of a plethora of Indian associations and asked them to come together, for "strength requires a larger unity comprising all these groups, all those who look to India as their common motherland". He urged the middle class urban Indians not to live in isolation, but to pay attention to the problems of the Malayan Indian labourers who formed bulk of the Malayan Indian population. To promote the education of Malayan Indians, he advised Indians there to follow the good example of Malayan Chinese who had established several schools for Chinese children. Nehru was conscious of the prevailing differences in wages between Indian and Chinese labourers.

78. Ibid., p.688
79. Ibid., p.689
80. Ibid.
He felt it was a matter of great humiliation and demanded that the Indians should be accorded "equality of status and wage with others".

Nehru repeatedly declared that the Indians overseas could expect complete justice only when India attained freedom. Once India became independent, Nehru said:

it (free India) would take the deepest interest in Indian labour abroad. It would be interested because it would like to protect the interests of its nationals. It would also be interested because it could not agree to any conditions or status which were derogatory to the dignity of the people of India.

Mention should also be made of the adverse impact of the usurious practices of Indian capitalist class in Burma. The Chettiares who constituted only a microscopic section of the Indian community, went to Burma as businessmen and money-lenders. Gradually they became

81. Ibid., p.683
82. Ibid., p.604
83. For a good discussion on the banking business of Chettiares in Burma see Chakravarni, n.22, pp.56-68
extremely wealthy and absentee land-lordism became the order of the day. During 1930-38 in Lower Burma alone, their landholding increased from 570,000 acres to 2,468,000 acres.

The Burmese nationalists naturally were alarmed at the rapid rate of land alienation taking place in their country. The situation became alarming during the years of depression. Anti-Indian feeling developed fast and the nationalists advocated stringent measures against Chettiar s. Burmese socialists raised the slogan - "no one owns the land, it belongs to the people - their state". The Burmese government was compelled to pass Tenancy Act in 1938-39, Land Alienation Act in 1939-40 and Land Purchase Law in 1941 in order to prevent the Chettiar from acquiring land from the Burmese farmers and also to enable the Government to acquire lands from the Chettiar landlords.

84. Chakravarti, n.22, p.63
85. Mahajani, n.22, p.21
86. Chakravarti, n.22, pp.67-68. Similar measures, though on a smaller scale, were adopted in Malaya also. Curbing Chettiar activities the Federated Malay States passed the Small Holdings (Restriction of Sale) Bill in 1931 and the Malay Reservations Act in 1933. The Straits Settlements Legislature passed the Money-Lenders’ Ordinance in 1935. Arasaratnam, n.22, pp.93-95
The Indian communities in Burma and Malaya had to undergo untold misery and suffering during the second world war. A large number of Indians returned to India alarmed at the prospects of a war near their place of work. Those who remained in Burma and Malaya were subjected to considerable privation. In Burma and Malaya thousands of Indian workers were conscripted as labourers to complete the "Burma-Siam Death railway"; a vast majority of them perished working on the "Death Railway". Feelings ran high in India and Nehru demanded that the governments of Burma and Siam should pay compensation to the members of the bereaved families.

The Indians who desperately wanted to be evacuated to India did not get British assistance. The Indian National Congress made a scathing attack on the British for ill-treating Indian evacuees and refugees. In a resolution passed in 1942 the Indian National Congress expressed its indignation. The

87. Mahajani, n.22, p.192
88. The Hindu, 21 March 1946
resolution pointed out that such arrangements as were being made benefited only the European population and, at every step, racial discrimination was in evidence. Because of the utter incompetence, callousness and selfishness of those in authority, many Indians in Malaya and Burma not only lost all that they possessed but also had to undergo unimaginable sufferings; many of them died on their way to India.

In order to comfort those Indians who stayed on in Burma and Malaya during the war and also to assure them of nationalist sympathy and support in their hour of grave crisis, the Indian National Congress directed Nehru to proceed to Burma and Malaya. The Burmese government refused permission and Nehru could not visit Burma. However, Nehru proceeded to

89. Kajkumar, n.22, p.56
90. India, *Legislative Assembly Debates* vol.6, 22 March 1945, p.2285
Malaya in March 1946. As Nehru himself said his visit was primarily intended "to give psychological relief to the Indians stranded there, make them stand on their feet and tone up their morale". Nehru organized a Central Indian Relief Committee with himself as the Chairman and Raghavan as the Vice-Chairman to co-ordinate the work of various relief organizations. The money, roughly M$145,000 that he raised through donations, formed the trust fund. Indian National Congress also sent a token gift of one hundred bales of cloth to Malaya immediately after Nehru's Malayan visit. The Interim Government intensified relief operations by chartering additional ships to bring Malayan Indians to India and by granting one million rupees to alleviate the economic distress of the Malayan Indians. It also despatched additional cloth to Malaya.

91. The Hindu, 10 March 1946
92. Ibid., 1 April 1946
93. Ibid., 14 October 1946
It may also be pointed out that some of the eminent Indians residing then in Southeast Asia and who provided leadership to the Indian community served the Government of independent India also with great distinction. Mention should be made of John A. Thivy, K.P. Kesava Menon, K.M. Kannampilly and N. Raghavan who joined the Ministry of External Affairs and contributed to the shaping of India's foreign policy.

**INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY:**

The period of Japanese occupation witnessed unprecedented political awakening of the Indian community. The defeat of the European imperialist powers and Japanese desire to get the co-operation of the Indian community were exploited by Rash Bihari Bose who organized Indian National Army (I.N.A.) in September 1941. Indian nationals in Southeast Asia and the captive Indian troops rallied to the call of the I.N.A. and joined it in large numbers. On 8 December 1941, Rash Bihari Bose formed Indian Independence League (I.I.L.) in Tokyo. Its branches were soon established in Siam, Malaya and Burma. With the rift
between Rash Bihari Bose and the Japanese and the consequent arrest of Rash Bihari Bose in December 1942, the two organizations viz. I.N.A. and I.I.L. received a set back. Both the organizations, however, were given a fresh lease of life with the arrival of Subhas Chandra Bose in Southeast Asia. With his inspiring presence Subhas Chandra Bose galvanized the Indian community and instilled in them a sense of self-respect. Wherever he went, he was welcomed by surging crowds. When he arrived in Singapore on 2 July 1943, the Indian community gave him a tumultuous welcome and, according to a well known writer, they felt as if, their "messiah" had arrived. The call of freedom found a ready echo in Indian hearts. Accepting the Presidency of the I.I.L. on 4 July 1943 in Singapore Subhas Chandra Bose appealed to the Indians in Southeast Asia to join the Indians at home to free the motherland:

The time has come when the Indians at home and those abroad should gather

94. Madan Gopal, ed., Life and Times of Subhas Chandra Bose: As Told in His Own Words (New Delhi, 1978), p.275
together with arms under one leader, and await the order for the destruction of the British imperialists.95

Speaking on the occasion of the formation of the Provisional Government of Free India on 21 October 1943, Subhas Chandra Bose emphasized the significance of Indian National Army. He said:

For the first time in recent history, Indians abroad have also been politically roused and united in one organization. They are not only thinking and feeling in tune with their countrymen at home, but are also marching in step with them, along the path of freedom. In East Asia, in particular, over two million Indians are now organized as one solid phalanx, inspired by the slogan of "total mobilization". And in front of them, stand the serried ranks of India's army of liberation, with the slogan "onward to Delhi" on their lips.96

In view of the strategic importance of Burma, the Provisional Government of Free India shifted its headquarters to Rangoon on 7 January 1944. Relations between the Provisional Government of Subhas Chandra Bose and the wartime Burmese government under Ba Maw were cordial.

95. Ibid., p.276
96. Ibid., pp.287-8
Japan and Burma were the first two countries to recognize the Provisional Government. In an official statement, Thakin Nu, the Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Burmese government, said:

The Provisional Indian Government is ... deserving of the unstinted support of every nation that believes in fairness and justice as the foundation of the New Order.98.

The response from the Indian community to the I.N.A. was overwhelming. On 4 July 1944, Subhas Chandra Bose expressed his satisfaction:

According to the programme of total mobilization, I demanded money and materials. Regarding men I am glad that I have obtained sufficient recruits already, recruits have come to us from every corner of East Asia from China, Japan, Indo-China, Philippines, Java, Borneo, Sumatra, Malaya, Thailand and Burma.... With regard to money I demanded thirty million dollars from Indians in East Asia. I have actually got much more in the meantime, and from the arrangements that have been made, I am confident that a steady flow of money will be maintained in future.99.


99. Madan Gopal, n.94, p.301
Addressing the Indian residents in Bangkok on 17 August 1945, just one day before he died in an aircrash in Formosa en route to Japan, Subhas Chandra Bose expressed his deep sense of appreciation, for the many acts of service and sacrifice which the Indians rendered to their motherland:

By contributing men, money and supplies to the struggle for Indian independence, you have set a shining example of patriotism and sacrifice. I can never forget your generous and enthusiastic response to my call of total mobilization. Like a perennial spring you sent your sons and daughters to the Indian National Army and Rani Jhansi Regiment. You gave generous donations in cash and kind to the war fund of the provisional government of free India.... In short, you have carried out your duty as the real sons and daughters of India.100.

The I.N.A. and I.I.L. provided opportunities to the Indian community in Southeast Asia to associate themselves with the freedom struggle of their motherland. For the first time the call of Indian freedom was carried to distant plantations and the Indian community rightly felt that they were in the vanguard of Indian struggle for freedom.

100. Ibid., p.338
The Indian nationalists and the general public were proud of the I.N.A. In a message to the I.N.A. committee, which was formed to receive the I.N.A. funds, Nehru said: "I have been specially struck by their (I.N.A. leaders) firm bearing. They are men of whom any nation can be proud". Praising the ability, sacrifice and patriotism of the I.N.A. and Subhas Chandra Bose, Gandhi wrote in *Harijan*:

The hypnotism of the I.N.A. has cast its spell upon us. Netaji's name is one to conjure with. His patriotism is second to none. His bravery shines through all his actions. He aimed high but failed. Who has not failed? The lesson that Netaji and his army bring to us is one of self-sacrifice, unity, irrespective of class and community, and discipline.102.

When the I.N.A. leaders were brought to India and tried in the Red Fort in November - December 1945, the Indian nation rallied to their support. The Indian National Congress appointed a committee to defend the members of the I.N.A. There were demonstrations.

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101. *The Hindy*, 7 November 1945

throughout the country demanding the immediate release of the I.N.A. members. This popular upsurge, combined with the mutiny in the Royal Indian Navy, Royal Indian Air Force and Royal Indian Army compelled the British to see the writing on the wall and hastened the withdrawal of British rule from India.

**DEFENCE THINKING AMONG INDIAN NATIONALISTS:**

The second world war brought home to Indian minds the strategic significance of Southeast Asia. The conquest of Burma, the bombing of Kohima, attack on Manipur and the capture of Andaman and Nicobar Islands revealed the vulnerability of Indian defence in case of sudden aggression. For the first time Indian intellectuals, as Werner Levi put it, began to discuss the defence problems from "a more realistic and nationalistic angle". In his pioneering book, *India and the Indian Ocean*, published during this period K.M. Panikkar wrote:

Japan's lightning conquest of Singapore and her consequent control of the Bay of Bengal from the bases of Penang and the Andamans and the harbours on the Burmese coast, have demonstrated that the challenge may come more from the East than from the West. 104.

Addressing a press conference on 9 January 1946 Nehru underlined the strategic significance and the necessity for co-operation among Asian countries.

To quote Nehru:

The strategic position of India is such that it is difficult to organize the defence of the countries to the right and to the left of India without India's co-operation. Therefore, in the natural order of events these countries and India should come closer (sic) together for mutual protection as well as mutual trade. 105.

The Indian National Congress also discussed the subject at the meeting of the All India Congress Committee.

104. K.M. Panikkar, India and the Indian Ocean (Bombay, 1971) First Indian reprint, p. 85
105. Major Anthony Strachey fully concurred with K.M. Panikkar when he said: "The lesson of the last war is surely that India must always take adequate precautions that her eastern neighbours do not become spring board for yet another attack on her ...." Anthony Strachey, "Some Aspects of the Future Defence of the New India", Asiatic Review (London), vol. 43, p. 122

105. The Hindu, 10 January 1946
on 6-7 July 1946. Highlighting the close links between India and neighbouring countries the All India Congress Committee's resolution said:

Inevitably whatever the future of world organization is, India and the countries of Southeast Asia must hang together and work together. This is necessary from the point of view of defence and strategy, for trade and commerce, and in cultural association.106.

INTERACTION BETWEEN INDIAN NATIONALIST MOVEMENT AND NATIONALIST MOVEMENTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA:

The rise of nationalist movement in India was paralleled by the growth of nationalist movements in Burma, Indonesia and Vietnam. These nationalist struggles were essentially responses of each country towards foreign domination and developed its own nuances and methods of struggle depending on the ideological orientation of the leadership, the behaviour of the colonial authorities and the compulsions of events. However, as the largest imperialist possession in Asia which was waging a heroic struggle

106. Indian Annual Register (Calcutta), vol.2, 1946, p.104
in a non-violent manner against the British imperialists, the Indian nationalist movement definitely inspired the nationalists in other Southeast Asian countries. Many of them looked to India as an ideal to be followed. As Sukarno, the Indonesian nationalist leader, put it:

India and Gandhi have frequently inspired me and our struggle for freedom and in those lonely years when I had been exiled from my own people or confined to a death prison cell only because I sought freedom for my people, it was my strong belief in God and the inspiring spirit of India that raised my hopes and my own faith in our cause. 107.

The Burmese nationalist leader, U Nu, acknowledged his grateful thanks to the Indian nationalist leaders and called Mahatma Gandhi as his political Guru, U Nu said: "Though I have met the Mahatma only once, I have always regarded him as my Guru." 108

For a variety of reasons — historical and political — India had greater contacts with Burma.

107. The Hindu, 17 August 1949

and Indonesia than with other Southeast Asian countries. The Indian interest in Malaya was mainly confined, as stated earlier, to the problems of Indian plantation labour. Before the second world war, legally speaking, there was no such thing as Malaya; there were three administrative units - Straits Settlements, Federated Malay States and Unfederated Malay States. The British policy of divide and rule and the existence of a plural society prevented the growth of nationalist movement in Malaya before the second world war. Thailand, which retained its freedom, had slowly embarked upon a policy of modernization and was more keen on developing relations with the West rather than with Asian countries. The Vietnamese nationalist movement came to be dominated by the communists and there was greater interaction between the Vietnamese nationalists and the Chinese Communist Party, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the French Communist Party rather than with other Asian nationalists. Despite occasional meetings between the nationalist leaders of India and Vietnam, the two nationalist movements developed without much contact with each other. In the Philippines, the Filipino nationalists were able to get constitutional concessions from the U.S. government thanks to their
own struggle and a favourable lobby in the U.S. The Filipino contact with the neighbouring countries of Southeast Asia, not to speak of India, was negligible before the second world war. The Philippines, in many ways, was the odd man out in Southeast Asia and politically and culturally more akin to the West rather than to the Asian countries.

The Burmese attitude towards India had a dual aspect. As mentioned earlier, the presence of a dominant alien Indian element created its own problems and the Burmese nationalists and the general public were as much interested in deliverance from the Indian capitalist exploitation as freedom from the British. It has also been mentioned earlier that the Indian nationalist leaders repeatedly dissociated themselves from the pro-British and exploitative Indian elements in Burma and appealed to the Indian community to completely identify themselves with Burmese aspirations.

The geographical contiguity brought the Indian and Burmese leaders very close. The fact that Burma was a part of British India till 1937 and the common system of administration was also a contributory factor
for the intimate relations between the two countries.
The Burmese nationalist leaders, on their part, watched
the political developments in India closely, particularly
the activities of the Indian National Congress, which
provided them with "ideas and inspiration" and tried
to synchronize their demands with Indian aspirations.

When the British announced constitutional reforms
for India in 1919, the Burmese nationalists succeeded
in their objective of committing the British government
to a constitution "analogous to India's". A
non-co-operation movement also was started in Burma in
1920's. In 1922, when the Duke of Windsor, then the
Crown Prince, visited Burma, Burmese nationalists
called a nationwide strike. In 1925 U To Gyi and U Ni
organized the Swaraj Party of Burma on the model of the
Swaraj Party of India to use the Legislative
Assembly to expose the colonialists. The Freedom Bloc,
which was founded in October 1939 at the initiative of the

109. Backa, n.98, p.54

110. Cady, n.97, p.206

111. Mahajani, n.22, p.36

112. Ibid., p.416,U To Gyi was called the Motilal Nehru
of Burma. Ibid., p.38
Thakins, derived its name from the Forward Bloc started by Subhas Chandra Bose. The Burmese leaders also undertook regular political pilgrimages to India. Dohama Asiavone, a nationalist party headed by radical members of the national intelligentsia and petty bourgeoisie known as Thakins regularly sent delegates to the annual sessions of the Indian National Congress from 1938. Aung San and his group of young Burmese comrades attended the Ramgarh session of the Indian National Congress in 1940 where they met Gandhi, Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose. As Mohammed Yunus, an eye witness, observed, they talked to Nehru "enthusiastically about the future and about the prospects of improving Indo-Burmese relations".

The Communist Party of India (C.P.I.) also established close links with the revolutionary elements in Burma. As the Comintern showed little interest in Burma, presumably considering it as a remote province.

113. Cady, n.97, p.416
114. Jan Backa, n.98, p.55
of India, it was through the Indian communist movement that communism reached Burma. Thein Pe who played a dominant role in spreading the communist movement in Burma in later years, was converted to communism while prosecuting his studies in the Calcutta University during 1936-38. P.C. Joshi, General Secretary of the C.P.I., sent many messages to Burmese radicals through Thein Pe. Thein Pe was "instrumental" in the formation of the Burmese Communist Party (B.C.P.) in Rangoon in 1939 at the "instigation" of the C.P.I. Besides Thakin Ba Hein, Thakin Soe, Thakin Aung Than, the party leadership also consisted of Indian revolutionary, Goshal.

INTERIM GOVERNMENT'S POLICY :

So long as India remained under British colonial domination, the Indian Nationalists could not do anything beyond expressing solidarity with nationalists of

other Asian countries. However, with the assumption of power in the Interim National Government on 2 September 1946, the capacity of the Indian leaders to extend assistance to the freedom fighters in different Asian countries increased. Nehru, who was the chief spokesman of the Indian National Congress on foreign affairs, became the Vice-President of the Interim Government. In his first broadcast to the nation on 7 September 1946, Nehru outlined the Interim Government's policy. He also emphasized the need to promote closer relations among Asian countries.

We are of Asia and the peoples of Asia are nearer and closer to us than others. India is so situated that she is the pivot of Western, Southern and Southeast Asia. In the past her culture flowed to all these countries and they came to her in many ways. These contacts are being renewed and the future is bound to see a closer union between India and Southeast Asia on the one side, and Afghanistan, Iran and the Arab world on the other. To the furtherance of that close association of free countries we must devote ourselves.117

117. Jawaharlal Nehru, India's Foreign Policy: Selected Speeches, September 1946-April 1961 (New Delhi, 1971), Reprint, p.3
Nehru also reiterated that India would not spare any efforts to rid Asia of colonialism. In his first press conference, after assuming power in the Interim Government, Nehru said:

India will watch with close interest the development of events in Palestine, Iran, Indonesia, China, Siam and Indo-China as well in foreign possessions in India itself, with every sympathy with the aspirations of the peoples of other lands for the attainment of internal peace, freedom where they lack it, and their place in the community of nations.118

**INDIA AND INDONESIA**:

The momentous developments in Indonesia following the proclamation of the Indonesian Republic on 17 August 1945 fired the imagination of the Indian leaders, who expressed sympathy with Indonesia. Immediately after the establishment of the Republic, President Sukarno got in touch with the Indian leaders 119 and invited Nehru to visit the infant Republic.

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118. *The Hindu*, 27 September 1946

119. *Ibid.*, 26 October 1945
On 15 October 1945, Nehru not only welcomed the birth of the Indonesian Republic but also urged Indians to express their solidarity with the Republic till the Indonesian struggle was brought to a successful end. On 23 October 1945 Nehru demanded that the British government in India should recognize Sukarno's Provisional Government immediately. Nehru also exhorted the Indian dock workers not to load any war materials meant for the suppression of the Indonesian Republic. In this connection he appreciated and welcomed the initiative taken by Australian and Chinese Trade Unions. In a letter addressed to Sardar Patel on 16 October 1945, Nehru gave expression to what role India should play in Indonesia:

The Indonesian struggle is becoming more intense and critical and I feel that we ought to give it greater prominence. It

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120. Ibid., 17 October 1945

121. Ibid., 24 October 1945 In early 1946, the Indian National Congress hailed the birth of Indonesian Republic and sent its greetings to the Republic of Indonesia and its congratulations to the people of Indonesia on "the success which has attended their gallant struggle". Rajkumar, n.34, p.95
would be a good thing if there were meetings etc. But the most dramatic thing would be for our dock workers and seamen to refuse to load war material for Java, as the Australians did.122.

The use of Indian troops by the British to reimpose Dutch colonial rule in Indonesia aroused Indian 123 indignation. Even before the despatch of Indian troops to Indonesia the Indian National Congress made its stand very clear on this issue. In a resolution passed in September 1945 the Congress declared:

In particular the AICC would take strong objection to the use of Indian troops in maintaining imperialist domination over any part of these countries of Southeast Asia or Western Asia.124.


123. According to Potsdam Agreement, Mountbatten's Southeast Asia Command was entrusted with the task of helping in the release of Allied prisoners of war and disarming Japanese. For discharging these two responsibilities, British Indian forces were sent to Indonesia and Indo-China. The troops landed in Surabaya in Indonesia on 25 October 1945. Believing that foreign troops had come to Indonesia only to effect Japanese surrender, the Republican leaders signed a cease-fire agreement with Major-General Hawthorn, Commander of Allied troops, in Java. But the real intentions of the imperialists became clear when their troops came into conflict with the Indonesian nationalist movement. David Wehl, The Birth of Indonesia (London, 1948), pp.52-143

124. Indian National Congress, 1940-1946: Resolutions passed by Congress (The All India Congress Committee, Allahabad, n.d.), pp.45-46
On 15 October 1945 Nehru reiterated the nationalist stand and said: "We must insist that no Indian troops be used against the Indonesian Republican Government".

The British government did not pay any heed to Indian feelings and decided to collaborate with the Dutch imperialists. Nehru became indignant at the British action and said it was "a matter for shame that the British Empire should be using all its might to establish a Dutch Empire in Indonesia". He warned the imperialist powers:

The movement of the people of Indonesia for freedom cannot be suppressed by force. The fire of freedom which has been lit in Asia will not extinguish till it has consumed the whole imperialist machinery.126.

He also condemned the Maharaja of Nepal for his decision to send the Gurkha troops to Indonesia. He said that it was a matter of shame to Nepal for "its ruler, claiming to be independent, has obliged

125. The Hindu, 17 October 1945
126. Ibid., 11 November 1945
the British government by sending his troops to Indonesia". Drawing a close parallel between the intervention of the British in Indonesia and that of Fascist Italy in Spain Nehru added:

We have watched British intervention there with growing anger, shame and helplessness that Indian troops should thus be used for doing Britain's dirty work against our friends who are fighting the same fight as we are. 128.

All sections of Indian society joined in condemning the use of Indian troops in Indonesia. In Lucknow, Bombay, Poona, New Delhi, Nagpur, Kanpur and Karachi, Southeast Asia Day was observed on 28 October 1945, asking for the immediate withdrawal of Indian troops from Indonesia and protesting against the reimposition of colonial rule over Indonesia. In a resolution adopted in its annual session in Hyderabad on 29 December 1945, the All India Women's Conference viewed with alarm the suppression of rising tide of freedom movements in Indo-China and Indonesia and protested against the use of Indian men, ships and money to put down the freedom movement and demanded the "immediate withdrawal of Indian troops from Indonesia". 130

127. Ibid.


129. The Hindu, 30 October 1945

130. Indian Annual Register. vol.2, 1945, p.184
On 27 October 1945, the people of Calcutta observed Indonesia Day. While congratulating the heroic peoples of Indonesia and Indo-China for continuing their struggle for freedom they criticized the use of Indian troops to suppress nationalist aspirations. The Indian public opinion and the leadership provided by the Indian National Congress had its impact on the British Indian soldiers. Nearly 3,600 soldiers refused to put down the Indonesian nationalists and deserted the army.

In order to awaken the conscience of the world, the Republican leaders invited Nehru to visit Indonesia to form an "unbiased opinion of how matters stand there". Unfortunately Nehru was not permitted by the British to go to Indonesia. In a resolution passed in December 1945, the All India Congress Committee noted with resentment that the Government of India has not granted necessary facilities to enable Jawaharlal Nehru to proceed to Java in response to Dr. Soekarno's invitation.

131. *The Hindu*, 30 October 1945
132. Ibid., 3 December 1946
133. Ibid., 26 October 1945
134. *Indian National Congress, 1940-1946* n. 124, p. 145
The use of Indian forces in Indonesia figured in the first meeting of the Indian Legislative Assembly on 21 January 1946. Prof. Ranga criticized the British government for its attempt to reinstate the "hated and unwanted" imperialists in Indonesia and Indo-China. He said that it was an "unholy thing" to use Indian troops to keep Indonesian and Indo-Chinese peoples in "continued enslavement". Diwan Chamanlal described the use of Indian troops to suppress Indonesian and Indo-Chinese nationalists as a "shameful thing". Sarat Chandra Bose asked the British government to withdraw Indian troops from Indonesia and Indo-China immediately because India did not want "to dip her hands" in her "neighbour's blood".

The Indian journalists in Indonesia like T.G. Narayanan of The Hindu and P.R.S. Mani of the Free Press of India News Agency played a notable role in

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135. India, Legislative Assembly Debates vol. 1, 21 January 1946, pp. 68-69
136. Ibid., p. 73
137. Ibid., p. 77
educating the public opinion by their excellent despatches. Sukarno, Hatta and Sjahrir were aware of the importance of world media and used these channels effectively to strengthen the legitimacy of the Republic and expose the true nature of Dutch imperialists. In a special article contributed to The Hindu on 4 January 1946 Sukarno wrote:

In the wide world around us there are countless friends and well-wishers who are aiding us with their moral support and active help. Among you, our brothers and comrades in India, there are hosts of sympathisers and helpers. Your workers have struck as a gesture of solidarity. Your Press is supporting our cause. Your great leader Nehru's passionate utterances on behalf of our freedom, have been a source of immense strength to us in our hour of trial and tribulation. How shall I ever be able to convey to you the deep stirring of emotion that wells up in everyone of us when we think of the wonderful manner in which you have rallied to our cause? Deep down his heart, every Indonesian utters a silent prayer 'God bless you, our brothers and friends in India'.

Mohammed Hatta, the Vice-President of the Indonesian Republic, too expressed similar feelings in another special article contributed to *The Hindu* on 6 January 1946. In 1946, India was in the grip of famine and faced food shortage in most parts of the country. The struggling Republic made a great gesture to India by offering the much needed rice.

In July 1946, the Republican Government entered into a barter agreement with the Government of India according to which Indonesia pledged to supply India with 70,000 tons of rice. "In reality" as Sukarno put it, "the Indonesian people consider this (rice) offer as a national pledge". The correspondent of *Free Press* of India brought out in graphic detail the true feelings of Indonesians towards India. When he visited a village in the interior of Java and asked one of the peasants what he felt about the rice offer, the latter replied *Saudara Saudara* (brothers, brothers) symbolic of the spirit of camaraderie and brotherhood between the peoples.

139. Mohammed Hatta, "Indonesia and India", Ibid., 6 January 1946
140. *Voice of Free Indonesia* (Djakarta), No. 8, 3 August 1946, p.1
141. *Free Press of India News Agency* (Bombay), 4 July 1946
of both the countries. It may be pointed out that the rice agreement was the first international agreement concluded by the Indonesian Republic with any country. Sukarno hailed the friendship with India as the greatest achievement of the Republic. In a speech on the eve of the first anniversary of freedom on 17 August 1946, Sukarno declared:

The most satisfactory aspect of our foreign policy is the agreement arrived at between ourselves and the Government of India. We have thereby won the friendship and awakened the fraternal feelings of Indians and forged links of understanding which will stand us in good stead when India takes her rightful place as one of the big nations of the world.142.

The Congress Working Committee was extremely elated at the Indonesian gesture and conveyed its gratitude to the government and people of Indonesia.143

One of the major objectives of the Interim Government was to carry forward India’s support to Indonesian Republic and do everything possible for

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142. Ibid., 19 August 1945
143. Indian National Congress, 1940-1946 n.124, p.163
the success of the Indonesian revolution. In his first broadcast to the nation on 7 September 1946, Nehru made a special reference to Indonesia and said:

India has followed with anxious interest the struggle of the Indonesians for freedom and to them we send our good wishes. 145

In his first press conference also Nehru reiterated Indian support to Indonesia:

We have one hundred per cent sympathy with them (Indonesians). We want them to win through and establish their freedom and we want to help and support them in every way. 146

The Interim Government, immediately after assuming power, resolved to recall the British Indian troops sent to Indonesia. Nehru also welcomed the

144. In fact Nehru assured Sukarno, Hatta and Sjahrir that in case the Interim Government was formed in India by the Indian leaders, Indonesian case would be vigorously championed. In a message to Sjahrir, Sukarno and Hatta Nehru said in April 1946: "In the event of any big changes taking place in India resulting in the formation of National Government, rest assured that we shall take every opportunity in such ways as we can". Free Press of India News Agency, 15 April 1946

145. Jawaharlal Nehru, n.117, p.3

146. The Hindu, 27 September 1946

147. India, Legislative Assembly Debates, vol. 7, 28 October 1946, p.103
Linggadjati Agreement "as a step towards world peace and ending of colonialism" in Asia. In March 1947, following the Linggadjati Agreement, the Government of India gave de facto recognition to the Indonesian Republic along with the U.K., the U.S. and Australia.

Even before the ink was dry on the Linggadjati Agreement the Dutch blatantly violated the provisions and proceeded with their aggressive plan by increasing their military strength. The Government of India immediately

148. The Hindu, 30 July 1947. The talks which began on 7 October 1946 between the Indonesian Republic and the Netherlands at the initiative of the U.K. resulted in the signing of Linggadjati Agreement on 15 November 1946. According to this Agreement, the Netherlands recognized the Government of Republic of Indonesia as exercising de facto authority over Java, Madura and Sumatra. Areas occupied by Allied or Netherlands forces would be restored to the Republic by mutual co-operation. The United States of Indonesia (U.S.I.) comprising the Republic of Indonesia, Borneo and the Great East (East Indonesia) was to be formed under the suzerainty of the Crown of Holland before January 1949. The Netherlands would support the new state of the U.S.I. for admission into the United Nations (U.N.). For a detailed account on the Linggadjati Agreement and the internal situation in Indonesia at that time see (1) Benedict R.O.G. Anderson, Java in a Time of Revolution: Occupation and Resistance (Ithaca, N.Y. 1972); (2) George McTearman Kahin, Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia (Ithaca, N.Y.1959) and (3) J.K. Ray, Transfer of Power in Indonesia (Bombay, 1967)

149. The Hindu, 30 July 1947
brought the matter to the notice of the U.S. and
the U.K. asking them to take suitable measures to
avert resumption of hostilities. While Indian
peace efforts were making headway the Dutch began
to regain control over their former empire by force.
The war which began on 20 July 1947 was called by the
Dutch delegate in the U.N. as "a limited police
action". The military action which involved organized
destruction enabled the Dutch to establish their control
over two-thirds of Java. Nehru became indignant at
the Dutch aggression and declared:

No European country, whatever it might be,
has any business to use its army in Asia.
Foreign armies functioning in Asian soil
are themselves an outrage to Asian sentiment.
The fact that they are bombing defenceless
people is a scandalous thing. If other
members of the United Nations tolerate this
or remain inactive, then the United Nations
Organization ceases to be. 153.

What angered India most was the fact that even though
the Indonesian Republic offered to submit the dispute to
arbitration, in accordance with the Linggedjati Agreement,

150. Ibid., 25 July 1947

     (London, 1951), p. 151

152. Ibid.

153. The Hindu, 26 July 1947
the Dutch, without giving any notice, set in motion their whole war machine and bombed and killed defenceless people. Sutan Sjahir, a well-known Indonesian nationalist leader, eluding the Dutch air blockade slipped out of Indonesia in an Indian Dakota piloted by B. Patnaik and reached New Delhi on 24 July 1947 to discuss the developments with Nehru and decide on future programme. Nehru assured him of India's "fullest sympathy both as government and as a people".

Disturbed by the dangerous turn of events the Government of India approached the U.K. to use its good offices to bring the hostilities to an end immediately and to secure a resumption of negotiations between the Dutch and the Indonesians. A similar request was also made to the U.S. The Government of India also warned that if the Indonesian dispute was not solved peacefully, the conflict would assume serious proportions threatening the peace and tranquility of not only Asia but of the

154. Biju Patnaik, who was a member of Orissa Legislative Assembly, brought safely Sjahir to India in a Dakota immediately after the resumption of hostilities between the Dutch and the Republicans on 20 July 1947. For this act of bravery Nehru paid rich tributes when he praised Patnaik as a "very gallant" Indian airman. The Statesman, 29 July 1947. In July 1980, Indonesia conferred its highest civilian award, Bhumi Putra on Biju Patnaik and offered him a royal salute at a special investiture ceremony held in Djakarta. The award given by the Indonesian government to a foreigner for the first time was in recognition of Biju Patnaik's role in freeing that country from the Dutch. The Statesman, 31 July 1980

155. The Hindu, 30 July 1947
the whole world. The U.K. suggested to the Government of Netherlands the possible appointment of a neutral police commission. The proposal was welcomed by the Government of India. But the idea did not find favour with the Dutch. Though the offer was renewed by the British government on 21 July 1947, there was no change in the Dutch attitude. The U.S. also made an effort offering its "good offices" to both the parties. Even though, neither the Dutch Ambassador nor senior officials representing the Dutch government were present in New Delhi, the Hague was kept informed of the views and possible initiatives of the Government of India. But all these efforts were in vain. Disappointed at the Dutch intransigent attitude and deeply concerned with the deteriorating situation in Indonesia, the Government of India decided to take the Indonesian issue to the U.N.

156. Ibid., 24 July 1947
157. Ibid., 23 July 1947
160. The Hindu, 30 July 1947
It may be pointed out that immediately after the outbreak of hostilities the representatives of Indonesian Republic appealed to India to take up the Indonesian issue before the U.N. Security Council. Dr. Soedarsono and Dr. Soeriningno, the two representatives of the Indonesian Republic, in a joint appeal issued from New Delhi, urged the democratic forces in the world including India, "to bring the case of Indonesia before the United Nations Organization". Expressing shock over the Dutch aggression in Indonesia, U.N. Secretariat circles hoped that India would take the initiative and represent to the U.N. about the colonial war unleashed by the Dutch government. In view of the "close interest" shown by India and Australia in the Indonesian dispute, diplomatic sources in London anticipated that either India or Australia might ask the U.N. to resolve the Dutch-Indonesian dispute. Azzam Pasha, Secretary-General of the Arab League, urged Nehru "to stand by the Indonesian Republic and bring their complaint

161. Ibid., 24 July 1947
162. Ibid., 25 July 1947
163. Ibid. For a good account of Australia's attitude to Indonesian independence struggle see "Australian Policy in Indonesia", The Economist, 19 February 1949, pp. 334-5 and Werner Levi, Australia's Outlook on Asia (Sydney, 1958), pp. 182-5
before the United Nations". The Indonesian government had also asked India, besides Australia and China, to take steps to end the war through the U.N.

India believed that Dutch aggression was an attempt to undermine not only the Indonesian Republic but also the U.N. Nehru declared that the Dutch military action "foreshadow the ending of the world structure which the United Nations have sought to build". Pointing out the past errors and mistakes which led to the failure of the League of Nations, he cautioned all members "to be vigilant and to nip trouble in the bud, before it becomes too widespread to be controlled". He also warned that "if each power was allowed to take aggressive action then the United Nations will have no prestige or authority and is bound to fade away". A few hours before the U.N. took up the Indonesian case for consideration, Nehru

164. Ibid., 26 July 1947
165. Ibid.
166. Ibid., 30 July 1947
167. Ibid.
168. Ibid.
declared that "Indonesia has become a symbol and a test for all powers and more especially for the United Nations".

The Interim Government sent a note to the U.N. Secretary-General and the Security Council on 30 July 1947, drawing their attention to the situation in Indonesia and asking them to take prompt and effective action for the restoration of peace. In the Interim Government's note to the Security Council Nehru stated:

I have the honour, on behalf of the Government of India, to draw the attention of the Security Council under Article 35, paragraph 1, of the United Nations Charter to the situation in Indonesia. During the last few days, Dutch forces have embarked without warning on a large-scale military action against the Indonesian people. These attacks began without warning at a time when a delegation of the Republican Government was actually at Batavia for negotiation with the Dutch authorities on the implementation of the Linggadjati agreement. In the opinion of the Government of India, the situation endangers the maintenance of international peace and security, which is covered by Article 34 of the Charter.

169. Ibid., 2 August 1947
170. Ibid., 1 August 1947
Australia, which was a member of the Security Council requested the Security Council to consider the Indonesian crisis which threatened world peace. Dr. Oscar Lange of Poland, the Chairman of the Security Council, ordered the immediate hearing of Indonesian question. Since India and the Netherlands were not members of the Security Council, they were invited to attend the meeting.

Taking part in the deliberations of the Security Council B.R. Sen, Indian representative, said that India had approached "the U.N. as a last resort, after all our efforts by other methods have apparently failed". Supporting Australian move to call for a cease-fire and suggesting that it would be more desirable if the Governments concerned were asked "to revert to the original positions which they held when the hostilities broke out", Sen urged that "the matter should be disposed off by the Security Council with the greatest possible expedition." 172 When the Netherlands representative

171. SCOR, Yr. 2, mtg 171, 31 July 1947, p. 1620
172. Ibid., p. 1621
objected to Indonesia being invited to take part in the proceedings of the Council, San argued that in view of the de facto recognition accorded to the Republic of Indonesia by the U.K., the U.S., members of the Arab League, India and Australia, besides Netherlands Government itself

it will not be an infringement of international law if the Security Council extended an invitation to the Republic of Indonesia to attend the meetings of the Security Council.173.

After a two day debate the Security Council called upon the parties to cease hostilities forthwith and "to settle their disputes by arbitration or by other peaceful means". Complying with the Security Council's instructions, the Dutch and the Republican governments ordered cease-fire at midnight of 4-5 August 1947. The Security Council's resolution spoke of truce and peaceful settlement but not of the withdrawal of the Dutch forces from the occupied territories of the Republic as demanded by the Indian representative.

173. Ibid., p. 1628
174. The Hindu, 3 August 1947
Yet the step taken by the Security Council marked the first victory for India in the Security Council with regard to Indonesian issue.

Besides mobilizing support for the Indonesian issue in the U.N., India also took other measures to strengthen the republic. On 28 July 1947 Nehru announced his Government's decision to terminate the Dutch Air Services over India immediately. The Government declared that "undoubtedly further steps will be taken to give them (Indonesians) medical help etc., if hostilities were not ended soon". The Government of India also decided to stop the purchase of goods by the private Dutch purchasing agencies and the Dutch Trade Commission in Bombay. Several public organizations also willingly came forward to strengthen the Indonesian cause. The All India Youth Congress decided to send a voluntary force of one thousand Indian Youths, including medical men, nurses and demobilized soldiers, to help.

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175. Ibid., 30 July 1947
176. Ibid.
177. Ibid.
Indonesia. On 24 August 1947 the Indian Red Cross sent a big consignment of medicines and deputed three Indian doctors to Indonesia. The Indian Federation of Labour also issued directives to Karachi and Bombay dock workers not to handle Dutch ships.

**INDIA AND BURMA**:

India-Burma relations entered a new phase after the second world war. Burmese nationalist leaders were convinced that once India attained independence, their independence could not be withheld for long. Like India, Burma was also promised independence by the British and as a first step an Interim Government was formed in Rangoon, twenty days after such a Government was formed in New Delhi. Aung San became the Vice-President.

178. Ibid., 31 July 1947
179. Ibid., 10 September 1947
180. Ibid., 2 August 1947
of the Interim Government. He was keen to forge closer links with India. Aung San was aware of India's importance to Southeast Asia and declared: "India is bound to be a powerful factor in South East Asia's affairs". When Nehru stopped in Rangoon for one night on his way back from Malaya, Aung San discussed international matters like formation of "Asiatic Federation" and promotion of "mutual understanding and joint action". After his talks with Nehru, Aung San said: "We trust Indian national leaders implicitly". Burmese nationalists also expressed their goodwill to India by providing the much needed food supplies. At a time when India was facing serious food shortage, Rangoon offered 10,000 tons of rice. Nehru, in a message to Aung San, expressed India's gratitude for this generous offer.

In January 1947 Aung San visited India to discuss the international situation and Indo-Burmese

181. The Hindu, 6 October 1946
182. Aung San, "Welcome Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose", Bose, n.98, pp.71-72
183. The Hindu, 6 October 1946
relations. In a statement made on 7 January 1947 Nehru paid glowing tributes to Aung San and wished him success in his endeavours so that Burma might attain freedom quickly. Nehru also declared that co-operation between India and Burma would be highly beneficial for the peace of the continent. When Thakin My, Finance Minister in Aung San's cabinet, arrived in New Delhi in March 1947, to negotiate the settlement of Burma's financial obligations to the Government of India, Liaquat Ali Khan, Finance Member of Nehru's cabinet, promised that the matter would be sympathetically considered. In June 1947, Abdul Razak, Education Minister of Burma, visited India. He appreciated India's difficult food situation and promised that Burma would do everything possible to solve India's food problem. Referring to the position of Indian minority in Burma, he said that Indians had a very good champion in Aung San and added that the rights of the Indian minority were quite safe.

184. Birendra Prasad, n. 28, p. 202
185. The Hindu, 23 March 1947
186. Ibid., 12 June 1947
Indians expressed their deep satisfaction at the inauguration of the Constituent Assembly in Rangoon on 9 June 1947. Greeting the Burmese Constituent Assembly, Nehru hoped that it would soon pave the way for "independence and a democratic people's constitution". 187 Expressing similar sentiments Gandhi hoped that Burmese progress to complete freedom would not be "marred by bloodshed" as had befallen India. In June 1947, India strongly advocated the admission of Burma into the E.C.A.F.E. 188

The assassination of Aung San on 19 July 1947 came as a great shock to Burmese and Indians alike. Burma was deprived of the most popular nationalist leader and India a great friend. Making a moving reference to the ghastly incident, Nehru said that though it was not the policy of India to interfere in the internal politics of another country, India must of necessity take interest, especially in a country like Burma, for, things had happened which "transcend the boundaries of

187. Ibid.
188. Ibid.
189. Tinker, n.108, p.27
internal politics". Nehru wanted stability and peace to be preserved in Burma, and according to some sources, even authorized the use of Indian troops then present in Burma to help the Burmese government if necessary. The All India Congress Committee also passed a resolution expressing its grief on the murder of Aung San:

His death at this critical moment is a terrible blow to Burma and a heavy loss to Asia. To people of Burma, the Committee extend their deepest sympathy at this disaster that has befallen them.

INDIA AND INDO-CHINA:

Contacts between Indian and Indo-Chinese nationalists, as mentioned earlier, started developing from 1927 when Nehru met at the Brussels Congress Ho Chi Minh and Duong Van Gieu, the two distinguished leaders of Vietnam. The following year, Gieu led a team of Indo-Chinese nationalists to the annual session of the Indian National Congress in Calcutta. Dr. Ansari, the President of the

190. The Hindu, 30 July 1947
192. Indian National Congress. Resolutions on Foreign Policy, 1947-1957 (New Delhi, 1957), p.1
session, extended a warm welcome to the Indo-Chinese delegates. Greeting the Congress, on behalf of the Indo-Chinese nationalists, one of the Indo-Chinese delegates said:

I wish you ... success in your struggle for freedom and pray that your movement might succeed. I speak for the people of Indo-China numbering 23 millions ... We have extreme sympathy for your movement. The emancipation of the oppressed peoples is not the work of one single country or people. It is the work of the people of all oppressed countries... let me say, 'Long live freedom of India'.

It may be pointed out that the Indo-Chinese delegates were the first to attend a Congress session from Southeast Asia. Unfortunately these contacts between the Indo-Chinese and Indian leaders could not develop further due to the obstacles placed by the British and French governments.

The developments in Indo-China after the second world war also received the attention of the Indian Nationalist leaders. Soon after the termination

193. Indian Quarterly Register (Calcutta), vol.2, 1928, p.372
of second world war, Indian soldiers were sent to Indo-China by the British under Potsdam Agreement. Indian nationalist leaders condemned the deployment of Indian soldiers to suppress Vietnamese nationalist movement. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the President of the Indian National Congress, stated that Indians who were fighting for freedom could not but sympathize with Indonesian and Annamite nationalists and "the use of Indian troops to suppress the aspirations of nationalists there have caused deep resentment". In a resolution passed in December 1945, condemning the use of Indian soldiers in Indochina and Indonesia, the Congress Working Committee declared:

Any support from any quarter to imperialist designs in Indonesia, Indochina and elsewhere is resented throughout Asia as culpable violation of the professed aim of the United Nations and the undeniable right of Asian nationals.

Nehru considered the use of Indian troops in Indonesia and Indochina as a national "shame" which


revealed India's "helplessness" and left "an abiding anger and bitterness". Indo-Chinese leaders were happy with the expressions of Indian sympathy and hoped that India would help in their struggle for freedom. Ho Chi Minh, President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (D.R.V.N.), greeting the Interim Government expressed the hope that "the fraternal and close relations between our two countries will contribute to the happiness of our two peoples and to the peace of the world". Reciprocating his greetings Nehru in a message said that he looked forward to "close fraternal relations between free India and Democratic Vietnam".

INDIA AND THE PHILIPPINES:

Immediately after the second world war, the Philippines was granted independence by the U.S. on 4 July 1946. The Indian nationalists were very happy that a sister nation attained its freedom. During

196. Nehru, n.43, p.584
197. The Hindu, 1 September 1946
198. Ibid., 10 September 1946
the proceedings of the All India Congress Committee on 6-7 July 1946, Nehru welcomed the independence of the Philippines:

Freedom and independence are the battle cries of every Asian country and people. Every advance of freedom, therefore, in any country of Asia is welcome. The independence of Philippines has been inaugurated on an auspicious day, July 4, famous in the annals of freedom, when the American colonies started their career of independence which was to lead them to new heights in prosperity and power undreamt of in previous ages. We send our greetings to the people of Philippines on this opening of a new chapter in their history.

ASIAN RELATIONS CONFERENCE, MARCH 23-APRIL 2, 1947:

The Asian Relations Conference was an epoch making event in the history of Asia. It was the manifestation of Indian leaders' long cherished desire to promote better relations among Asian countries. For the first time in history, Asian nationalists assembled on Asian soil to discuss common problems.

199. *Indian Annual Register*, vol. 2, 1946, p. 104
exchange view and arrive at solutions. The Conference heralded a new age of Asian resurgence. As Michael Brecher has pointed out the Conference reflected "one of the most significant phenomena of the century, the re-entry of Asia into world politics".

The Conference was not official in character in that it was sponsored, not by the Interim Government, but by the Indian Council of World Affairs, a non-political organization. However, the brain behind the Conference was Jawaharlal Nehru, who to quote Appadurai, Secretary of the Asian Relations Conference, "provided every assistance that the Indian Council of World Affairs asked for in connection with the Conference". Though the idea of organizing an Asian Conference was mooted immediately after the end of the second world war simultaneously in many countries, India took the initiative in organizing the first Asian meet. In his inaugural address to the Conference, Nehru mentioned:

It so happened that we in India convened this conference, but the idea of such a conference arose simultaneously in many minds and in many countries of Asia.


201. A. Appadurai, "The Asian Relations Conference in Perspective", International Studies (New Delhi), vol.18, p.276
There was a widespread urge and an awareness that the time had come for us, peoples of Asia, to meet together, to hold together and to advance together. It was not only a vague desire, but the compulsion of events that forced all of us to think along these lines. Because of this the invitation, we in India sent out, brought an answering echo and a magnificent response from every country of Asia. 202.

The spirit of Asia, which had persisted despite the isolationism of the colonial period, and the growing desire to enter the club of free nations in co-operation with other Asian countries, were the two factors that were responsible for the spontaneous and enthusiastic response. Twenty-eight countries sent their representatives to the Conference. All the Southeast Asian countries - Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Cochin-China, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaya and the Philippines - sent their representatives.

According to the organizers, the two objectives of the Conference were: (1) To understand Asia's problems - social, economic and political and (2) to

promote co-operation among the peoples of Asia.

Elaborating the objectives of the Conference, in
the course of an address given in the Bombay branch
of the Indian Council of World Affairs, on 22 August
1946, Nehru said:

We have no doubt that, if we do meet,
the Conference will not put an end to
the world's troubles. The Conference
will help to promote good relations with
neighbouring countries. It will help
to pool ideas and experience with a view
to raising living standards. It will
strengthen cultural, social and economic
ties among the peoples of Asia. The
data papers presented to the Conference
will constitute valuable documents and
the discussions on them will, we hope,
throw out concrete suggestions for
practical policy.

Nehru and the Indian delegation dominated the
Conference all through by highlighting the great role
that Asia was destined to play in world affairs. In
his inaugural speech Nehru declared that the countries
of Asia "can no longer be used as pawns by others",
and added that "they are bound to have their own policies

203. Jawaharlal Nehru "Inter-Asian Relations", India
Quarterly vol.2, p.327
in world affairs". Even though there were conflicts in many Asian countries, Nehru stated, "the whole spirit and outlook of Asia are peaceful and the emergence of Asia in world affairs will be a powerful influence for world peace". He further declared that "there can be no peace unless Asia plays her part". Pointing out that Asian countries were all equal in status, Nehru said:

In this conference and in this work there are no leaders and no followers. All countries of Asia have to meet together on an equal basis in a common task and endeavour.

He also tried to dispel the fears expressed in Europe and the U.S. that the Conference was directed against them. He said:

We have no designs against anybody, ours is the great design of promoting peace and progress all over the world. For too long have we of Asia been petitioners in western courts and chancellories, that story must now belong to the past. We propose to stand on our own legs and to co-operate with all others who are prepared to co-operate with us. We do not intend to be the playthings of others.204

204. Nehru, n.202, pp.297-304
Our presence here today is an expression of the will of the Asian peoples to unite and find possible ways and means to solve their common problems.208.

The Conference was divided into five round table groups to discuss eight topics: (1) National movements for freedom; (2) Racial problems; (3) Intur-Asian migration; (4) Transition from colonial to guided economy; (5) Agricultural reconstruction and industrial development; (6) Labour problems and social services; (7) Cultural problems and (8) Status of women and women's movements.

In a conference representing so many countries with different policies and programmes differences were bound to surface. In the course of the discussion on 'national movements for freedom', Indonesian and Vietnamese delegates referred to the use of Indian troops by the British imperialists to put down the national movements in their countries. While admitting that Indian troops were used in Indonesia after the end of the second

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208. Ibid., p.53
world war, Nehru pointed out that the first step taken by the Interim Government was to order the withdrawal of these forces and that by November 1946 all Indian troops had been completely withdrawn.

The Indonesian delegates, while expressing gratitude to the Conference for the declarations it had made in sympathy with their struggle for freedom, hoped that the Conference would do something more which would be of "concrete assistance" to them. Vietnamese delegates complained that India's support was "more moral than material" and this was not "sufficient help" in their struggle for independence. He urged India to strengthen the hands of the Vietnamese nationalists by taking steps like according recognition to the Government of Vietnam, championing Vietnamese cause in the U.N. and preventing French reinforcements going from India to be used against Vietnam. In reply to the Vietnamese complaint Nehru said that he did not see

209. Ibid., p.77. It is interesting to note that the Vietnamese delegate also pointed to the use of British Indian troops to put down Vietnamese nationalist movement. Nehru evaded this issue in his reply.

210. Ibid., p.74
how the Government of India could be expected to declare war on France. That was not the way to proceed, and by such precipitate action, they were likely to lose in the long run. Any wise government would try to limit the area of conflict. However, Nehru assured that sufficient pressure would be brought to bear on the colonial government to grant independence as early as possible.

The Conference resolved to set up an Asian Relations Organization so that "the contacts forged at this Conference must be maintained and strengthened and the good work begun here must be continued, efficiently organized, and actively developed". Unfortunately no follow-up action was taken and the Asian unity in later years turned out to be a mirage than a reality. In retrospect one should not, however, underestimate the importance of Asian Relations Conference.

211. Ibid., pp.78-79. It may be pointed out that even though the Indonesian and Vietnamese delegates expressed their displeasure for the mere moral support they got from India and urged India to do something more than expressing sympathy for their nationalist struggles, it was to the Vietnamese delegate that Nehru gave a blunt reply.

212. Appadorai, n.201, p.283