CHAPTER III
FREE INDIA AND THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA
The origin and growth of India's foreign policy and India's relations with Southeast Asia before 15 August 1947 have been discussed in the previous chapter. As stated earlier the Indian National Congress showed interest in world affairs ever since its inception in 1885. This interest, which began on a modest scale, picked up momentum with the growth of the Congress and the intensification of the freedom struggle. In the course of the nationalist struggle, there evolved, as Professor Bimla Prasad points out, "certain principles of foreign policy and certain ways of looking at world affairs" which later became the foundations of independent India's foreign policy.

More than any other nationalist leader, Jawaharlal Nehru was responsible for shaping and articulating the nationalist thinking on matters relating to international affairs. Nehru, who moulded foreign policy of the Congress ever since he returned from the Brussels Congress in 1927, not only became the Prime Minister of independent India, but also assumed charge as Minister for External Affairs. It was the singular good fortune of India that it had

inherited a tradition of foreign policy thinking even before it became independent. What is more, for thirty years the ideas and ideals of foreign policy reflected the thinking of one of the greatest minds of modern times, Jawaharlal Nehru. Commenting on this unique combination of continuity of men and thinking in foreign policy N.V. Rajkumar writes: "This has given the country a continuity of tradition and steadiness of outlook in its external relations which perhaps no other young nation possesses".

SALIENT FEATURES OF INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY:

The main features of independent India's foreign policy can be summed up as opposition to colonialism, imperialism and racialism or in a positive sense, freedom of all nations from all kinds of domination - political, economic, social and cultural; maintaining independent judgement of each issue in the international sphere without aligning itself with either of the power groups; enabling Asia to have its say in world councils particularly

2. N.V. Rajkumar, The Background of India's Foreign Policy (New Delhi, 1952), p.2
in matters concerning Asian countries; lessening of world tensions by offering its good offices; strengthening the United Nations Organization (U.N.O.) not only for promoting peace and security in the world but also for the economic, social and cultural advancement of mankind, and settlement of international disputes through negotiations. Nehru explained the basic features of India's foreign policy even before India attained independence. Addressing his first press conference after the formation of Interim Government Nehru said:

In the sphere of foreign affairs India will follow an independent policy, keeping away from the power politics of groups aligned one against another... The kernel of our policy is the ending of colonialism all over Asia, or for that matter in Africa or elsewhere, and racial equality, or equality of opportunity for all races, no legal bar, etc., and the end of domination or exploitation of one nation by another.4

3. For a detailed account of the main features of India's foreign policy see (1) Achuta Manon, The Foreign Policy of India (Madras, 1975); (2) A.Appadarai, "The Foreign Policy of India", in Joseph E.Black and Kenneth W.Thompson, eds. Foreign Policies in a World of Change (New York, N.Y. 1963), pp.481-515; (3) K.P.Karunakaran, India in World Affairs (Bombay, 1952), vol.1; (4) K.P.Karunakaran, India in World Affairs (Calcutta, 1958), vol.2; (5) Karunakar Gupta, Indian Foreign Policy (Calcutta, 1956); (6) K.P.Misra, ed. Foreign Policy of India (New Delhi, 1977); (7) Michael Brecher, Nehru: A Political Biography (London, 1955); (8) B.R.Nanda, India's Foreign Policy: The Nehru Years (New Delhi, 1979); (9) M.S.Rajan, India in World Affairs, 1954-1956 (New York, N.Y. 1964) and (10) M.S.Rajan, India's Foreign Relations During the Nehru Era (Bombay, 1976)

4. The Hindu, 27 September 1946
India stuck to the policy of non-alignment despite severe opposition from both sides of the cold war. During the heydays of cold war, non-alignment was anathema to Stalin and Truman alike. The United States (U.S.) was making frantic efforts to enlist support against the communist powers and non-alignment appeared to the Americans as one designed to strengthen the communists against the democratic forces of the world. Americans branded Nehru as "the agent of the Soviet Union". John Foster Dulles, a member of the U.S. delegation to the U.N. General Assembly, said:

"In India Soviet Communism exercises a strong influence through the Interim Hindu Government." Communist powers also castigated India in a similar fashion. Liu Shao-Chi, the Chinese leader, described India, Burma, the Philippines and Indonesia as "semi-colonies" which must be freed from the stranglehold of western imperialism. In a telegram dated 19 October 1949 to Ranadive, the General Secretary of the Communist

5. Nanda, n.3, p.4


Party of India (C.P.I.), Mac Tse-tung expressed the hope that under the leadership of the C.P.I. India would certainly not remain long "under the yoke of 8 imperialism and its collaborators". The New Times described the Indian National Congress as a "party of a reactionary bloc of Indian capitalists, landlords and princes" who had made a deal with Anglo-American imperialists and Indian reactionaries to fight their own people. It may also be pointed out that Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, India's first Ambassador to the Soviet Union, could not even meet Stalin once, in the course of her two year stay in Moscow.

The Indian nationalist leaders have always maintained that the attainment of Indian independence was only the first step in Asian and African political resurgence. Nairu repeatedly declared India's commitment


10. In April 1949 Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit told the press bluntly: "I did not meet Stalin even once". T.N.Kaul, Diplomacy in Peace and War (Sahibabad, 1979), p.15
to the freedom of Asian countries. Addressing the U.N. in 1948 Nehru said:

We in Asia, who have ourselves suffered all these evils of colonialism and of imperial domination, have committed ourselves inevitably to the freedom of every other colonial country. There are neighbouring countries of ours in Asia with whom we are intimately allied. We look at them with sympathy; we look at their struggle with sympathy. Any power, great or small, which in any way prevents the attainment of the freedom of those peoples, does an ill turn to world peace. 11.

Nehru was convinced that, after the end of the second world war the days of colonialism were numbered in Asia. Since colonialism was a continuing outrage against human dignity and freedom, it was bound to be terminated sooner or later. With the end of British imperialism in India western imperial system was sure to crumble soon in rest of Asia. "None of the colonial powers" Nehru remarked in 1952, "have any 12 strength behind them". This understanding of the inherent weakness of colonial powers made Indians more vocal in their opposition to colonialism.


INDIA AND THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Though India championed the cause of the people groaning under imperialist domination and colonial exploitation in all parts of the world, Indian leaders evinced greater interest in Southeast Asia. When India became independent, the whole of Southeast Asia, barring Thailand (which never lost its independence) and the Philippines (which got independence in 1946) was in the grip of colonial rule. Since India's future was linked with the peace and security of Southeast Asia, Indians naturally took greater interest in the decolonization of these countries. Indian interest did not end with the attainment of mere independence. Nehru believed that these countries should not get engulfed in cold war and wanted to create conditions which will enable them to accomplish political stability and rapid economic development. India also provided assistance, within the limited means at its disposal, to these newly independent countries to consolidate their political gains. India's Southeast Asia policy, therefore, was motivated by three important considerations. The first objective was to rally world opinion in favour of
speedy decolonization in Southeast Asia. The second was to extend the area of peace in Southeast Asia by helping the Southeast Asian countries to pursue their task of political, social and economic development with least outside intervention. The third was to provide moral and material support to newly independent countries to stabilize their political systems. India’s support to the Indonesian Republic, Indian diplomacy at the Geneva Conference of 1954, India’s opposition to the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (S.E.A.T.O.) and the Commonwealth assistance to Burma at Indian initiative in 1948-50 are excellent illustrations of these three foreign policy goals.

FREE INDIA AND THE INDONESIAN STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM

Mention has already been made of the steps taken by the Interim Government in furtherance of the cause of the Indonesian Republic. After independence, Indonesia naturally received considerable attention from the Indian foreign office. The Indonesian leaders also hoped that free India would play a significant role in mobilizing world opinion on behalf of their country.
As early as January 1946, Hatta had written:

We in Indonesia sincerely hope that India will soon be free, all the more so, in view of the fact that the question of freedom of our two countries is really one common question. When India declares her independence and becomes free from British rule, the Indonesian independence will no longer be a problem.13

On 16 August 1947 President Sukarno expressed his great joy at Indian independence and declared that the success of Indonesian freedom struggle would depend on Indian people. The significance of Indian independence was clearly brought out by Merdeka, a news bulletin issued by the Information Service of the Indonesian Republican Government, in New Delhi:

We Indonesians, after having proclaimed two years ago our independence on August 17th but who are still fighting, struggling and toiling for the defence of the newly acquired freedom, are certainly not less happy by this big occasion. We are happy not only because the masses of the two new countries are given now the opportunity to determine their own way of life, but also because freedom is something which cannot be isolated or monopolized by any

13. The Hindu, 6 January 1946
14. Ibid., 18 August 1947
single country. The freedom of one country is bound to influence the fate of millions of subject peoples, particularly in this special case, being a question of a population only second to that of China. 15

New Delhi took a number of significant steps to promote the cause of the Indonesian Republic. On 12 October 1947 the External Service Division of the All India Radio started news broadcasts in Bahasa Indonesia which gave considerable publicity to the Republic. At the third session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (E.C.A.F.E.) which was held in Dotacumund in June 1948, Jawaharlal Nehru regretted the absence of the representative of Indonesian Republic and expressed the hope that steps would be taken to invite the Republic "to take part in the Commission's deliberations in some form or other". Thanks to Indian initiative the Republic was given Associate Membership of the F.C.A.F.E. in December 1948.


16. Inaugurating the services Sardar Patel, the Minister for Information and Broadcasting, said: "These broadcasts shall be a symbol of the spirit of resurgence which pervades the people of Asia today." The Hindu, 15 October 1947

17. Nehru, n.11, p.260

18. The Hindu, 9 December 1948
In the U.N. which, as stated earlier, was already debating the Indonesian problem, the Indian representative played an important part. P.P. Pillai, the Indian delegate, drew the attention of the U.N. to the Dutch violations of cease-fire resolution and the necessity to halt the deteriorating situation:

To us it is intolerable that after the world has fought two wars for democracy and national self-determination, a colonial war of this kind should be permitted to continue.19

Irritated by the Indian stand, the Dutch delegate tried unsuccessfully to draw a parallel between the war in Indonesia and the communal riots which took place in India and Pakistan in 1946-1947. P.P. Pillai condemned the comparison as "quite gratuitous and irrelevant". 20

After long deliberations the Security Council appointed a Committee of Good Offices on 25 August 1947

19. SCOR, yr. 2, mtg 192, 23 August 1947, p.62
20. Ibid.
with an Australian, a Belgian and an American, to help the parties arrive at a settlement. The Security Council also set up a Consular Commission to supervise the cease-fire order and report on the implementation of truce. Strangely enough the Commission consisted of Belgium, France, the United Kingdom (U.K.) and the U.S., all western colonial powers, who naturally would favour the Dutch. Countries like India, the Soviet Union, Syria, Colombia and Poland, which espoused the Republican cause, were deliberately excluded. P.A.Pillei, the Indian delegate, expressed his "profound disappointment" over the strange manner in which the Commission was constituted and pointed out that the Security Council had accepted "the opinion of the accused as to how the trial should be conducted". Even the Consular Commission could not hide the fact that the Dutch police action did not altogether cease. On receiving the Consular Commission's report, which condemned the Dutch for their non-compliance with Security Council's cease-fire order, the Security Council in a resolution adopted on 1 November 1947 simply "took note" of the fact that the cease-fire

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order had been ineffectual and called upon "the parties concerned forthwith to consult with each other, either directly or through the Committee of Good Offices as to the means to be employed in order to give effect to the cease-fire resolution". Security Council did not even disapprove Dutch defiance of its cease-fire order. India, naturally, was disappointed at this "unrealistic" resolution for it did not "express any regret, or use any term even faintly indicative of disapproval, in regard to the fact that the cease-fire order has not been faithfully implemented". P.P.Pillai pointed out that the Council's inability, even three months after its cease-fire order, to take any action other than "take note" of the fact that the order has been disregarded, "will be universally interpreted as tenderness towards the Dutch".

The mounting Indian opposition to the continuance of the Imperialism in Indonesia, both within and outside the U.N., infuriated the Dutch who started to criticize India severely. Van Kleffens, the Dutch delegate, pointed

22. SCOR, yr.2, mtg 218, 1 November 1947, p.25
23. Ibid.
out that in India there was "more military action" than "in the whole of Java and Sumatra put together". P.P. Pillai answered that Van Kleffen's remarks were out of place and unwarranted and regretted that the Dutch "should have sought to divert attention from the inequity of the Indonesian war by irrelevant and ill-informed references" to India. A semi-official Dutch document entitled *Indonesia, the Great Powers of Asia and Australia*, which was widely circulated in western countries, described India's interest in Indonesia as an imperialistic attempt to dominate Asia. To quote the document:

> India which has for a long time been on the verge of independence and was involved to its advantage in the late war by supplying materials and troops, and then released by England, toys with the idea of Asiatic leadership which it hopes to assume in succession to Japan. India's history has known expansion in various directions in Asia and Asia Minor. The present ruling class under the leadership of Pandit Nehru is playing a more modern imperialistic game.


25. Ibid.

26. Ibid., 19 February 1948
This charge was outrageous and nobody took it seriously. D.B. Desai, India's delegate, declared in the Security Council: "We have no ulterior motives, but no power in Asia can afford to sit back and look on with equanimity or indifference at the happenings in Indonesia".

Throughout 1947 the Dutch continued their aggression in Indonesia in violation of Security Council's resolutions of 1 August and 1 November 1947. Consequently Republican authority was reduced to parts of Sumatra and Java. The Indonesian nationalists did not lose hope and resorted to guerilla warfare. The U.S. which watched the situation with dismay, did not want the escalation of the conflict and made efforts to bring the two parties to the negotiating table. At the initiative of Americans, peace talks began in the U.S. Naval Ship, Renville, on 8 December 1947. Nehru was naturally happy with the American initiative and welcomed the peace talks. In a message to the Indonesian and

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27. SCOR, yr.3, mtg 390, 23 December 1948, p.28
Dutch delegations appealed to them "to work for a similar consummation in a similar spirit as the peaceful transfer of power in India from British to Indian hands." 28

The Runville Agreements signed on 17-19 January 1948 represented a partial victory for the Dutch. According to the Runville Agreements, Van Mook's demarcation line was recognized as the status quo line. As a result, the area of the Republic was reduced to Java and Sumatra; moreover the Republic would have to withdraw all its forces from areas claimed by the Dutch as a result of their police action. Netherlands' sovereignty over Indonesia was to be transferred "after a stated interval" to an independent United States of Indonesia, of which the Republic was to be a constituent state. "Within a period of not less than six months or more than one year from the signing of this agreement", a plebiscite was to be held "to determine whether the populations (sic) of the various territories of Java, Madura and Sumatra wish their territory to form part of the Republic of

28. The Hindu, 19 December 1947
Indonesia or another state within the United States of Indonesia". Summing up the effects of the Renville Agreements, Alastair Taylor writes: "In other words, the republic would be entering into political discussions with its position materially weakened and confronted with the prospect of progressive deterioration of power".

The Government of India's reaction to the Renville Agreements was mixed. It welcomed the agreements as a step toward a final settlement. At the same time it shared the feelings of the Indonesian nationalists that the agreement was arrived at "mainly through the concessions which one of the parties had been compelled to make at all stages".

The Renville Agreements did not last long. The Dutch resumed their hostile attitude by attempting to establish puppet regimes in Madura and West Java and to blockade the progress of the Indonesian Republic.

29. For the text of the Renville Agreements see Conference on Indonesia: Documents (New Delhi, 1949), vol.2, pp.14-16


The Indian representative drew the attention of the U.N. to the aggressive designs of Dutch imperialists in total disregard of the Keluva Agreement. Considering the Dutch plans as a part of a premeditated and carefully worked out programme, P.P. Pillai warned the Security Council that if such developments were allowed to continue they "might lead to the fragmentation and dismemberment of the territories of the Indonesian Republic".

P.K.I. Revolt in Madiun and Indian Reaction

During this period, the Indonesian Republic had to face not only Dutch opposition but also an internal rebellion led by the Partai Kommunis Indonesia (P.K.I.) or Communist Party of Indonesia. The People's Democratic Front or P.D.R., which was founded on 10 February 1948, became more and more militant under Sjarifuddin. Failure of the Republicans to secure substantial political gains from the Dutch and the pro-Dutch leanings of the U.S. greatly dissatisfied sections of Indonesians who swelled the ranks of the P.K.I. Armed struggles in the

32. The Hindu, 19 June 1948
33. The P.K.I. was founded in 1929. It was the first national
F.N. cont.

The communist party in Asia. The P.K.I. organized a revolt in 1926-27 in Java and Sumatra against the Dutch rulers. This rebellion was put down by the Dutch and thousands of P.K.I. members were arrested and exiled. As the P.K.I. was declared illegal, many communist leaders went underground. Musso and Alimin, who were on their way to Indonesia from Moscow, were arrested by the British in Singapore. Tan Malaka, another great communist leader, reached Bangkok where he established a new party called Parti or Indonesian Republic Party in 1927 and concentrated on training Indonesian underground workers in Bangkok. The communists came closer to the Dutch during the second world war and collaborated with the Dutch imperialists.

neighbouring Asian countries gave further encouragement to the Indonesian communists to embark on armed struggle and wrest governmental power from the Republican leaders. Musso who returned from Moscow in August 1948 took over the leadership of the P.K.I. and the F.D.R. He immediately adopted a revolutionary programme and led the party to the path of armed revolt in岷ian on 18 September 1948. The岷ian revolt, however, turned out to be a "storm in a tea cup". In spite of the severe handicaps (because the bulk of its loyal troops were immobilized along the Van Mook line) the Republican armed forces under General Nasution were able to put down the insurrection. Musso and Sjarifuddin were captured and executed. The communist uprising, though further weakened the economic and military strength of the Republic, proved a blessing in disguise, for it raised the prestige of Sukarno and the legitimacy of the Republic in the eyes of the world.


35. Kahin, n.33, p. 295
Moscow refrained from making any comments on the communist revolt. Throughout the period of the revolt, as Alastair Taylor writes, the Soviet Government "did not openly support the rebellion nor did it allude to the matter in the Council". The Soviet press did not come out with any comment immediately on the communist uprising in Indonesia. However, the New Times reacted one month after the revolt was put down. It made a scathing attack on the Republic. To quote:

Indonesian dissatisfaction with the policy of making deals with the colonizers, pursued by the Hatta Government, has latterly assumed the proportions of a popular uprising. The struggle for genuine independence of the Republic had become the focal point of political life. Treacherous elements are attempting behind the backs of the people to come to terms with the American and Dutch imperialists.37

36. Taylor, n.30, p.387. Charles McLane says that the silence of Moscow over the suppression of the P.K.I. revolt was because the P.K.I. leaders executed the insurrection in the "absence" of Soviet directives. McLane, n.33, p.409

37. G.Afrin, "In Indonesia", New Times, No.45, 3 November 1948, p.32
There was marked difference in the attitude of the U.S. government towards the Republic vis-a-vis the Dutch after the abortive communist rebellion. Although the U.S. had been sympathetic to the cause of Indonesian freedom yet it could not take a firm stand against the Dutch because of political alignments. The U.S. was deeply concerned over the situation which was favouring the communists in China, and the attempts of the Indonesian communists to take over the leadership of the Republic. In order to strengthen the hands of the Republic, the U.S. took certain measures. At a time when the Republican leaders were very much apprehensive of the Dutch intervention in the Republic under the pretext of suppressing communist revolt, Washington "wisely put strong pressure on the Dutch not to intervene and they were restrained from doing so". The U.S. also urged the Netherlands government to adopt a conciliatory policy and reach an agreement with the Republican leaders.

38. Kahin, n.33., p.295

39. The Hindu, 17 December 1940
The sympathies of the Indian nationalist leaders were obviously with the Republicans. The Government of India was also facing a similar violent uprising led by the C.P.I. The Government of India immediately banned the Communist Party in many states, arrested the communist leaders and put down the revolt with a heavy hand. In the light of their own experience Indian leaders could very well appreciate the magnitude of communist threat to the Indonesian Republic which was already engaged in a struggle against the Dutch colonialists. The Government of India’s thinking on the subject comes out vividly in a letter Sardar Patel wrote to the Provincial Premiers on 15 October 1948:

In Indonesia, the Republican Government is faced with hostilities on two fronts – the communists and the Dutch. There are, however, signs that Government forces are gaining some ascendency over the communists. The Dutch, who seem to have tried to make some capital out of the difficulties of the Government, do not seem to be in any mood either to learn or unlearn.40

In the same letter, Sardar Patel underlined the necessity for constant vigilance against communist activities which were posing a threat to the stability and security of South and Southeast Asian countries:

In the sphere of law and order, the communist menace demands constant vigilance. It is clear that we cannot allow a situation to develop which would create in India conditions even remotely suggestive of Burma, Malaya, Indonesia and China. It would never be allowed to deteriorate beyond a police problem and even there the less of a problem the better.41.

**THE SECOND POLICE ACTION**

Under pressure from Washington, the Dutch resumed negotiations with the Republican leaders on 4 November 1948. The talks reached a deadlock on the question of Interim Government. The Dutch proposed that in the Interim Government the Dutch representative should be vested with the sole authority to employ Netherlands' troops in case of internal disturbances. Matte rejected it outright. Ho

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41. Ibid., p.334
declared that the proposal was "indigestible". Compliance with the proposal would have been suicidal for the Republic. It would not only have infringed on their sovereign rights, but also would have given a convenient pretext for the Dutch to resort to military intervention.

The Dutch were aware that time was fast running out against them. They wanted to resolve the issue by a fait accompli and planned a quick police action. New Delhi was keenly following the developments in Indonesia and apprehended renewed Dutch attack on the Republic.

On 4 November 1948, in a meeting in Cairo, Nehru declared that if any further "aggressive action" was taken in Indonesia by the Dutch, it might have "grave repercussions in Indie and the world". Nehru also invited Sukarno to visit India so that the latter could explain the situation and plan the future course of action. Sukarno readily accepted the invitation. On 19 December 1948 Sukarno was awaiting the arrival of the private plane of the Indian Prime Minister, Pandit Nehru, which was to fly him to India. The Dutch

42. For details see "Netherlands Minister for Overseas Territories Dr. Sassen's letter to Dr. Hatte, 30 November 1948" Conference on Indonesia: Documents (New Delhi, 1949), vol. 2, p. 32

43. The Hindu, 7 November 1948
suspected the Indian move, for they feared that Sukarno might escape and set up a provisional government in India. The Dutch, therefore, refused landing permission in Batavia and transit permission in Jogjakarta for Nehru's plane. It was obvious that the Dutch wanted to thwart Sukarno's plan of visiting India and timed the police action accordingly. As Professor Kahin remarks, "the timing of the Dutch attack was in part a result of their desire to keep Sukarno from reaching India".

On 17 December 1948, the Dutch served an ultimatum demanding that the Republic should "surrender to the position" of the Hague. As the Republic refused to comply, the Dutch imperialists launched the second police action against the Republic in the early hours of 19 December 1948. Within a few hours, Jogjakarta, the Republican capital, and "all important Republican leaders, including the President and the Vice-President and members of the Cabinet and the Commander in-Chief of

44. Mohammed Yunus, Persons, Passions and Politics (New Delhi, 1979), p.39
45. Kahin, n.33., p.337
the Army were imprisoned.

The Dutch military action aroused the indignation of all sections of Indian society. The Government of India expressed its complete disapproval of the Dutch action and suspended the rights of the Dutch Airlines to operate in or across India. The departure of Mohan Singh Mehta, the Ambassador Designate to Holland, was also "indefinitely postponed". In a resolution adopted in its annual session in Jaipur on 19 December 1948 the Indian National Congress assured the Indonesian Republic of its complete sympathy. It further said that "it was a matter of the utmost concern to India that Indonesia should attain her full freedom and take her rightful part in Asian and international affairs".

Addressing the plenary session of the Congress Nehru declared:


47. The Hindu, 25 December 1948

48. Ibid., 30 December 1948

49. Indian National Congress, Resolutions on Foreign Policy, 1947-57 (New Delhi, 1957), p.1
Action has been started by the Dutch, but I may warn them that they will not be able to achieve their object. This action does not mean that the Republicans have been defeated. I can emphasize that no one can prevent the tide of independence in Asiatic countries. The police action of the Dutch will have serious repercussions in India, in Asia and perhaps in some other countries too.50

Crewmen of the Bombay docks decided to boycott the loading and unloading of the Dutch ships. The Hyderabad Students Congress and the students of Bombay expressed their deep sympathies for the Indonesians.53

Indian diplomacy once again asserted itself in the U.N. The Security Council held an emergency meeting on 22 December 1948, on the requests made by the U.S. and Australia. Taking part in the debate, D.B.Desai, the Indian representative, said that Indonesian question had become a test for Security Council's dignity and self-respect. Pointing out the grave consequences of the Dutch military action, he declared:

50. The Hindu, 21 December 1948
51. Ibid., 6 January 1949
52. Ibid., 4 January 1949
53. Ibid., 29 December 1948
The struggle of the Indonesian people for freedom epitomizes the spirit that is stirring the whole Asia. In that continent there is a tremendous upsurge. Everyday events of great consequence are taking place. If this question is not speedily and effectively solved it will have wide repercussions in that continent.54

D.B. Desai, therefore, requested the Security Council to act "immediately, decisively and effectively", and order "an immediate cease-fire" and the release of the Indonesian leaders "who have been taken prisoners since the opening of hostilities". The Security Council passed a resolution, on 24 December 1948, in which it called upon the parties "to cease hostilities forthwith" and asked the Dutch to release Sukarno and other political prisoners immediately. When the Hague failed to carry out the resolution, Security Council passed another resolution on 28 December 1948, calling upon the Netherlands to set free the Indonesian political prisoners "forthwith" and to report to the Security Council within

54. SCOR, yr. 3, mtg 390, 23 December 1948, p.28
55. Ibid.
the next twenty-four hours that it would comply with the U.N. wishes. The Netherlands flouted this resolution too.

The Dutch refusal to implement the Security Council's resolutions (which, to quote Nehru's words, were "very weak and inadequate") and Security Council's inability to deal effectively with the Dutch, disillusioned India, which entertained great hopes on the usefulness of the U.N. The pro-Dutch stand taken by the Western powers also caused great resentment. Nehru declared:

"We have to confess with sorrow that the attitude of some powers to this attempt to destroy the Indonesian Republic has been one of tacit approval or acceptance of aggression."

NEW DELHI CONFERENCE ON INDONESIA:

India rendered a signal service to the cause of Indonesian independence by convening a Conference on Indonesia in New Delhi from 20 to 23 January 1949.

58. India Record, 8 January 1949
59. Ibid.
Nehru was seriously thinking of the steps to be taken in support of the Indonesian Republic in the new situation created by the resumption of hostilities in Indonesia. He declared on the very day the Dutch launched aggression: "We will have to reconsider what we may have to do under the circumstances". Nehru also was keeping in touch with other Asian nationalists like U Nu who suggested a meeting of all Asian countries. Nehru concurred with U Nu's plea and decided to convene an Asian Conference in New Delhi.

The Indian initiative had mixed reception. The Republican government naturally was elated and described the proposed Conference on Indonesia as "the most encouraging manifestation of international concern" over the situation in Indonesia. As was to be expected, the Dutch authorities were very angry and expressed concern over Nehru's action in calling a conference to discuss "the internal affairs of another country".

60. The Hindu, 21 December 1948
61. The Conference on Indonesia (New Delhi, 1949), p.9
62. The Hindu, 4 January 1949
63. Ibid.
Western representatives in the U.N. headquarters viewed the Conference with "mistrust" and felt that an Asian bloc was in the offing. The British government considered the Conference an unwise move as it would create a "dangerous and difficult" situation. Foreign diplomats in New Delhi subscribed to the view that India's real intention in calling the Conference was to form an anti-western bloc. It was not unnatural for the European colonial powers to express concern whenever an Asian country made efforts to bring together the countries of Asia on the question of anti-colonialism. They exhibited fears when India convened the Asian Relations Conference, which was purely cultural and non-political in character. The U.S. government asked India not to adopt any extreme postures which would lead to "breach of relations with Holland".

Some of the western newspapers, however welcomed the Conference. The Times wrote that it was natural.

64. Ibid., 19 January 1949
66. Ibid., p.87
for India, which had close cultural and religious ties with Indonesia and which had evinced great interest in the Indonesian freedom movement, to hold a Conference on Indonesia. The Manchester Guardian Weekly and The Economist shared the views of The Times. Greeting the Conference New Statesman and Nation remarked that this Conference might become a "landmark in Asian affairs". The Conference was welcomed widely in the U.S. The pro-Republicans expressed the hope that the Conference would result in some concrete action against the Dutch. While condemning the West for its failure to check Dutch aggression in Indonesia, New York Post welcomed the Asian Conference.

From the very beginning Nehru took special care to allay the fears of the western countries regarding the objectives of the Conference. Addressing the Indian Journalists' Association in Calcutta Nehru categorically stated that it was not India's intention to form "an Asian

68. *Quoted in The Hindu, 5 January 1949*


70. "Guests of Nehru", The Economist, 8 January 1949, pp.50-52.

71. "Asia and the Dutch", New Statesman and Nation, 8 January 1949, p.22

72. The Hindu, 9 January 1949

73. Quoted in Ibid.
bloc against European countries or America. This
Conference is not opposed to any country or people.
It is not anti-European or anti-American or anti-western".
The External Affairs Ministry explained that the purpose
of the Conference was to "reinforce the United Nations
and not to replace it". It further said that the
Conference would like to make the Security Council realize
the strong feelings in Asia on the subject of imperialist
aggression. Nehru himself made this point clear. In
the invitation issued to various countries Nehru stated
that "the Conference is not designed to supersede in
any way the activities of the Security Council, but
only to lend the Council support on the basis of a
united understanding among ourselves".

74. For the text of Nehru's address to Indian Journalists' Association in Calcutta on 13 January 1949, see
The Conference on Indonesia, n.61, p.58

75. The Hindu, 14 January 1949

76. The Conference on Indonesia, n.61, p.59
The Indian point of view was endorsed by the Manchester Guardian Weekly. It remarked that India always indicated its willingness to strengthen the hands of the Security Council. It cited the permission India gave, at the instance of the Security Council, to the Dutch Premier to fly across India to Indonesia. The Manchester Guardian Weekly, 6 January 1949. The New Statesman and Nation remarked that the Conference might serve to "revitalize the United Nations". "Asia and the Dutch", n.71
The Asian Conference on Indonisia met in New Delhi on 20 January 1949. Since the Conference was intended to help the Indonesians, only those Asian countries which supported and sympathized with the Indonesians, were invited. They included Afghanistan, Australia, Burma, Ceylon, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen. China, Nepal, Thailand and New Zealand were represented by their observers. Leading members of either bloc were excluded and the membership of the Conference was limited only to those countries "which are either neighbouring or directly concerned". This was done because India did not want the Indonesian question to be embroiled in cold war rivalry. However, the Soviet Union, which considered itself an Asian as well as an European power, presented its preclusion from the Conference.

Inaugurating the eighteen-nation Conference
Nehru declared:


78. Pichai, n. 34, p. 98
We meet today, because the freedom of a sister country of ours has been imperilled and the dying colonialism of a past age has raised its head again and challenged all the forces that are struggling to build a new structure of the world. That challenge has a deeper significance than might appear on the surface, for it is a challenge to a newly awakened Asia which has so long suffered under various forms of colonialism.

Nehru reiterated that the Conference was meeting "in no spirit of hostility to any nation or group of nations". Nehru also emphasized that the Conference was not intended to sidetrack or bypass the U.N. but to help the Security Council to bring about a rapid and peaceful solution of the Indonesian problem. To quote Nehru: "We meet to supplement the efforts of the Security Council, not to supplant that body".

Nehru cautioned that if the Dutch challenge was not met effectively it "would affect not merely Indonesia but also Asia and the entire world". He, therefore, urged the Conference:

(1) to frame and submit proposals to the Security Council for the immediate restoration of peace and early realization of freedom by the Indonesian people;
(2) to suggest to the Security Council what action it should take in case its recommendations were not carried out by the Dutch; and

(3) to devise machinery and procedure to meet threat to freedom of Asian countries in future.

In a memorandum submitted by the Indonesian delegation, it was urged that the Conference should include in its resolutions their proposals regarding formation of an Interim Government by 1 March 1949; holding of general elections for a Constituent Assembly by 1 June 1949 and transfer of complete sovereignty by 1 September 1949; applying the provisions of Articles 41 and 42 of the U.N. Charter if the Dutch failed to carry out its recommendations and extending de jure recognition to the Republican government before the establishment of an Interim Government.

The Conference, after three days of frank and exhaustive discussions, unanimously adopted three

79. For the text of Nehru's presidential speech inaugurating the eighteen-nation Conference on Indonesia on 20 January 1949, see Nehru, n.11, pp.407-11

80. The Hindu, 21 January 1949
resolutions. The first resolution declared that the Dutch military action against the Indonesian Republic constituted "a flagrant breach of the Charter of the United Nations and defiance of the efforts of the Security Council and its Good Offices Committee to bring about a peaceful solution". The Conference recommended to the Security Council that all Republican leaders be freed immediately and the freedom of the Republican government be restored; an Interim Government be formed before 15 March 1949; "elections for the constituent Assembly be completed by 1st October 1949" and "power over the whole of Indonesia be completely transferred by 1st January 1950, to the United States of Indonesia". It also suggested that the Security Council "should take effective action under the wide powers conferred upon it by the Charter" in case its recommendations were not complied with. Finally the Conference requested the Security Council to report to the U.N. General Assembly the progress made in solving the Indonesian issue.

It is interesting to note that the resolution on Indonesia incorporated many of the proposals made by the Indonesian Republican leaders in the memorandum they submitted to the Conference.
Resolutions II and III of the Conference dealt with measures which should be taken for promoting close co-operation and consultation among the participants. The Chairman of the Conference telegraphed the resolution to the President of the Security Council on 23 January 1949 and followed it with a letter expressing the hope that the Council's effective action should not be further delayed. He also assured the Council "of the full co-operation of the member states represented at the Conference in any measure that it may decide to take".

The Conference offered the Security Council a definite plan of action aimed at bringing about an early and honourable settlement in Indonesia. One striking feature of the Conference resolution was the request made to the Security Council to report to the U.N. General Assembly, the measures taken or recommended, for solving Indonesian issue and the response from the

82. For the full text of the resolutions passed by the Conference, see Jansen, n. 65, pp. 408-11

83. The Conference on Indonesia, n. 61, p. 65
Dutch and Indonesians. By doing so, the members of the Conference indicated their desire to place the issue before all the members of the U.N. by taking it away from the Security Council, which was dominated by the western powers which were supporters of the Dutch.

The Indonesian representatives were greatly delighted at the outcome of the Conference. In a joint statement they expressed "profound satisfaction about the results so far achieved by the Conference". Great satisfaction was also expressed in India and abroad at the outcome of the Conference. The Hindu observed that "the Conference has done a magnificent job in a businesslike way". Commenting on the quick decisions taken by the Conference the Hindustan Times wrote that "it was a remarkable achievement for the Asian Conference that within three days of the holding its first open session it was able to reach agreed decisions..." The Manchester Guardian Weekly believed

84. The Hindu, 24 January 1949
85. Ibid., 25 January 1949
86. Quoted in The Conference on Indonesia, n.61, p.54
that the Conference attended by five of the British Dominions "cannot fail to affect Whitehall's thinking on and approach to Commonwealth relationships". The New York Times hoped that at least now "the Dutch government, whose impatience and folly have done so much harm, will yield in the interests of justice and humanity". Professor Kahin felt that the Conference "resolutions went farther than most members of the Security Council were prepared to go". Reflecting the opinion of the U.S. ruling circles, L.K. Rosinger expressed surprise at the moderate tone of the resolutions. "None of the resolutions" he wrote, "was as strong as had been expected ...." The British official circles expressed satisfaction at the moderation and skill with which Indian statesmen conducted the proceedings of the Conference. While the western media generally hailed the Conference and the final outcome, the communist world reacted very sharply.

87. Manchester Guardian Weekly, 27 January 1949
88. Quoted in The Conference on Indonesia, n.61, p.47
89. Kahin, n.33, p.400
91. "Indian Rampart", The Economist, 12 March 1949, p.452
Naming the participants as "reactionary elements" whose real purpose was to establish a military alliance to meet "the communist danger", Tass asserted that the Conference resolution on Indonesia would only perpetuate "Dutch rule over Indonesia". *New Times* was equally hostile to the Conference when it observed that "the resolutions on Indonesian question consisted of nebulous and noncommittal recommendations" and "only invoked disappointment among the democrats of Indonesia and other Asian countries". It was but natural for the communists, who were sore with Nehru and other Asian nationalists for suppressing the communist revolts to resort to bitter criticism of the Conference.

The Conference activated the Security Council and the members took greater interest in Indonesia.

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92. *Quoted in Jansen*, n. 65, p. 96

93. *New Times*, No.6, 2 February 1949, p.17

The hostile attitude of the Soviet press to the Conference was greatly resented in India. Speaking in the Constituent Assembly N.G. Range said: "I am very glad that he (Nehru) has taken the initiative in calling an Asian Conference and I am happy to see in the world press the lead he has given has come to be appreciated very much except in the Soviet Press. I cannot understand why the Russians are so keen in criticizing the initiative taken by the Honourable Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Do they want the Britisher to take the initiative? Or do they want the Americans to take the initiative? If India had not taken the initiative it would have helped the imperialist cause and not the cause of peace". *Constituent Assembly of India (Legislative) Debates*, pt.2, vol.2, 8 March 1949, p.1241
Responding to the voice of half the world population and one third of the members of the U.N., Security Council adopted a resolution on 28 January 1949. After pointing out the fact that the Council's earlier resolutions of 24 and 28 December 1948 had not been fully carried out, the resolution called for "the immediate discontinuance of all military operations"; the immediate and unconditional release of "all political prisoners arrested by them since 17 December 1948 in the Republic of Indonesia"; and to restore freedom to them "to discharge their responsibilities" in the Jogjakarta area. It also reconstituted the Committee of Good Offices as the "United Nations Commission for Indonesia", with more powers than it possessed previously, to assist in the negotiations to form an Interim Government by 15 March 1949 and recommended that elections for a Constituent Assembly be held by 1 October 1949 and that sovereignty be transferred to a "United States of Indonesia" before 1 July 1950.

In the time-table for transfer of power suggested by the New Delhi Conference, the Security Council made only one major change by fixing 1 July 1950 as the deadline for the termination of Dutch sovereignty, instead of 1 January 1950. India was not entirely happy with the Resolution of the Security Council. The New Delhi Conference had made clear suggestions for the enforcement of the recommendations of the Council if they were violated once again by the Dutch. It was astonishing that the Security Council found no need for a firm line of action to enforce its recommendations. Security Council also rejected the New Delhi Conference's request to report to the U.N. General Assembly on the Indonesian issue. Security Council's dilution of the New Delhi Conference's proposals was disappointing to most of the participants in the Conference. Nehru informed the Legislative Assembly that to a certain extent the decisions of Security Council fell short of the recommendations of the New Delhi 95 Conference on Indonesia. Although Security Council's

95. Constituent Assembly of India (Legislative) Debates pt.1, vol.2, 9 March 1949, p.1401
resolution fell far short of their expectations, Indonesian nationalist leaders were not entirely dissatisfied, because for the first time the Security Council laid down terms for a definitive political settlement of Indonesia problem. Further, the Security Council's resolutions, as Professor Alastair M. Taylor points out, "prevented the Republic's liquidation - and for that reason robbed the second police action of its raison d'être ...." Finally the resolution put the Republic "in a far stronger bargaining position" than it had been, by asking the Netherlands to recommence negotiations with a government which, according to the Hague, had ceased to exist.

The impact of the Conference on Indonesia could be seen clearly in the U.S. which brought considerable pressure on the Dutch to arrive at an immediate settlement with the Indonesians. When Dr. Stikker, the Netherlands Foreign Minister, visited Washington, Dean Acheson, U.S. Secretary of State, curtly told him of the U.S. desire for an early ending of Indonesian disputes. Acheson also hinted at the possibility of

96. Taylor, n.30, p.195
97. Ibid.
discontinuing American aid in case the Netherlands did not implement Security Council's resolutions.

India continued its efforts to strengthen the Indonesian nationalists even after the Conference on Indonesia. On 12 April 1949, on the initiative of India and Australia, the U.N. General Assembly agreed to consider the Indonesian issue. On 13 April 1949, Nehru convened in New Delhi an informal Conference which has attended by ten countries which took part in the Conference on Indonesia to review the Indonesian situation and to consider "further measures to bring about a satisfactory settlement of the Indonesian problem". This Conference passed two resolutions calling upon the participants to take measures in the U.N. General Assembly to condemn the Dutch for showing disrespect to the Council and to consider the possibilities of imposing economic sanctions and withdrawing all transit facilities by land, sea or air.

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98. Kahin, n.33, p.415


100. The Hindu, 15 April 1949. The ten countries that took part in the Conference on 13 April 1949 in New Delhi were: Afghanistan, Australia, Burma, China, Ceylon, Egypt, Iran, Nepal, Pakistan and Siam.

101. Jansen, n.65, p.96
The Asian Conference on Indonesia was held in New Delhi; the U.N., General Assembly's decision to debate the Indonesian issue and the American economic threats all had decisive influence on the Dutch who finally resumed negotiations with the Republican leaders on 14 April 1949. The negotiations ended with the signing of an Agreement in the Hague on 2 November 1949, by which the Dutch agreed to the unconditional and complete transfer of sovereignty before 30 December 1949 of the entire territory of the former Netherlands East Indies, except for Western New Guinea, to the Republic of the United States of Indonesia (R.U.S.I.), a federal government comprising of the Republic of Indonesia and the fifteen political units established by the Dutch. The Hague Agreement also provided for the Netherlands-Indonesian Union, in which the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the R.U.S.I. would take part on the basis of "free will and equality in status with equal rights". The only problem that remained unresolved was the status of Western New Guinea.

102. Kahin, n.33, pp.433-4
a compromise formula was evolved according to which the Netherlands' control and administration were to continue in Western New Guinea till its political status was determined through negotiations between the Netherlands and the R.U.S.I. within a year from the date of transfer of power to the R.U.S.I. Thus came to an end another colonial empire in the most populous country in Southeast Asia. Nehru declared that the birth of the United States of Indonesia "marked the turning of a new leaf in the history of Asia".

On the successful conclusion of the Round Table Conference in the Hague, Nehru, on behalf of the Constituent Assembly of India, congratulated, "the great leaders of the Indonesian Republic, the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister and others on the part they have played which has been a part not only of remarkable courage but of remarkable wisdom and restraint". C.Rajagopalachari, the Governor-General of India, conveyed "sincere congratulations and best wishes to Dr. Sukarno, the President of the Republic.

103. Ibid., p.444
104. India Record, 5 January 1949
105. Constituent Assembly of India (Legislative) Debates, pt.2, vol.6, No.1, 28 November 1949, p.10
of Indonesia. A resolution moved by Rama Rao, Indian representative in the U.N. on 3 December 1949 and adopted by the U.N. Special Political Committee, welcomed the Hague Agreement and congratulated the parties concerned and the U.N. Commission on Indonesia on their success.

In the Security Council all countries except the Soviet Union and the Ukraine hailed the outcome of the Hague talks. Tsarapkin, the Russian representative in the Security Council, accused Hatta and Sukarno as "the representatives of the self-styled Government". He further said:

When we look at the result of the agreements signed at the Hague, it is easy to see why they have been received with such jubilation by the representatives of the Netherlands and by their active accomplices, the United States and others. The agreements show that the Indonesian people are again wearing the chains of colonial enslavement with the complicity of the representatives of the Hatta clique, which has betrayed the interests of its people.108.

106. *Indie Record*, 8 December 1949
107. Ibid., 15 December 1949
108. *SCOR*, yr. 4, mtg. 456, 12 December 1949, p. 11
Reacting to the Russian criticism, Rama Rao declared in the Security Council that the conclusion of the Hague Agreement was an event over which most of the countries rejoiced. He added, "the matter is one of special gratification to India because the Prime Minister of India took a leading part in a Conference, held on the subject of Indonesia in New Delhi early this year, a Conference which materially influenced the subsequent course of events".

India was represented in a fitting manner by a Cabinet Minister, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, in the transfer of power ceremony, held in Jonjakarta on 27 December 1949. Addressing a press conference in Jakarta, she said that "no country in the world rejoiced more sincerely than India at the advent of independence for Indonesia, because right from the beginning India had stood for Indonesian independence". Even though Nehru could not take part in the independence day celebrations in Indonesia, he participated in the flag hoisting ceremony held at the residence of the Indonesian representative in New Delhi. Speaking on the occasion

109. Ibid., p.2
110. India Record, 5 January 1950
Nehru said:

Today the brave and lovable people of Indonesia, after a great turmoil, are emerging as an independent sovereign people... It is really a historic moment for the whole of Asia, for, today, it is not merely Indonesia, but the great continent of Asia which is gradually coming into its own. 111

Paying glowing tributes to Nehru and the role that India played in Indonesia's struggle for independence Soekarno, the Indonesian representative in India, said:

We want the Prime Minister of India to accept our heartfelt gratitude and the thanks of millions of Indonesians, unknown to him, but whose cause he has championed so consistently, for the numerous acts of help, for the kind, friendly and wise advice and hospitality he has given to all our leaders and the Government of the Republic of Indonesia. 112.

INDIA AND INDO-CHINESE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT:

The Vietnamese were also involved in a bitter anti-colonial struggle against the French during this period. The Vietnamese never reconciled themselves to French rule and carried on the struggle to overthrow French imperialism. The nationalist movement in Indo-China 113 was mainly confined to the Vietnamese who formed

111. The Hindu, 28 December 1949
112. Ibid.
113. Rupert Emerson, Representative Government in Southeast Asia (Massachusetts, 1955), p.170
three-fourths of the total population of Indo-China. In Cambodia and Laos, the two other constituent states of the Indo-Chinese Union, though there was not much opposition to the French rule, the Vietnamese nationalist influence was slowly taking roots among the leftist forces. Resistance to foreign domination was not new to the Vietnamese who carried on a struggle for one thousand years for independence from the Chinese. The spirit of nationalism was further promoted by the study of the works of Montesquieu and Rousseau in the University of Hanoi which was founded in 1907. The Vietnamese nationalists also derived inspiration from anti-European struggles taking place in other parts of Asia. Japanese victory over Russia in 1905 gave a fillip to the national consciousness among the Vietnamese. The Vietnamese elite were influenced by the works of contemporary Chinese reformers, particularly Kang Yu-wei, who advocated radical reforms. The Vietnamese were also greatly impressed by the Revolution of 1911 in China which resulted in the establishment of Republican government. The Vietnamese nationalists were stirred by the doctrine of national self-determination
which was foremost among the fourteen points enunciated by President Wilson.

In the beginning the nationalist movement in Vietnam was led by moderates who repeatedly urged France to discard the policy of repression and to follow a policy of co-operation with the Vietnamese. As the attempts of the moderates failed to bring the French anywhere near the Vietnamese aspirations, the nationalist movement began to be dominated by revolutionary groups. First of such groups was the Revolutionary Party of Young Annam founded in 1925. Two years later, under the inspiration of the Chinese Kuomintang Party, Vietnam Quoc Dan Dang or V.N.G.D.D. (Vietnam National Party) was founded. The nationalist movement came under communist control with the founding of the Communist Party of Indo-China in 1930 under the inspiring leadership of Ho Chi Minh, a Moscow trained communist. In May 1941 along with several other political exiles Ho Chi Minh founded Viet Nam Doc Lap Dang Minh Hoi (League for the Independence of Vietnam) or popularly known as the Viet Minh which led the nationalist movement to independence. During the second world war, in the wake of Japanese defeat, Ho Chi Minh formed a coalition comprising of communists and non-communists and proclaimed the
independence of the Democratic republic of Vietnam (D.R.V.N.) on 2 September 1945. The D.R.V.N. consolidated its position by holding the first general election in January 1946 for the National Assembly which adopted a constitution incorporating provisions for a bill of rights, a president and a cabinet responsible to a unicameral legislature to be elected by universal suffrage.

The French, who returned after the war, found it difficult to resume their authority over whole of Indo-China and were compelled to sign an agreement with Ho Chi Minh on 5 March 1945. In accordance with the agreement, the French recognized the D.R.V.N., as a "free state with its own government, parliament, army and finances, forming part of the Indochinese federation and the French Union". The agreement was made use of as


a stop-gap arrangement and the French resumed hostilities on 23 November 1946. Left with no other choice, the Vietnamese took retaliatory measures by attacking French garrisons in Tongking and Annam. As the hostilities spread, the French resorted to a tactical move and created 'Central Provisional Vietnam Government' a non-communist government, in opposition to the D.R.V.N., on 20 May 1948. Bao Dai, persuaded by the French, became the Chief of a new French 'demonion', composed of Cochinchina, Annam and Tongking, on 30 December 1949. Even though Bao Dai's non-communist government was installed with the blessings of the French, "Ho Chi Minh's position was in no way weakened".

As Ellen J. Hammer writes "there was little international interest in Indo-China during 1946 and 1947." In India, the government and the people were more aware and conscious of the Indonesian nationalist movement than the freedom struggle taking place in Vietnam. Enlightened sections of Indian public opinion gradually became aware of the momentous developments in Vietnam. Sarat Chandra Bose, the elder brother of Subhas


Chandra Bose, was the first Indian leader to make concrete suggestions to assist the Vietnamese nationalists. He appealed to Indian youth to come forward in large numbers to join a voluntary army to fight along with the Vietnamese Republican forces against the French. Responding to Sarat Chandra Bose's call Brij Bhushan Kashyap, leader of a group of New Delhi volunteers, organized a batch of volunteers to serve the cause of Vietnam. A group of ex-servicemen of Travancore offered their services and a "Bumbay Vietnam Brigade" was organized by R.K. Karanjia. Col. Bo Yan Naing, son-in-law of Dr. Ba Maw, who was also engaged in a similar task in Burma came to India to discuss with Sarat Chandra Bose details of a joint Indu-Burmese plan to send a volunteer force in aid of the Vietnamese. Sarat Chandra Bose and Col. Bo Yan Naing addressed letters to the Indian and Burmese governments respectively requesting for facilities to send a medical mission and an unofficial volunteer brigade to Indu-China.

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118. The Hindu, 4 January 1947
119. Ibid.
120. Ibid.
121. Ibid., 22 January 1947
122. Ibid., 13 February 1947. See also Ibid., 19 March 1947
Government of India agreed to consider the first request, but flatly rejected the second. Nehru explained the Government of India’s stand clearly when he wrote to Bose: “So long as the Government of India is not at war with another country it cannot officially take aggressive action against it.” Bose pointed out historical precedents when the British and French volunteers went to Spain during the Spanish Civil War in support of the Republican forces. The analogy did not, however, convince the Government of India and Nehru said that his government had no intention “to allow Indian ‘Lafayettes’ to proceed to Vietnam”.

While Sarat Chandra Bose at least received a negative reply from the Government of India, Bu Yan Naing failed to get even that courtesy from his government. Thus ended, in a fiasco, the first Indian attempt to extend concrete help to the Vietnamese nationalists.

123. For the texts of letters exchanged between Nehru and Sarat Chandra Bose refer Ibid., 23 March 1947

124. Ibid.

125. Ibid., 19 March 1947
Vietnamese cause was championed by various sections of Indian society. Ravindra Varma, President of the All India Students Congress, while expressing solidarity with Vietnam, urged the Government of India to bring diplomatic pressure on the French to grant freedom to the Vietnamese. He also gave a call to observe "Vietnam day" on 21 January 1947. In Calcutta the students held a procession defying ban order and the police resorted to lathi-charge and firing. The angry students were pacified by the timely intervention of Sarat Chandra Buse, who appealed to them to restrain themselves and "not to fight the battle of Vietnam in the streets of Calcutta". J.B. Kripalani, the President of the Indian National Congress, criticized police action on the students, who were expressing their feelings on an international issue over which "all parties in India are united". Indian working class did not lag behind.

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126. Ibid., 14 January 1947


in extending support to the Indo-Chinese. Mrinal Kanti Bose, the President of the All India Trade Union Congress, directed provincial committees and regional councils to boycott French ships to and from Indo-China. Inspired by the success of the Conference on Indonesia, Parliamentarians like K. Hanumanthaiah and S.N. Mishra urged the Government of India to take similar steps for the independence of Indo-China. The Government of India reacted negatively to these proposals. The difference stemmed from differing perceptions on Indo-China. Whereas Sarat Chandra Bose and his colleagues viewed the struggle as purely an anti-colonialist movement, the Government of India was conscious of the more complicated trends in Vietnam. In addition to the strong anti-colonial characteristics, there were other factors which made the situation in Vietnam more difficult. In Vietnam, as discussed

129. Ibid., 22 January 1947

130. India, Parliamentary Debates pt.2, vol.3, 16 March 1950, pp.1729-32. U. Kyaw Nyein, the Burmese Minister for Industries, also suggested to India that it should take the initiative in the matter of Indo-China as it had done in the case of Indonesia. But the suggestion was not given serious consideration. The Hindu, 14 August 1953
earlier, there were two governments competing for popular support. From New Delhi's standpoint it was extremely difficult to judge which of the two governments was consolidating itself. Besides, neither of them was accorded international recognition. In view of the legal complications involved, the Government of India decided not to interfere in the matter till a clear picture emerged. B.V. Keskar, Deputy Minister for External Affairs, ruled out the possibility of holding a Conference on Indo-China. Commenting on K. Hanumanthaiah's suggestion, B.V. Keskar said:

If he goes into the details of the question, he will find that if you call such a Conference, that Conference will agree to disagree and will bring to light the fundamental differences with regard to various interests that are involved within the various nations. 131.

The Vietnamese nationalists made sincere efforts to involve India actively in Indo-China. In the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi in March-April 1947, Nehru made clear India's desire to remain neutral by extending invitations to the D.R.V.N. as well as to the

French supported regime in Saigon. As stated earlier, during the Conference, Mai The Chau, the D.R.V.N. representative, actively canvassed support for the struggle against the French. Mai The Chau asked the participants, particularly India, to extend not only moral but also material support to his government. He asked the Indian government "to accord recognition to the Government of Vietnam", to "use their influence to get the United Nations take up the question" and to take steps "to stop French reinforcements". Nehru assured Mai The Chau that he would bring pressure to bear on France.

Ho Chi Minh personally appealed to Nehru to bring the Vietnamese matter to the Security Council. He urged Nehru "to immediately appoint a commission of outstanding Indian leaders to visit Vietnam to study actual conditions on-the-spot! There were practical difficulties in taking up the Vietnamese case before the Security Council. The Government of the D.R.V.N. was


133. Ibid., p.79

134. *The Hindu*, 12 October 1947
not recognized by major powers of the world as was done in the case of the Republic of Indonesia. In fact, in 1946 even the Soviet Union, the D.R.V.N.'s ideological ally, refused to raise the Vietnamese question in the U.N.

Secondly, unlike the Netherlands, France was a Permanent Member of the Security Council and it was certain that France would exercise veto, if the Indo-Chinese matter was raised in the Security Council.

The D.R.V.N. also was not invited by India to the Conference on Indonesia. Unhappy with the elimination, Tran Van Laun, the Vietminh leader, submitted a memorandum to the Conference in which he suggested the creation of a permanent Asian committee represented by all Asian countries including those struggling for freedom. As the members of the Conference did not want to divert their energies from Indonesia, the Vietminh attempt to muster Asian support failed.

Attempts were also made by the rival Vietnamese governments to secure India's recognition since India

135. Hammer, n.117, p.201
136. The Hindu, 21 January 1949
was undoubtedly "one of the key nations on the political chess-board of Asia" and its recognition would go a long way in enhancing their prestige. Mai The Chau, the D.R.V.N. representative in India, and Ho Chi Minh made repeated appeals for India's recognition of their government. Bao Dai, Head of the Government of the State of Vietnam, appealed for India's recognition of his government for he believed that it would be "more than a priceless encouragement to us". Bao Dai also tried to enlist the U.S. support to influence New Delhi. Dean Husk, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, and William Lacy, the Chief of the State Department's Office of Southeast Asian Affairs, also attempted in vain to impress upon B.V. Keskar, Deputy Minister for External Affairs, the necessity of India's recognition of Bao Dai government.

137. Ibid., 25 April 1950

138. See (1) Asian Relations, n.132, p.77 and (2) The Hindu, 18 October 1947

139. The Hindu, 25 April 1950

140. Ibid., 2 November 1950
Nehru was fully aware that Ho Chi Minh was first and foremost a nationalist who enjoyed the confidence of the majority of the people in Vietnam; the D.K.V.N. also controlled 80 per cent of the Vietnamese territory. He also said in November 1949, that "the Bao Dai Government is not a very successful one". Due to the complexities of the Vietnamese situation, Nehru preferred to adopt a low profile. Asked when the Government of India proposed to take a decision with regard to the recognition of Bao Dai and Ho Chi Minh governments, Nehru told Parliament in December 1949, that "this matter has not come up before government". In a press conference in February 1950 he announced that India would watch events and "not jump into the fray". Fearing that outside interference

141. Ibid., 5 November 1949. Nehru told Dean Acheson in 1949 that the French experiment in Indo-China with Bao Dai was hopeless and doomed to fail: as the "Emperor" lacked the character, ability and prestige necessary to succeed and was not given adequate scope by the French. Dean Acheson, Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department (New York, N.Y. 1969), p.335


143. The Hindu, 8 February 1950
would only worsen the situation in Indo-China, India not only followed a policy of non-intervention but also wanted others to follow a similar policy. In the Conference of Commonwealth Foreign Ministers in Colombo, the Indian representative warned other delegates not to take any hasty action with regard to the recognition of either of the governments in Vietnam.

Nehru's fears came true when the opposing governments in Vietnam were recognized by the rival blocs. Soon after its inauguration, the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.) accorded recognition to the D.R.V.N. on 19 January 1950 and the Soviet Union and its European satellites followed quickly. As a retaliatory measure the U.K. and the U.S. accorded formal recognition to the Bao Dai government on 6 February 1950. Thus Indo-China issue became a part of cold war.

Yet another attempt was made to involve India as a mediator in the Indo-China dispute. As early as February 1947, it was reported that a prominent Vietminh leader proposed mediation by India in the Indo-Chinese dispute.

144. Ibid., 24 February 1947
In the Conference of the Economic Commission for Asia and Far East in Singapore in October 1949, India proposed that both the countries be admitted as members and thus proved its neutralist credentials. Impressed by India's neutrality Bao Dai acclaimed Nehru as a "perfectly neutral personality" and proposed him to be the mediator among France, the State of Vietnam and the D.R.V.N. In the autumn of 1949, due to the persuasive diplomacy of the British Labour Party Leader, Fennor Brockway, Nehru agreed to mediate between France and Ho Chi Minh provided "interested parties also agree". But strong opposition to the move came from the Minister of the French Union who declare "We cannot accept Mr. Nehru's mediation as we are in serious conflict with him on the question of French possessions in India". Thus the Indian move fizzled out.

145. Ibid., 23 October 1949
146. Ibid., 25 October 1949
147. World Press on India, 5 June 1954
148. Ibid.
In view of the growing strength of public feeling in India in favour of Vietnam and the frequent appeals of the D.R.V.N. for India's assistance, the Government of India made certain gestures. Two months after the outbreak of hostilities in 1946 between the Vietminh and the French, Nehru expressed sympathy for the Vietnamese and said:

Our hearts are with the people of Indo-China; the attempt of French to crush the spirit of freedom in Indo-China has deeply moved the Indian people. 149.

In December 1948 Mai The Chau, Hu Chi Minh's special envoy in India, requested the Indian government to condemn the French policy in Indo-China, to halt the work of the French Purchasing Mission in New Delhi and to prevent the repair of French planes and the refuelling of French ships. Responding to the Vietminh request, the Government of India prohibited operational and combat French air-craft and permitted only air ambulances and transport air craft with "strictly limited" facilities. 150, 151

150. Ibid., p.131
151. Constituent Assembly of India (Legislative) Debates pt.1, vol.1, No.1, 18 February 1947, p.764
Even this limited step proved ineffective. The French government made use of its colonial possessions in India for trade with Vietnam.

India also attempted to bring pressure on the French government through western powers. In a memorandum drafted by the Indian Consul in Saigon and sent to Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary, India pointed out that 80 per cent of the territory in Vietnam, which was under the control of the D.R.V.N. government, was comparatively well administered and peaceful. As such the reconquest and establishment of the French control over entire Vietnam was unlikely. New Delhi also urged the British government to endeavour for a peaceful settlement of Indo-China dispute. It was hoped that since the U.K. was one of the leading and influential powers of the west, it would be able to prevail upon the French to negotiate with the D.R.V.N. New Delhi which neither wanted to show disregard to the feelings of Indian public nor was准备ed to "jump into the fray" by discarding the cautious policy of keeping aloof, found

152. The Hindu, 3 November 1949
it difficult to take any other measures to promote the cause of Vietnamese freedom. Making a statement on India's policy, towards Indo-China, Nehru told Indian Parliament on 17 March 1950:

The policy we have pursued in regard to Indo-China has been one of absolute non-interference. Our interference could at best be a theoretical one. I do not think that either a theoretical or any other kind of interference in the affairs of a country struggling for freedom can do any good, because the countries which have been under colonial domination invariably resent foreign interference. Their nationalism cannot tolerate it and even if interference comes with the best possible motives, it is often regarded as a kind of weapon in the hands of those who are opposed to nationalism. Besides, interference exposes them to the possible slur that their nationalism is not a free, independent nationalism but that it is controlled by others. That is why we have sought deliberately not to interfere with Indo-China and we intend to continue this policy.

153. Nehru, n.11, pp.394-5
Differences in the Indian Perception of Indonesian and Indo-Chinese Nationalist Movements:

Though the Government of India subscribed to the principle of anti-colonialism, a diligent student can discern subtle differences in India's perceptions and policies towards Indonesia and Vietnam. While the Indonesian nationalist movement found concrete expression through the Indonesian Republic, the freedom movement in Vietnam was hampered by internal divisions, one dominated by the communists and the other by anti-communists, both claiming themselves to be the spokesmen of Vietnamese nationalism. As stated earlier, Hu Chi Minh's government made repeated requests for India's support against the French imperialists; so also did the rival Government of Bao Dai. After careful consideration of the whole situation the Indian government "sought deliberately to keep away from any interference". Consequently the Government of

154. Nguyen Duy Thanh, the representative of State of Vietnam, appealed for India's help in Vietnam's "double struggle" i.e., against "the relics of French rule" on the one hand and against "a new enemy more dangerous than the old colonialism namely communism" on the other. The Hindu, 1 November 1950

155. Nehru, n.11, p 395
India refused to allow volunteers to go to Vietnam; adopted a neutral posture on the question of recognition of either Ho Chi Minh's or Bao Dai's governments; did not take any initiative to bring the issue to the attention of the U.N. and refused to convene a Conference on Indochina. It must be pointed out that India repeatedly warned other countries to desist from precipitating the situation. The recognition of rival governments in Vietnam by the two power blocs made Indochina problem part of cold war.

Speaking about cold war and neutrality Nehru declared in June 1950: "Neutrality as a policy has little meaning except in times of war. If you think there is a cold war today, we are certainly neutral". The Indochina crisis, in Indian perception, had become deeply embroiled in cold war; inspite of its commitment to wipe out colonialism India adopted a policy of neutrality between the two rival governments. Neither

156. Ibid., p.58
the continued French possession of Indian territories like Pondicherry, Chandernagore, Maha, Yanam and Karaikal, nor the fact that Ho Chi Minh commanded the respect of most of the Vietnamese and controlled large portions of Vietnam could influence India to discard its neutral policy and support the D.A.V.N. On the other hand neither the communist insurgent movements in India, Burma, Malaya, Indonesia and the Philippines which aimed at overthrowing legally established governments of these countries nor the severe condemnation of Nehru by the P.R.C. as a member "of the political garbage in Asia" induced New Delhi to change the policy of non-involvement and come out openly in support of the Bao Dai government.

**INDIA AND BRITISH COLONIALISM IN MALAYA**:

The position of Malaya in many ways was unique in Southeast Asia. There was no strong anti-colonial feeling and most of the Malays, Chinese and Indians who constituted the three segments of Malaya's plural

157. The P.R.C. also criticized Nehru as "a stooge and hireling of imperialism", "a blackguard who undermines the progress of the people's liberation movement", and his neutrality as "a camouflage", and India as the centre of "imperialist intrigues for the obstruction and undermining of the people's liberation movements of Asia". Girilal Jain, *Panchasheel and After* (Bombay, 1960), pp.5-11
society were reconciled to the British rule. The most important political development in Malaya after the second world war was the communist struggle for power which brought incalculable harm to the ordinary people. India's sympathy was naturally with the ordinary people of Malaya and not with the Malayan Communist Party (M.C.P.). Aware of the political realities of Malaya and the threat posed by the M.C.P. New Delhi advocated progressive introduction of self-government till such time as the Malays would be ready to welcome freedom. Speaking in the U.N. General Assembly in 1954, V.K. Krishna Menon said:

While we join issue with the United Kingdom on the colonial question in Malaya, we are happy to feel that advances are being made there and indeed we hope that as freedom broadens from precedent to precedent, Malaya will belong to the fraternity of free nations along with us.158.

The Indian policy towards Malaya was, therefore, not characterized by strident anti-colonial slogans, but was aimed at restoring security, bringing stability

158. GAOR, 8session 9, mtgs. plen.492, 6 October 1954, p.222
and to pave the way for progressive introduction of self-government. Pointing out the threat posed by the M.C.P. Nehru told Indian Parliament in June 1952 that British imperialism in Malaya was "an exhausted thing". There was no need to be afraid of it. But there were graver dangers, according to Nehru, which threatened the freedom of Malaya. He spoke of "other imperialisms that are growing" in Malaya, implying the M.C.P. On another occasion, in September 1954, explaining the peculiar situation in Malaya Nehru said in Parliament:

The problem in Malaya is not an easy one. It is difficult because, oddly enough, in Malaya the people of Malaya are in a minority. The Chinese are there in great numbers... The indigenous people of Malaya are not at all keen on something happening which might give power to non-Malayans there.160.

Krishna Menon expressed the same view when he said that the "British government has the very difficult position whereby one talks of Malayan independence when the Malayans themselves are in a minority". Progressive introduction of self-government in Malaya was the most desirable.

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159. Nehru, n.11, p.57
160. Ibid., p.92
161. GAOH, n.156
objective and the British should transfer power as soon as a viable nationalist alternative emerged. Above all Nehru did not appreciate the manner in which the M.C.P. carried on its struggle against the British. Faced with a similar communist struggle in India and aware of the dangers which communist parties posed to the newly independent Southeast Asian countries, Nehru understood the true nature of communist threat in Malaya. In the course of a tour of the Federation of Malaya and the Colony of Singapore in 1950 Nehru openly condemned the "terrorism" let loose by the M.C.P. Addressing a press conference in Singapore on 17 June 1950 Nehru said that the activities of the "terrorists" in Malaya were harmful for the country and would only create "chaos". Addressing a public meeting in Singapore on 18 June 1950, Nehru declared that terrorism in Malaya was excessively harmful and it should not be tolerated. He further said that it passed his comprehension as to how a campaign of violence could lead to any good whatsoever. It would only degrade humanity. Drawing a parallel between the activities

162. The Hindu, 19 June 1950
163. Ibid., 20 June 1950
of the communist parties in India and Malaya, he said in Kuala Lumpur on 19 June 1950 that there was not much difference between the communists in India and Malaya, but in India they were not so widespread as in Malaya.

INDIA'S APPROACH TO THE PROBLEMS OF PEACE AND SECURITY IN BURMA:

India-Burma relations, as stated earlier, began on a warm and friendly footing. Burma rejoiced greatly over the attainment of Indian independence on 15 August 1947. Broadcasting a message to the people of India over HNgoon Radio on 15 August 1947, Thakin Nu, the Prime Minister of Burma, said:

We in Burma have special reasons for rejoicing, for during the last century or so, we have been linked in common fate with the geographical India and her freedom foreshadows our own in the very near future... The two dominions, who are heirs to the great position, which India achieved in international affairs, will, I am sure, add new luster to that glory... We are confident that the great Dominions will use this power in the cause of freedom of Asian peoples and the peace of the world.165.

164. Ibid., 22 June 1950
165. Ibid., 18 August 1947
Indians were equally jubilant over the inauguration of Burmese independence on 4 January 1948. Rajendra Prasad, the President of the Indian National Congress, participated in the independence day celebrations in Rangoon. Greeting the Republic of the Union of Burma, Nehru said:

This is a great and solemn day, not only for Burma but for India and for the whole of Asia.... We in India are particularly affected by it because we have been bound in so many ways to Burma from immemorial ages... There have been in the past political ties and bonds but the real bond that has existed between India and Burma has been a silken bond of the spirit of mutual thing even political changes cannot break. And so today we welcome the advent of the Republic of Burma.

Speaking on the occasion of the hoisting of Burma's national flag over the Burmese Embassy in New Delhi, U Win, Burma's Ambassador to India, paid rich tributes to Indians:

In particular, at this auspicious hour we remember the Indian brethren who have strived for freedom shoulder to shoulder with us and who have given us so much material and spiritual aid all along.

166. Ibid., 7 January 1948
167. Ibid., 5 January 1948
168. Ibid., 6 January 1948
The Government of India watched with keen interest the post-independence developments in Burma. India could not afford to close its eyes to the developments in Burma, for Burma was its immediate neighbour and the security of India depended on the peace and stability in Burma. Hence, India followed a more active policy and helped to promote the independence and integrity of Burma.

It was a political tragedy that Burma which needed badly a period of peace to rebuild its economy was faced with a civil war situation immediately after independence. The first to raise the banner of revolt was the Burmese Communist Party (B.C.P.). Led by Thakin Than Tun, the B.C.P. launched an armed struggle on 24 March 1948, with the ultimate objective of replacing the democratic government by a communist government. The B.C.P. was soon joined by a section of the People's Voluntary Organization (P.V.O.) called the 'White band' P.V.O.'s. A more formidable threat, from the

169. General Aung San organized People's Voluntary Organization during 1946-47 for demonstrating his influence and political strength and thereby to impress upon the British to transfer power. After independence, when Thakin Nu failed to meet their basic demand to give due share to the communists in the running of the government, there occurred a break between the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (A.F.P.F.L.) and the P.V.O.'s. See (1) J.S.Furnival, "Twilight in Burma", Pacific Affairs (Richmond), vol.22, pp.3-20; (2) Maung Maung, "Burma Looks Ahead", Pacific Affairs, vol.25, pp.40-48 and (3) Thakin Nu, Towards Peace (Rangoon, 1949), p.51
military point of view, came from the martial tribe of Karens, who rose in rebellion in January 1949.

The Karen problem was a legacy of the British colonial policy in Burma. Favouring the British as part of their policy of "divide and rule", the Karen elite felt uncertain and insecure about their future in independent Burma. Without the protecting arm of the British, they felt orphaned and "let down by the British". Herein lies the root of Karen demand for the right to secede from the Union and also the formation of a separate state consisting of Pegu, Tenasserim and Irrawaddy divisions, which accounted for half of Burmese territory. The Karen leaders exploited the fluid political situation in Burma, took to armed struggle and rapidly extended their sway over large territories.

The rebels had the early advantage. They extended their control easily and by early 1949, the authority of the government was reduced to Rangoon and a very small area surrounding the capital. The economy was in doldrums.

Burma, which had a flourishing foreign trade, with an annual favourably balance of trade of nearly Rs.300,000,000/-, began to experience foreign exchange difficulties. Rice exports fell from pre-war level of 4,000,000 tons to 1,000,000 tons; oil industry, which was another foreign exchange earner was also severely hit as oil wells came to be controlled by the rebels. Burma, which exported 60,000,000 gallons per year, had to depend on imports for its needs. Timber exports also suffered; the loss was estimated at Rs.15,000,000. Communications were totally disrupted. The damage to railways was estimated at over Rs.100,000,000. The railway network, which earlier covered 2,500 miles, was reduced to less than 100 miles. All these factors were reflected in the budget of 1948 which showed a deficit of Rs.100,000,000.

Describing the sorry state of affairs, Thakin Nu observed that the government was "reduced to penury" and was "placed in the position of a beggar". The Karen insurrection, as estimated by Thakin Nu, had cost "30,000 lives and a loss of revenue of more than £18,000,000".


172. "Nationalization in Burma", The Economist, 8 January 1949, p.62

173. U Nu, Saturday's Son (Bombay, 1976), p.243

174. Manchester Guardian Weekly, 3 March 1949
Faced with such economic and security crises, the U Nu government had no choice except to appeal for foreign assistance. In January 1949, the Burmese Government approached the Government of the U.K., with which Burma already had signed a Defence agreement 175 for a loan of £20,000,000. The British government viewed the Burmese situation with sympathy and understanding. At the same time, the British leaders were sensitive to the fact that any help to Burma from the U.K., might be interpreted as a fresh bid to re-establish British imperialism. Hence the British felt it was essential that instead of their government going singly to the aid of Burma, other governments which were equally concerned should be persuaded to come to the fore. Accordingly the British

175. U.K. House of Commons, Parliamentary Debates vol. 462, No. 69, 28 February 1949, col. 16. See also The Hindu, 2 March 1949

government took the initiative and consulted the government of Australia, New Zealand, India, Pakistan and Ceylon. An informal meeting was arranged in New Delhi on 28 February 1949 to discuss the Burmese situation.

New Delhi was the logical choice as India was Burma's closest neighbour. Indian nationalist leaders also had extremely cordial relations with their Burmese counterparts. The Conference, attended by four Commonwealth countries - India, Ceylon, Australia and the U.K. - reviewed the situation in Burma. They unanimously agreed that peace and stability could be restored in Burma primarily "through conciliation".

In the joint statement addressed to the Prime Minister

177. Expressing the British view of the New Delhi Conference, The Economist wrote that the Commonwealth Conference was "in the nature of an emergency medical consultation over a patient whose condition has been going from bad to worse". "Doctors by the Burmese side", The Economist, 5 March 1949, p.412

178. New Zealand declined to participate in the informal talks at short notice. Pakistan which showed equal interest in Burma along with other Commonwealth countries, and even suggested the dates - 27 and 28 February—for the Conference, failed to take part in the informal talks on Burma. Giving reason for Pakistan's absence at this Conference, Pakistan Foreign Ministry said in a statement that no Minister was able to attend the meeting in New Delhi because the budget was presented in Parliament on 28 February 1949. The Hindu, 2 March 1949.
of Burma, they offered their good offices for a joint mediation to evolve a compromise solution for the Karen problem. In suggesting a compromise with the Karens the Conference believed that conciliation rather than confrontation was the best method of solving the Karen problem. If a peaceful solution could be found for the Karen problem, the participants hoped, the B.C.P. could be weakened and isolated. Nehru went beyond the joint mediation proposals of the New Delhi Conference and offered to be a mediator if both parties desired.

However, the decisions of the New Delhi Conference did not satisfy the Burmese leaders. The Burmese government also did not respond favourably to Nehru's offer for mediation. Instead of taking a decision on the Burmese request for financial aid, the Conference concerned itself more with the Karen problem and even placed its good offices at the disposal of both parties. Under the prevailing situation, the Burmese government felt that there was little scope for mediation. The


180. *The Hindu*, 7 March 1949
government had already bent backwards to the maximum
and agreed to establish an autonomous Karen State within
the Union of Burma. Thakin Nu already had to face severe
opposition within the country for the gestures that he
made to the Karens. Some newspapers even commented that
Thakin Nu had become "Karen Nu".

Further, the Burmese government feared that any
mediation by even friendly countries would be looked
upon as interference in Burma’s internal affairs.
Thakin Nu also pointed out that the Burmese government
was only a "caretaker government", and it had no mandate
to negotiate either with the communists or Karens or
P.V.C.s for a compromise. Expressing his inability
to avail of India’s services Thakin Nu said :

I have never declined Pandit Nehru’s
mediation offer. I have simply laid
before him the true position in Burma
and left it to him to say whether
mediation is advisable in Burma.183.

181. Aung, n.169, p.316
182. The Hindu, 13 April 1949
183. Ibid., 16 April 1949
Though the New Delhi Conference did not make much headway, Nehru continued his efforts to assist Burma. He raised the Burmese problem again in the Commonwealth Conference in London in April 1949. Thanks to Indian initiative and diplomacy, the U.K., India, Pakistan, Ceylon and Australia agreed to give whatever support they can to the government of Thakin Nu so that peace could be "rapidly restored" in Burma. They also decided to set up a committee in Rangoon, with the Ambassadors of the five countries as members, "to ensure the speedy implementation" of their decisions. The most significant feature, which must be underlined is the fact that the Commonwealth Prime Ministers agreed to offer financial, military and other aid without any strings or even offer of mediation. The agreement sanctioning £ 6,000,000 Commonwealth loan to Burma was signed in Rangoon on 28 June 1950. Of the total amount, the U.K. agreed to contribute £ 3,750,000, India £ 1,000,000, Australia and Pakistan £ 500,000 each.

and Ceylon £ 200,000. India's contribution, as the figures given above reveal, was the second largest, the first being that of the U.K.

India also showed its goodwill and understanding through various other ways. On 12 April 1950 the Government of India sanctioned a special loan of Rs.5,000,000 against rice supplies by Burma. Commenting on this loan, the Eastern Economist rightly observed that it was more than a "gesture of goodwill"; it indicated a willingness "to underwrite the Government of Burma". The Indian financial institutions granted credit facilities to the tune of Rs.20,000,000 to enable

185. Agreement between the Governments of the United Kingdom, Australia, India, Pakistan and Ceylon on the one hand and the Government of Burma on the other hand respecting a loan of £5,000,000 to the Government of Burma (Cmd. 8007), (London, 1950), p.2


Burma government to buy rice bags in Calcutta.

Commenting on Indian financial aid, a distinguished Burmese scholar has written that "in the dark days of 1949, the government was virtually bankrupt and no foreign bank would make loans". In such a pitiable situation, an Indian bank came to the rescue of the Burmese government, "took the risk" and "advanced money". India also supplied Burma with arms and ammunition and aircrafts at a time when they were not easily available in the world market. The Burmese army was in desperate need of aircraft and ammunition to bring the situation under control. Expressing his gratitude to this timely assistance by which the enemy was "first contained, then eliminated", Thakin Nu wrote: "Without the prompt support in arms and ammunition from India, Burma might have suffered the worst fate imaginable". Pointing out the significant role of the Indian dakotas in

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188. *The Statesman*, 10 May 1949

189. Aung, n.169, p.319


191. U Nu, n.172, p.227

192. India sold six Dakotas to Air Burma Ltd. in early 1950. This was disclosed by Godgil, Minister for Works, Mines and Power, in reply to a question in the Parliament. India, *Parliamentary Debates* vol.2, 11 April 1950, cols.1473-4. See also Ibid., Appendix 7, Annexure No.16, February-April 1950, p.360
aerial operations Hugh Tinker points out that with half a dozen Indian dakotas the Burmese government was able to maintain some sort of liaison with the towns remaining in their control, while the Burmese Air Force was able to machine-gun convoys and give warning of enemy troops concentrations. In a rare gesture of diplomatic gratitude Thakin Nu described Nehru as a "friend and a saviour" and "a friend in war and peace".

What were the factors that determined India's policy towards Burma in these early momentous years of independence of both countries? In 1948-50, India itself was facing grave problems—rehabilitation of millions of refugees, the war in Kashmir, police action in Hyderabad, armed struggle led by the C.P.I., and the integration of 550 states into the Indian Union. Jawaharlal Nehru naturally could appreciate the grave dangers, which Burma (equipped with far less manpower and economic and military resources) was confronted with. India was equally concerned with the safety of the Indians living in Burma. Addressing a press conference Nehru said that "we are very much interested in the fate of the 800,000 Indians in Burma". The Government of India was apprehensive

194. U Nu, n.172, p.227
195. The Hindu, 13 May 1949
of the repetition of 1942 when millions of overseas Indians trekked their way back to India through Burmese jungles. Expressing concern, B.V. Keskar, Deputy Minister of External Affairs, informed the Constituent Assembly that the government was closely watching the situation in Burma and added that all steps were "being taken so that a mass exodus and infiltration may not take place". Further, the security of India was inextricably interlinked with that of Burma and Nehru was anxious to prevent Burma from falling into Karen and communist hands. In the long run, Nehru viewed the communist threat as more dangerous than that posed by secessionist Karens. Nehru told a press conference in New Delhi on 6 March 1949 that "if the present conditions continued, other elements in Burma may begin to play more important role than either the Karens or the Burmese government". Though Nehru did not spell out who constituted the "other elements", it was apparent he was referring to the B.C.P. Hence his offer to mediate between the Burmese government and Karen rebels.

197. The Hindu, 8 March 1949 Emphasis added.
As a non-communist nationalist, Nehru was deeply aware of the threat posed to newly independent countries of Southeast Asia by the communist parties with powerful ideological backing both from the Soviet Union and the P.R.C. Nehru did not hesitate to take strong steps to put down the communists within the country. As is well known, in the wake of Telengana uprising, the C.P.I. was banned in many states and a large number of communists were detained without trial. Nehru also, as discussed earlier, did not support the M.C.P. which had begun an armed struggle in the name of "anti-colonial war". Nehru sympathized with the Indonesian nationalist leaders who were opposed by the P.K.I. During a state visit to Indonesia in June 1950 Nehru hit out against the Indonesian communists. Thus India’s support to the Burmese government was in conformity with Nehru’s domestic postures against the C.P.I. as also the desire to strengthen the non-communist nationalist regimes in Southeast Asia.


199. The Hindu, 12 June 1950
The close identity of interests and convergence of objectives which characterized India-Burma relations during this period have led many western observers to conclude that Burma was "India's satellite". Such a conclusion is not warranted by political realities. A clear example of Burma's independence of judgement is provided in Burma's attitude towards the Commonwealth. Unlike India and Pakistan, independent Burma decided not to have any links with the U.K. Aung San and other nationalists felt that if Burma opted for Dominion status, the government would be confronted with severe opposition. "The rising tide of nationalism", as U Nu mentions in his Memoirs, would not tolerate the recognition of British Monarch as the symbolic head, which was implied in a Dominion status. Such a decision would also be certainly exploited by the Burmese communists, who were waiting for an opportunity to "shout from the house tops" that Burmese independence was not "true independence" and that the A.F.P.L. leaders had "sold Burma to the British". Though Nehru would have liked Burma to follow India's lead and remain in the Commonwealth, he appreciated the Burmese sensitivities.

It must also be pointed out that all through 1948-50, neither India nor any of the Commonwealth countries made any attempts to review Burma's decision.

200. Werner Levi, Free India in Asia (Minneapolis, 1952), p.110
201. U Nu, n.172, p.132