

CHAPTER I

FOUNDATIONS OF INDO-SOVIET RELATIONS

India's relations with the Soviet Union have always been a subject of enduring interest for both the countries. Friendship between the two countries with different traditions and social systems has been considered a model of international co-operation. In fact, the friendly relations between India and Soviet Union are rooted in their history. India's relations with the Soviet Union can be traced back to the 15th century when the Russian merchant Afanasy Nikitin visited Northern India and published an account of his travels. In the 17th century Indian businessmen settled in Astrakhan from where they sent goods to Russia. There had been an ascendancy in the contacts between the two countries from the end of the 18th century. But during the 19th century the Russian and British empires clashed as the British India pushed into Afghanistan.

The Great October Revolution and anti-colonial appeals of the Bolshevik leaders to other peoples of the world gave a boost to Indian nationalism. There is a logic of history in the close relations between India and the USSR. Lenin, the founder of the first socialist state, showed keen interest in India's national liberation struggle. Several references to India can be seen in the Collected Works of Lenin which contain his observation on India from 1900-1903.



A staunch champion of freedom and the cause of self-determination as he was, he hailed the Indian National Movement in the following words:

I am glad to hear that the principles of self-determination and the liberation of oppressed nations from exploitation by foreign and native capitalists, proclaimed by the 'workers' and peasants 'Republic' have met with such a ready response among progressive Indians, who are waging a heroic fight for freedom. The working masses of Russia are following with unflagging attention the awakening of the Indian workers and peasants. The organization and discipline of the working people and their perseverance and the solidarity with the working people of world are an earnest of ultimate success. We welcome the close alliance of Moslem and non-Moslem elements. We sincerely want to see this alliance extended to all the toilers of the East. Only when the Indian, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Persian and Turkish workers and peasants join hands and march together in the common cause of liberation only then will decisive victory over the exploiters be ensured. Long live a free Asia¹.

Thus, Lenin's support to the Indian freedom movement marked the beginning of Indo-Soviet interaction which has now developed into friendship between the two countries in virtually every field - a friendship which is an important factor of peace and progress in the world. In June 1918, the Commissariat of Foreign Relations of Soviet Russia released a Blue Book on the situation prevailing in British India. Its editor, K.M. Troyanovski wrote:

1. V.I. Lenin, Collected Works (Moscow, 1964), Vol.31, p.138.



There can be no general peace without a free independent India India is the centre of Western activity in the East. India will, therefore, be the first fortress of the Revolution on the Eastern Continent. We, Russian Revolutionaries and International Socialists, feel it our duty to rejoice at the announcement of a revolution in India but also to support this revolution by direct or indirect means and with all our powers².

Jawaharlal Nehru had great respect for Lenin and he had repeatedly emphasized the importance of the works of the founders of Marxism-Leninism. Nehru called Lenin "a master of thought and a genius of revolution"; he further wrote "he become one of the world's immortals". Nehru was well aware of the significance of the Great October Socialist Revolution as an event of historic importance for the world. The October Revolution of 1917 was rightly assessed by Jawaharlal Nehru in his speeches when he said:

... with your October Revolution under the leadership of the great Lenin we in India started a new phase of our struggle for freedom. Our people were engrossed in this struggle for many years and faced heavy repression with courage and endurance³.

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2. Documents of Foreign Department, (Secret Proceedings) February 1920, File Nos.258-267, National Archives of India, New Delhi. Cited in Vinod Bhatia (ed.), Indo-Soviet Relations Problems and Prospects (New Delhi, 1984), p.10.
 3. India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches: March 1953 - August 1957, (New Delhi, 1983), Vol.III, p.302.



Britain was well aware of the danger that might be created by the October Revolution on India, and its impact on British position in India. In a report, the Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montague, and the Viceroy of India, Lord Chelmsford, admitted that the Revolution in Russia and had been received in India as a victory over despotism and that it had given an impetus to the development of political aspirations in India⁴. The British in India used "the bogey of the Russian menace", to encourage the Indian hostility to the first Czarist regime and then to the Soviet Russia. The Indian nationalist leaders did not accept the so-called British plea of "Russian menace" and they considered Soviet Union as a friend against the British imperialism.

The October Revolution was positively welcomed by the Indian National Congress, although some of its leaders did not share its socio-political programmes. At the same time, the Left Nationalists in India, who had established underground revolutionary organizations, regarded the Soviet Republic as their ally and began to establish direct contacts with Soviet Union. On 7 May 1919, Lenin received a group of leaders headed by Raja Mahendra Pratap, justly described in a recent study as the first representative delegation of Indian revolutionaries to contact the

4. Rostislav Okulov, USSR-INDIA: An Important Factor of Peace, (New Delhi, 1981), p.15.



head of the Government⁵. In his message to the Indian Revolutionary Association of Kabul in May 1920 Lenin remarked "the toiling masses of Russia follow the awakening of the Indian worker and peasant with unabating attention"⁶.

Jawaharlal Nehru visited Soviet Union for the first time in 1927 when the tenth anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution was being celebrated. He was sympathetic to Soviet Union and admired its rapid industrial progress under central planning. He thought that India could learn a great deal from the Soviet experience in solving its own problems as both the countries were predominantly agricultural and on the threshold of industrialization. Since poverty and illiteracy were other common features in both the countries it was Nehru's conviction that if Russia found a satisfactory solution for this, the task before India would be easier.

Soviet Union was India's powerful neighbour, which might be friendly to India and co-operate with her or be a thorn in her side. In either case, it was essential for Indians to know it well so that they might be able to shape their policy correctly⁷. Nehru realised that independent India and Soviet Union would live as good

5. G. Adhikari, Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India (New Delhi, 1971), p.16.

6. V.I. Lenin, The Awakening of Asia: Selected Essays (New York, n.d.), p.50.

7. Jawaharlal Nehru, Soviet Russia: Some Random Sketches and Impressions (Bombay, 1949), p.34.



neighbours as there were no clash of interests between them. Nehru was convinced that the Soviet Union was a powerful anti-imperialist force and that the colonial countries had something to learn from the Soviet system. He considered the Soviet Union a fortress against the forces of reaction, aggression and war, ignorance and obscurantism⁸.

Two events which took place in 1930 significantly contributed to the growth of Indian tradition of friendship for the Soviet Union. One was the solemn as well as spectacular demonstration of the great love and affection which the most militant section of the Indian nationalists, always felt for the Soviet Union⁹. The second important event of 1930 was Rabindranath Tagore's visit to the Soviet Union. He was greatly pleased by the Soviet state system and his impressions were communicated to the Indians through his letters and speeches. The poet's words produced much impact on the Indians in favour of the Soviet Union. He wrote that the future of India depended on its ability to work together with those world forces which wanted to end exploitation of man by man, and of nation by nation¹⁰.

8. A. Vafa, "An Architect of Soviet-Indian Friendship", in Jawaharlal Nehru in Soviet Perspective: A Symposium (New Delhi, 1980), p.53.

9. V.V. Balabushevich and Bimla Prasad (eds.), India and the Soviet Union: A Symposium (New Delhi, 1969), p.14.

10. Soviet Land (Moscow), No.8, April 1987, p.3.



So far as the politically conscious Indians were concerned, their views regarding extreme steps in the course of the freedom movement continued to be reflected by the Indian National Congress from 1930-'34. With a short break in 1931, it busied itself with organising a mass movement of civil disobedience which involved breaking law and taking its consequences. Nehru became President of the Congress in April 1936 and his views became the basis of the Indian outlook on world affairs. Nehru analysed the world situation and called upon the Congress to identify itself with the socialist and nationalist forces in the world struggling against imperialism and fascism, the two faces of decaying capitalism.

The campaign against fascism and nazism was quite manifest at the Fazipur session of Congress (1936), where it declared unequivocally:

Fascist aggression has increased, the fascist powers forming alliances and grouping themselves together for war with the intention of dominating Europe and the world are crushing political and social freedom. The Congress is fully conscious of the necessity of facing this world menace in co-operation with the progressive nations and the peoples of world. The Congress declares the solidarity of the Indian people with the people of the USSR ¹¹.

In the Tripura Congress Session (1939), Nehru sponsored a

11. G.S. Sardesai, India and the Russian Revolution, (New Delhi, 1967), p.91.



resolution which stated: "The Congress dissociates itself entirely from the British foreign policy which has consistently aided fascist powers"¹². Here he saw clearly that only the Soviet Union was standing up against nazism and fascism. He believed that if these new ideologies succeeded, the colonial peoples would have a worst fate in store for them. He was very clear in his mind that the imperialists, fascists and nazists had only one common objective, i.e., to destroy the Soviet Union.

India could not afford to remain unconcerned during the Second World War. Nehru boldly criticised British attitude towards the Soviet Russia¹³. Abruptly on 22 June 1941, Hitler invaded the Soviet Union. The Indian National Congress was seriously concerned with Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union. In December 1941, the Working Committee of the Party at its meeting held at Bardoli, wished for the success of the Soviet Union and resolved to express its great admiration for the astounding self-sacrifice and heroic courage of the Soviet people in defence of their country and freedom¹⁴.

Eventhough many nations suffered heavily for the victory over Nazi Germany during the World War II it was the Soviet Union that made the greatest sacrifice. The heroic struggle of the Soviet

12. Ibid., p.92.

13. Jawaharlal Nehru, A Bunch of Old Letters, (Bombay, 1958), p.419.

14. Rajkumar, Background of India's Foreign Policy (New Delhi, 1952), p.85.



people against Nazism inspired the Indians to continue their struggle to achieve their independence. There was much similarity between the governance of India and that of Russia. As Gandhiji wrote in his Collected Works,

The Power of the Viceroy is no way less than that of the Czar We, too, can resort to the Russian remedy against tyranny. The movement in Bengal for the use of Swadeshi goods is much like the Russian movement. Our shackles will break this very day if the people of India become united and patient, love their country and think of the well-being of their motherland disregarding their self-interest. The governance of India is possible only because there exist people who serve. We also can show the same strength that the Russian people have done¹⁵.

He further wrote: "If the Russian people succeed, this Revolution (of 1905) in Russia will be regarded as the greatest victory, the greatest event of the present century"¹⁶.

Mahatma Gandhi, who had some initial reservations with regard to Russia's involvement in the Second World War, came out in the open in order to record his support to this country. In a message to China, sent on 7 August 1942, Gandhiji observed, "Let China know that this struggle is as much for her defence as it is

15. Mahatma Gandhi, Collected Works (New Delhi, 1961), Vol.V, p.132.

16. Ibid.



for India's liberation, for, in that liberation is involved her ability to give effective assistance whether to China or to Russia or even to Great Britain or America"¹⁷. While addressing the AICC meeting in Bombay the same day, Mahatma Gandhi declared: "the coming of Japan will mean the end of China and perhaps Russia, too"¹⁸. He further added, "I do not want to be the instrument of Russia's defeat, nor China's. If that happens, I would hate myself"¹⁹.

At this time most of the Congress leaders including Nehru were in prison as a result of the individual civil disobedience movement which has been started as a protest against the British refusal to declare India independent inspite of the Indian offer of full support to the war effort in return. However, there could be no question about Indian sympathy with Soviet Union in such a situation. In their struggle for national liberation and social progress, Indian leaders had invariably relied on the consistent support of the Soviet Union. Following the principles laid down by Lenin, Soviet Union pursued a policy of alliances with the national liberation movement in the common struggle against imperialism and colonialism.

17. Mahatma Gandhi, Collected Works (New Delhi, 1979), Vol.76, p.377.

18. Ibid., p.380.

19. Ibid.



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For the first time Indian and Soviet delegates met at Sanfransisco Conference of the UN in April 1945. This was an important Conference for the future of the world. The Soviet delegate, Molotov, expressed his hope to hear the voice of an independent India in the near future. From the Indian side Jawaharlal Nehru, who became the Vice-President of the Interim Government of India, expressed the desire to cultivate cordial relations with the Soviet Union and the United States. Nehru admired Soviet Union for taking "a vast responsibility for shaping world events" and India was ready to "undertake many common tasks", with the Soviet Union. But no such response was heard from the US delegate. However, it was clear that India wanted to follow a policy of non-alignment by which India opted "to keep away from the power politics of groups aligned against one another, which have led in past to world wars and which may again lead to disaster on an even vaster scale"²⁰.

It had been generally believed for quite sometime in the Soviet Union that the Congress under Gandhi's leadership was not consistently following a path of struggle but was trying to work out a compromise with British imperialism in order to safeguard the vested interests of the Indian landlords and bourgeoisie. Nehru continued to take a friendly attitude towards the Soviet Union. He

20. India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches: September 1946 - May 1949 (New Delhi, 1983), Vol.I, p.2.



believed that India's relations with the Soviet Union, not just a mighty country, but, for us in India, a neighbouring country was "very important"²¹.

However, a letter proposing the establishment of diplomatic relations was forwarded to Moscow by Jawaharlal Nehru on 21 September 1946, i.e., nearly 12 months before the formal proclamation of India's independence. In his very first broadcast as the head of the Interim Government in September 1946, Jawaharlal Nehru greeted the Soviet Union as:

that other great nation of the modern world, ... which also carries vast responsibility for shaping world events They are our neighbours in Asia and inevitably we shall have to undertake many common tasks and have much to do with each other²².

There after on 2 October a letter from the Soviet Government was sent to India stating that the Soviet Union was prepared to establish diplomatic relations with India. Nehru in his reply emphasized that co-operation between the two countries would be mutually beneficial and would promote peace and progress in the whole world.

Nehru instructed V.K. Krishna Menon and K.P.S. Menon, the two most prominent Indian diplomats to conduct talks and

21. Ibid., p.10.

22. Ibid., p.3.



consultations with the Foreign Minister, V.M. Molotov, the leader of the Soviet delegation in New York who arrived to participate in the first session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. After meeting Molotov in New York on 28 September 1946, V.K. Krishna Menon observed that he did not see any reason as to why the strongest feelings of friendship between India and the USSR should not form the permanent basis of closer Indo-Soviet relations²³. Menon delivered Nehru's personal message to Molotov asking for assistance to meet the famine situation in India. The Indian delegates held preliminary talks with him in connection with the establishment of diplomatic relations with the USSR.

On 12 November 1946 Nehru told the Constituent Assembly that Foreign Minister of USSR, Molotov had conveyed to V.K. Krishna Menon in Paris, the information that the Soviet Union would exchange diplomatic representatives with India. In April 1947, the Soviet Union and India announced the establishment of formal diplomatic relations. The official announcement was greeted by the Soviet press as a sign of India's independent policy.

In view of the ever-growing friendly relations between India and the USSR, the governments of both these countries considered it fit to cement their already existing ties in the form

23. Hindu (Madras) 1 October 1946.



of diplomatic relationship on 14 April 1947²⁴.

The establishment of diplomatic relations between New Delhi and Moscow was hailed by the press of the two countries. The Hindustan Times welcomed the step in the interest of exchange of accurate information and expressed the view that

arrangements will be made at an early date for the training of Indian scientists in Russia and the engagement for short periods of Soviet technicians to advise the Provincial and Central Governments in this country regarding the applicability of the Russian experience to Indian economic problems²⁵.

An editorial in New Times described the establishment of diplomatic relations as an

"event of international significance" and an "evidence of friendly sentiments the peoples of the two countries entertain for one another", and a sign that "India is moving towards an independent policy"²⁶.

Soviet sympathies clearly were with the new states of the developing world and with those colonies struggling to become

24. The press communique, released by the government of India on 14 April 1947 observed, "Being desirous of maintaining and further strengthening the friendly relations existing between India and the USSR, the Government of India and the Government of the USSR have decided to exchange diplomatic missions at embassy level". See Statesman, 15 April 1947.

25. The Hindustan Times (New Delhi), 14 April 1947.

26. New Times (Moscow), Vol.3, 18 April 1947, p.3.



independent. However, the declaration of India's independence was welcomed and Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov sent his greetings to India on the eve of independence on 15 August 1947²⁷. On 25 June 1947, two weeks before the Mountbatten plan for the partition of India was announced Nehru announced the appointment of his sister, Vijay Lakshmi Pandit as India's first Ambassador to the USSR. By appointing Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit as India's first Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Nehru highlighted the importance he attached to this country. On 23 October 1947, the Soviet Union also announced the appointment of its first Ambassador to India, K.V. Noviko. The Indian Ambassador presented her credentials in Moscow on 17 August 1947 and the Soviet Ambassador on 1 January 1948.

In a speech at the founding meeting of the Cominform in September 1947, Andrei Zhdanov, one of Stalin's leading ideologues, declared that the world had become divided into two irreconcilable blocs - the imperialist headed by USA and the anti-imperialist camp headed by the Soviet Union. Zhdanov included India among those exceptional states, that, while not socialist, was not part of the imperialist camp.

During the first few years after Indian independence in 1947,

27. Amrita Bazar Patrika (Calcutta), 22 August 1947.



the Soviet leadership did not reciprocate the friendly feelings that Nehru had for the USSR. Stalin initially saw the Indian Government headed by Nehru as compromise with British imperialism. The Soviet Union had criticized the Mountbatten Plan, under which independence was given to India and Pakistan, and it believed that the leadership of the Congress had agreed to the British terms for a political settlement. Further, India's unequivocal support to the British adherence to the Western Union Pact; her support to the Commonwealth Communique for re-armament drive against would be aggressors; and her reluctance to utilise the Soviet offer of technical assistance at the ECAFE in 1948, made India a suspect in the eyes of Russia.

By early 1948 East-West Cold war positions had been rigidified and India was to fall victim to these new tensions. The Soviets enunciated their new suspicion of continuing British imperialism in areas like India, and the Indian bourgeoisie were once again, as in 1928-35 viewed as reactionary and "the camp of imperialism". India was a semi-colony that was not truly independent. Non-alignment was perceived as an "imperialist device". While India's independence was thus dubbed as a 'sham' its policy of non-alignment was sharply censured as collaboration with British capitalism. The nationalist leadership, including that of Gandhiji and Nehru, came in for criticism. While the grief evoked by Gandhiji's death was almost universal, "no message of condolence came from Russia, not a word of comment



appeared in Soviet newspapers". But the Soviet delegate at the Security Council meeting paid tributes to Gandhiji, calling him a "great Indian", who undoubtedly left "a deep imprint" on the history of India and the Indian people²⁸.

The Communists were encouraged to work for 'genuine' freedom of the colonies and for revolution. The Communist insurrection in the Telengana region of South India in 1948, encouraged by the Comintern, amidst growing communal tensions in the country, had, however, a traumatic effect on Nehru. He saw the Indian Communist Party as an instrument of Moscow, blind to the interests of the country.

However, in order to obviate the inevitable impression that India was slowly siding into the Western camp, Nehru, at the same time, made it a point to express openly his anti-imperialist views. On numerous occasions he proclaimed that the colonial world must become independent, and actually assured the nationalists of many subjugated countries of India's moral and material support. Although there is no doubt that by adopting such a policy Nehru was giving expression to his genuine convictions against imperialism.

Thus during the first two years of her independence, India

28. S.P. Singh, Political Dimensions of India-USSR Relations (New Delhi, 1987), p.34.



found herself in the position, on the one hand, of an anti-imperialist nation eager to assist the colonial world in the attainment of independence and on the other, of establishing significant economic and political relations with the west. On the other hand, India's attitude to the Soviet Union also grew lukewarm and it became a party to certain decisions on international issues.

The Soviet Asian Republics and North Vietnam were not invited to the Asian Conference to 1949 with the concurrence of India.

India supported the Dutch-Indonesian Agreement of December 1949 as well as the ruthless suppression of the communist elements in Indonesia. Obviously, all these steps of India created further misgivings in the Soviet mind²⁹.

Jawaharlal Nehru's visit to the US capital (11 October - 7 November 1949) led to some apprehensions to obviate the security implications for India of the victory of communists in China. Seen in the light of the aforementioned facts, it seems that many of the international developments - like the enunciation of the Truman Doctrine in March and Marshal Plan in June 1947 along with Churchill's Fulton (March 1946) and Zurich (September 1947) speeches against the so-called Soviet expansion - were at the root of Soviet anxieties. The formation of the NATO, intensification in the cold-war tension and simultaneous US efforts to win the support

29. G.D. Bhatt, Indo-Soviet Relations and Indian Public Opinion (Delhi, 1989), p.7.



of Nehru caused concern to Moscow. India's continued dependence on Britain in most of the important matters even in the post-independence period was not appreciated.

Stalin considered the world divided into two camps - communism and imperialism and there was no room for anyone between the two fronts. He who was not with the Soviet Union was considered as her enemy. India's neutrality in world affairs was regarded by the Soviet Union as an "imperialist device" in order to "slander" the Soviet Union by placing her on the same level with American imperialism. Stalin was skeptical about Indian moves and he stoutly refused to acknowledge the reality of India. The Soviet leadership did not reciprocate the friendly feelings that Nehru had for the USSR. It is a well-known fact that our first Ambassador to Russia, Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit had not been able to have an audience with Stalin.

India had to keep away from war of any time fought by both the blocs anywhere in the world either directly or indirectly. Internally India had to follow a policy of mixed economy thus satisfying the ideological prejudice of both the blocs. The non-aligned movement came to stand for a struggle for strengthening the independence of the newly emerging countries and against colonialism and imperialism. Non-alignment arose as a reply to cold war politics in the early fifties and it has come to stay and India being one of its leading spokesman.



India's stand on certain international questions, helped to create a climate of rapprochement between the Soviet Union and India. The appointment of S. Radhakrishnan as the Indian ambassador to Moscow in July 1949 was the best choice and quite opportune as he was a man free from anti-Soviet bias, and capable of removing the Indo-Soviet misunderstanding.

Nehru had good reason to suspect that Moscow and Beijing might come together against India. The occupation of Tibet by the Communist China brought a hostile regime closer to India. Though faced with such a perilous situation, Nehru had little manoeuvrability. To join forces with the Western bloc in such a situation would have meant giving up all that he believed in, particularly his policy of non-alignment.

In the circumstances, he opted for befriending China and tried to prevent the emergence of a critical communist monolith. Only if China changed its stance on India, he thought, Moscow might follow suit in due course. If Nehru placed his faith in China, it was not only because of India's long association with that county but also because Nehru believed that the revolution in China was basically nationalist and that it would have greater sympathy for Indian aspirations and policies. So, inspite of the growing opposition of the United States to the new China, Nehru adopted friendly posture towards China. He advocated its admission into the UN and insisted on the return of Formosa to the mainland.



He also refused to sign the Japanese Peace Treaty. And when China entered the Korean War, India declined to support the UN Resolution, which condemned China as an aggressor. Similarly, even when China established its dominance over Tibet through military means, Nehru did not want this fact to come between India and China as an irritant. All these brought about a change in Peking's attitude towards India.

The stance adopted by Prime Minister Nehru in the Korean war was appreciated and admired by the Soviet Union³⁰. This was a test case for India's non-alignment and she acquitted very well in adopting a strictly impartial position. India registered a strong protest at the UN military command's decision to extend the war north of the 38th parallel. For the Soviet Union this was a heartening gesture³¹. Nehru's appeal for peaceful settlement of the Korean conflict was welcomed by Stalin, but rejected by the United States. This made Stalin to recognise that Nehru was genuinely interested in pursuing an independent policy in world affairs and he made a series of gestures of friendships towards India.

30. Kissinger's Contemporary Archives, Vol.VIII, 1950-52, p.10847.

31. India's forceful advocacy of the admission of people's China into the UN was the second important international issue upon which Soviet and Indian interests converged in the early 1950's.



Kashmir Dispute

The Kashmir dispute constituted a major irritant in the Indo-Pak relations, and even after the two Indo-Pak wars and the Simla Agreement the dispute has not been settled. After a dialogue between India and Pakistan over Kashmir proved fruitless, India took the matter to the Security Council on 31 December 1947 under Article 35 of the United Nations Charter and charged Pakistan with "an act of aggression against India"³². At a meeting of the Council held on 17 January Andrei Gromyko, representing the USSR observed:

... the whole question should be adopted as soon as possible on the substance of the question in order to rectify and improve the situation in Kashmir and to settle relations between India and Pakistan³³.

The manner in which the Kashmir question, quagmired in the power politics of the United Nations and the manner in which Pakistan was sought to be propped up by some powerful countries as a counter weight to India by utilising the Kashmir dispute was a frustrating experience for India and immeasurably influenced the

32. UN, Security Council Official Record, S/628, 1 January 1948, p.28 (hereafter cited as SCOR,).

33. Ibid., 17 January 1948, pp.123-124.



country's understanding and insight into international relations as well as her foreign policy stance³⁴.

The Western powers time and again brought up the Kashmir issue in the UN with the objective of helping Pakistan. The Security Council at that time was dominated by the Western powers and India had to fall back on the Soviet veto in order to prevent the adoption of patently hostile resolutions moved by the Western powers. Though Nehru initially offered a plebiscite to decide the Kashmir problem, he did not pursue it as conditions had changed substantially.

The US attitude towards India was not appreciative since the issue of US arms aid to Pakistan was treated as a dangerous move as Washington was already hostile to India on the Kashmir issue. By asking the UN to withdraw all US personnel from Kashmir, India gave notice to Washington that it (Washington) was no more considered by India as an impartial judge in Indo-Pakistan affairs³⁵.

While India and US were having divergent opinion on the Chinese and Korean questions, the US quietly started drawing Pakistan into Western sponsored military alliances in order to

34. V.P. Dutt, India's Foreign Policy (New Delhi, 1984), p.9.

35. Vinod Bhatia, Indira Gandhi and Indo-Soviet Relations (New Delhi, 1987), p.8.



establish military bases against Soviet Union in the Pak held Kashmir. This development forced Stalin to change his mind and draw India closer to the Soviet Union. In 1952, Moscow broke its silence over Kashmir in favour of India at the UN and better understanding between Soviet Union and India had become clear when in April 1952 Stalin who had not met any foreign dignatories about two years granted an audience to Indian Ambassador Dr.Radhakrishnan just before his relinquishing office. This meeting helped to remove many confusions in Stalin's mind about India and signalled the beginning of a new era of Indo-Soviet relations. Radhakrishnan on his return to India praised the Soviet Union and rebuked the Western powers for attempting to destroy the Soviet Union.

In 1953, in a further gesture of good-will Stalin granted an interview to the new Indian Ambassador, K.P.S.Menon, resulting in the improvement of trade relations. A worthy trade agreement was concluded in December 1953. This was a turning point in Moscow's attitude towards India.

The death of Stalin in March 1953 came to be a watershed in the Soviet history and its policy towards India. Soon after the death of Stalin, the Soviet Prime Minister in August 1953 made an unprecedented friendly reference to India in his speech. "The position of such a considerable state as India" he said, is of great importance for the strengthening of peace in the East. India has



made her own significant contribution to the efforts of peace-loving countries directed to the ending of the war in Korea. Our relations with India are growing stronger and cultural and economic ties are developing. We hope that relations between India and the Soviet Union will continue to develop and strengthen with friendly co-operation as their keynote³⁶.

Meanwhile, India began to move closer to both China and Soviet Union which was not appreciated by Washington. In 1954, India and China signed a Treaty in which the five principles of Panchasheel were incorporated. Nehru followed this up with a visit to China in 1954, and accepted an invitation to visit the USSR.

Just before Nehru's visit to the USSR, the two countries had signed the first economic agreement in February 1955 for the setting up of Bhilai Steel Plant. Nehru later stated that "Bhilai is embedded in the national consciousness of the people of India as the symbol of a new era³⁷. The Soviet Union not only provided concessional financial credit but also technical assistance to India. The Soviet offer to put up this project must be regarded as a landmark in the history not merely in the relations between India and Soviet Union but also between the East and the West. The Western powers were dragging on the discussions regarding the western financial and technical support for the construction of steel

36. V.V.Balabushevich and Bimla Prasad (ed.), n.9, p.25.

37. A.Appadorai (ed.), India: Studies in Social and Political Development 1947-'67 (New Delhi, 1968), p.232.



plants. Thus began an era of economic co-operation between the two.

Nehru's visit to the Soviet Union in June 1955 was used by the Soviet Union to develop friendship with India and Nehru was considered as a leading figure of independent India. He was accorded an extra-ordinarily warm reception which no other non-communist leader was ever given. In their joint communique of 22 June 1955, both the parties stressed the determination not only to build further their relations on the principles of peaceful co-existence, but also to work to make them universal. This "will enlarge the area of peace, promote mutual confidence amongst nations, and pave the way for greater international co-operation"³⁸. It was also agreed that the USSR and India were ready to co-operate, to the fullest extent, in solving the burning problem of our time and in finding ways of lessening tension in the "hotbeds" of the world³⁹.

The return visit of Prime Minister N.A.Bulganin and first Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, N.S.Khrushchev to India (18 November - 13 December 1955) further cemented the friendly ties between these two countries. Speaking in honour of the visiting Soviet dignitaries on 20 November in New Delhi, Prime

38. V.Mikhin, Indo-Soviet Treaty 15 Years (New Delhi, 1986), p.27.

39. Ibid.



Minister Nehru referred to:

deeper friendship and understanding between the people of our two great countries ... have progressively grown, eventhough the paths we have pursued in our respective countries have varied⁴⁰.

The Soviet Union not only supported India on all major political questions like Kashmir and Goa but also extended liberal credits for setting up of basic industries like heavy engineerings, power, pharmaceuticals, etc. These projects are supported with a total credit commitment of over thousand crores of rupees⁴¹.

The Soviet Union declared that it should support India's effort to liberate Goa and other Portugese colonies in India and implied that India should quickly liberate them if necessary by military means because the American "military clique" viewed these Portugese possessions as potential bases for use against New Delhi.

In the summer of 1954, the Sino-Soviet differences over the policy to be followed toward Nehru and other neutralist leaders of Asia accelerated the Soviet desire to build up closer relations with India. In the end of September 1954 when Khrushchev visited Peking, he realized that it was difficult to tackle Mao-Tse-Tung as he was uncompromising. He further realized that if the Soviet Union

40. Jawaharlal Nehru, n.3, p.309.

41. Sukhbir Choudhary, Indo-Soviet Treaty - A close up view (New Delhi, 1973), p.2.



wanted China's friendship and support, she would have to sacrifice her national and international goals.

Khrushchev returned home with a feeling that Mao "vehemently" objected to the Soviet policy towards India and described Nehru and other neutralist leaders of Asia as "lackeys of American imperialism". Mao demanded unambiguous Soviet support against India on the issue of Sino-Indian border dispute. The Soviet leader did not give into the Chinese pressure to support the Chinese territorial claim against India. After realizing the Chinese mind Khrushchev went ahead with his policy of winning over the Indian friendship.

It is not clear as to when and at what point the desire for a counter-weight to China became a major factor in Soviet policy towards India. According to T.N.Kaul, Khrushchev told the Indian Vice-President Dr.Radhakrishnan in 1956 that 'in ten year's time the chief enemy (Soviet Union) would be China'⁴².

Soviet Stand on Sino-Indian Border Dispute

In 1959, the border clashes between India and China led to Soviet calls for talks and to reaffirmations of Soviet friendship with both sides. This neutral position pleased the Indians but surprised the Chinese. However, this does not mean that the containment of

42. Peter J.S. Duncan, The Soviet Union and India (New York, 1989), p.15.



China was altogether a new phenomenon that sprang up all of a sudden only in 1959 and began to dominate India's relations with the Soviet Union. As Michael Brecher points out: "No Indian statesman can ignore the compelling fact that two great powers of the communist world stand at the gates of the Indian sub-continent"⁴³.

The Soviet Union was the only great power which thought it to be in its interests that India should emerge as a strong, consolidated country capable of playing an important role in Asian and world politics. It is, therefore, important to note that this Soviet policy towards India arose out of its consciousness (i) that after the emergence of a strong China, the major power confrontation in Asia would occur between China on the one hand and the United States on the other; (ii) that by itself, the Soviet Union would not be able to play a dominant power role in Asia; (iii) that, it would be detrimental to Soviet interests if either the USA or China were to dominate substantial parts of Asia; and (iv) that, hence it was in the interest of the Soviet Union to promote diversity in Asia and welcome the coming into being of other independent centres of power in Asia, with whom the Soviet Union would be able to work close, friendly relations on the basis of equality and mutual benefit⁴⁴.

43. Micheal Brecher, India's Foreign Policy: An Interpretation (New York, 1957), p.4.

44. M.S.Rajan, Shivaji Ganguly (ed.), Sisir Gupta: India and the International System (New Delhi, 1981), p.249.



In 1960, for the first time India bought arms from the Soviet Union - helicopters and planes for possible use against China. In the Aksaichin area during the border dispute Indian officials were imprisoned by China as early as 1958. India did not publish this news to the world with the hope of solving the dispute peacefully. China did not like the path of peaceful negotiation. In October 1962 China made a surprise and sudden attack on India. India was unprepared for the sudden betrayal when negotiations were contemplated on the basis of the McMahon line. In the 1962 attack China took away a large territory and on 29 November 1962 China declared a unilateral ceasefire.

Initially Moscow sided with the Peking in the 1962 border dispute. Soviets were not very happy in this development as years of hard striving for Indian friendship and Indian neutrality had gone for nothing as a result of Peking's actions. Soviet Union adopted a cautious approach towards the border incident. Taking the side of India, Soviet Union criticised the aggressive war blocs as obstructing the progressive democratic strength in India⁴⁵. The Soviet Government did try to bring an early end to Sino-Indian War; probably because of Soviet pressure, China stopped its war with India⁴⁶.

45. Alexy Kosygin expressed the Soviet's anti-China official feeling on Indo-China conflict on the occasion of 45th anniversary of the October Revolution. See The Statesman, 6 November 1962.

46. Sanjay Gaikwad, Dynamics of Indo-Soviet Relations; The Era of Indira Gandhi (New Delhi, 1990), p.41.



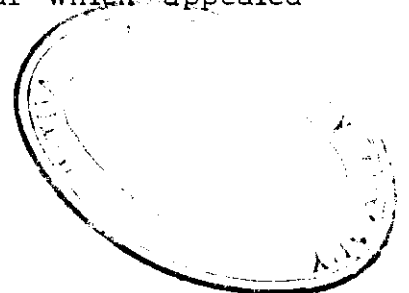
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Following the Chinese attack on India in October 1962, India asked United States for \$ 500 million worth of military assistance. But, America responded with an offer of only \$70 million worth⁴⁷. However, when India approached the Soviet Union, the latter gave India what it wanted. The military relationship went further, when the Soviet government agreed to follow India to produce MiG-21 aircraft under licence, although it had supplied only MiG-19s to China⁴⁸. Besides, in 1963 Moscow started supplying all types of arms and equipments for mountain warfare, MiGs, Missiles and tanks. This was followed by an agreement to set up another steel plant at Bokaro which was originally promised to be taken up by US government and later backed out because of various political pressures in the anti-Indian lobby.

The initial pro-China stance of the Soviet Union has been attributed to the fact that the Russians needed Chinese support in the Cuban Missile Crisis. After this crisis was defused the Soviet leaders switched back to a policy of cordiality with Nehru. On 5th November, however, Moscow changed the line. Pravda maintained silence over the McMohan line in an editorial which appealed

47. Ibid., p.42.

48. Peter.J.S.Duncan, n.42, p.16.



to both parties to agree to a ceasefire and to negotiate without imposing pre-conditions⁴⁹.

When Jawaharlal Nehru died on 27 May 1964 a memorial meeting was held in Moscow in the Hall of Columns where eloquent tributes were paid to the late Prime Minister, who was the architect of India's friendly ties with the USSR. This was a rare sort of condolence, such honour being reserved for Communist heads of States only⁵⁰.

All apprehensions with regard to any probable shift in Indo-Soviet relations after Nehru's death were set aside by the Prime Minister designate of India Lal Bahadur Shastri, who declared that Nehru's course both in home and foreign policies would be continued. Nehru's death did not bring about any re-assessment of the Soviet attitude towards India. It was fully confirmed during the visit of the Defence Minister and the President of India to Moscow in September 1964.

Indo-Soviet Relations after Nehru Era

Within less than a month of President Radhakrishnan's visit to Moscow, L.I. Brezhnev took over as the chief of the CPSU and

49. Vinod Bhatia, Indira Gandhi and Indo-Soviet Relations (New Delhi, 1987), pp.15-16.

50. S.P.Singh, n.28, p.108.



Kosygin as the Prime Minister. On the day Khrushchev was removed the Indian government in carefully-worded statement drew the attention of the new Soviet leaders that "India, values her friendly ties with the Soviet Union and looks forward with confidence that these friendly ties will continue to grow under new leadership"⁵¹. In vivid contrast the Chinese Communists were delighted by Khrushchev's fall and regarded it as a "major victory". On 28 October, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Nehru's daughter, in Shastri's cabinet as Minister of Information and Broadcasting arrived in Moscow to meet the new Soviet leaders and on the following day Prime Minister Kosygin assured her that Moscow would continue its policy towards India. "Our friendship with India is not a passing thing" he declared. "It is one of the best friendship between our two countries"⁵².

New Delhi studiously watched all this and issued a brief statement, which expressed the hope that friendly relations between India and the USSR would continue to grow stronger under the new Soviet leadership⁵³. Soviet pledge of friendship with India was reiterated on several occasions by the new leadership. On the eve

51. Times of India (New Delhi), 17 October 1964.

52. The Statesman, 31 October 1964.

53. Ibid., 17 October 1964.



of the 47th anniversary of the October Revolution, Brezhnev referred to good neighbourly, traditional and friendly ties with India⁵⁴. On 9 December 1964, in his report to the Supreme Soviet, Prime Minister Kosygin observed that Soviet friendship with India was becoming "broader and more fruitful" year after year⁵⁵.

A new phase in the relations between India and the USSR, which began in the spring of 1965 with the outbreak of armed clashes on the Indo-Pak border in the Rann of Kutch, was characterised by a firm desire on the part of the Soviets to develop their time-tested relations with New Delhi and explore some new vistas in their formal state-to-state relations with Pakistan.

It is true that there was no question of bartering away a time-tested friend like India. Since Sino-Pak-US collusion had further increased the element of inter-dependence in relations between India and the USSR, economic co-operation with India had to be augmented, military assistance to her had to be further reinforced and political support to her on the issues of her direct interest had to be reaffirmed⁵⁶. Perceiving India as weakened by the war with China two years earlier, the new Soviet leaders sought to improve their relations with Pakistan, and to try to wean

54. Pravda (Moscow), 7 October 1964.

55. Ibid., 10 December 1964.

56. S.P.Singh, n.28, p.115.



it away from China. Certainly, this balancing act was an up-hill task. The major issue, which the Soviet Union faced, appeared in the form of armed clashes between India and Pakistan in the Rann of Kutch, which ultimately led to the outbreak of an all-out war between these two countries in September 1965.

In the fall of April 1965 when a minor conflict between India and Pakistan broke out over the Rann of Kutch, the Soviet Union moved away from her whole-hearted support to India and assumed a "neutral" stand. Prime Minister Shastri believed that though the Soviet Union had taken a neutral stand in the conflict, her sympathy had remained with India. He felt that as a leader of the country he could not sacrifice the Soviet support and friendship for the benefit of the people. On the eve of his visit to the Soviet Union on 12 May he praised Moscow as a "big friend" of India which had rendered "us various kinds of aid and assistance at difficult times". The friendship between our two countries is of tremendous significance to the whole world⁵⁷.

In August 1965 a major armed conflict between India and Pakistan broke out over Kashmir. In the clashes between India and Pakistan, which erupted into a fullscale war in August, Moscow stayed officially neutral, although it continued to supply arms to India. The United States declared an arms embargo, which

57. Amrita Bazar Patrika, 12 May, 1965.



affected Pakistan much more adversely than India. It was from about this time that the USSR became a major exporter of arms to India, while China supported Pakistan⁵⁸.

The friendly relations between India and the Soviet Union were demonstrated again in 1965 when hostilities broke out between Pakistan and India over Kashmir. Guided by its wish to strengthen peace and universal security and proceeding from the vital interests of the peoples of India and Pakistan, the Soviet government insisted that it was possible to overcome the differences between India and Pakistan only through negotiations; with this purpose in mind, the USSR called for a ceasefire and offered its good office to settle the differences.

India and Pakistan accepted the Soviet proposal and agreed to hold a meeting between Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri and President Ayub Khan in Tashkent. The Soviet Prime Minister Kosygin played the role of a mediator between them. In this process Washington encouraged Kosygin to play this role to unite India and Pakistan against China. When, on 22 September 1965, India and Pakistan accepted the ceasefire resolution of the Security Council of the UN the Soviet Union welcomed their agreement.

On 19 January 1966 Shastri and Ayub Khan signed the historic Tashkent Declaration, whereby both sides undertook not to

58. Peter.J.S.Duncan, n.42, p.17.



resort to force and to solve their disputes peacefully on the basis of the principle of non-interference in each others internal affairs. They noted with deep appreciation the constructive, friendly, and noble role of the Soviet Union in bringing about the meeting, which resulted in mutually satisfactory result⁵⁹. The Soviet objective to hold the Tashkent conference was, of course, to establish the Soviet Union as an Asian power. Though the Soviet leaders did not say so in public, former Indian Ambassador to the Soviet Union K.P.S. Menon asserted that the Soviet proposal for a conference between India and Pakistan was a "strong evidence of Russia's Asianess"⁶⁰.

At Tashkent, Soviet Union behaved as a big power of a totally different type. It was the first instance of international diplomacy when a big power tried its most to bring peace between two comparatively weaker nations instead of exploiting their discord of further its interests⁶¹.

The Tashkent declaration was signed on 10 January 1966 which by

59. For details of Tashkent Declaration, See, India, Ministry of External Affairs, Foreign Affairs Record (New Delhi), Vol.XII, No.1, January 1966.

60. Times of India, 28 November 1965.

61. K.Neelkant, Partners in Peace - A Study in Indo-Soviet Relations (New Delhi, 1972), p.19.



India and Pakistan pledged to restore peaceful relations between the two countries to promote good neighbourly relations and to reaffirm their faith in the UN Charter so as not to have recourse to force. This declaration accorded considerable success for the Soviet role in South Asia. It allowed Moscow to maintain good relations with both India and Pakistan until the end of the 1960's. But to those who looked forward to friendly relations between India and Pakistan, Tashkent gave tremendous hope. As has been put very aptly: "In a way Tashkent is an epitome of Indo-Soviet friendship - a friendship whose purpose is not to threaten or encircle any nation, but to promote the cause of peace in the world, more particularly in South Asian region"⁶². Thus, the Indo-Pak conflict of 1965 ended because of the Soviet mediation. It provided a sound basis for the establishment of normal relations between India and Pakistan, and helped in ending the state of war between the two countries.

62. K.P.S.Menon, "steady growth of Relations", cited in V.V.Balabush-evich and Bimla Prasad (Eds.), n.9, p.34.

