CHAPTER I

MUTUAL PERCEPTION AND PRAXIS (1950-53)
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India and the Bolshevik Revolution

Indian National Movement had come of age during the First World War. Yet to attain the subsequent mass dimension, it was to witness following Gandhi's entry, it still largely remained a movement essentially conceived and led by intellectuals. They were inspired by universal resistance to alien domination. The Bolshevik Revolution in its magnitude and implications was an epochal event in world history. This fact was duly appreciated by the Indian nationalist leaders and this remained as a major influence for the subsequent events.

To Jawaharlal Nehru, the Great October Revolution was a "tremendous event, unique in world history". While talking about the importance of Bolshevik Revolution to India, he in one of his books wrote:

".... the dynamic forces released by the revolution of 1917 have not played themselves out. They have made history and will continue to make history and no one can afford to ignore them. We in India can least of all be indifferent to them. Russia is our neighbour, a giant sprawling half over Asia and Europe, and amity or enmity is out of question."1

Nehru's perception of the Bolshevik Revolution was conditioned by his own understanding of human history and social movements and also by the imperatives of prevailing international situation. For the Indian people Bolshevik Revolution marked a watershed; heralded the birth of "new civilization" out of the womb of old world. They were enraptured by the Russian people's upheaval against the Czarist regime. It brought home to the colonial people the important lesson that immense strength and energy resided in the common people. At the same time, it provided a major impetus to the resurgence of nationalism.

Despite the censorship imposed by the British Government on the press in India, during the period, the success of Bolshevik Revolution did not go unnoticed. Indians were highly attracted to the "Bolshevik Ideas" and it stimulated the emergence of a new consciousness among the educated Indians. An article in the Modern Review commented:

"It is refreshing to turn, from the chorus of abuses and misrepresentation directed against the Russian Soviets by the capitalist press, to the illuminating sketch of the framework of the Soviet state ... we are at last given an insight into the mighty efforts of the revolutionary Russia to organize herself and work out her communist ideals .... In fact the Bolshevik is striving to make Russia better and
nobler than anything she has ever been."^2

India's support for the Bolshevik Revolution is mainly derived from its stubborn opposition to "imperialism and colonialism". This was the meeting point for Indian freedom movement and the Bolshevik Revolution. No doubt, the methods adopted for their national independence were diametrically opposite.

While having undoubted fascinations for the ideals and achievement of communism, it is interesting to note that Nehru was not a Marxist or Communist. To cite his own words:

"I am very far from being a communist. My roots are still perhaps partly in the nineteenth century, and I have been too much influenced by the humanist liberal tradition to get out of it completely. This bourgeois background follows me about and is naturally a source of irritation to many communists. I dislike dogmatism, and the treatment of Karl Marx's writings or any other books as revealed scripture which cannot be challenged, and the regimentation and heresy hunts which seem to be a feature of modern communism. I dislike also much that has happened in Russia, and especially the excessive

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use of violence in normal times. But still I
incline to more and more towards a communist
philosophy." 

The Indian National Congress, which was steering the
Indian freedom struggle, was influenced by the remarkable
achievement of the October Revolution. The Indian national-
ists' participation at the Brussels Congress of the League
Against Imperialism in 1927 under the stewardship of Nehru
was a testimony to their sharing of "Bolshevik ideals", and
their strong undercurrent of sympathy with Russia. The
Brussels Congress had a great impact upon Nehru's sensitive
and receptive mind. This was followed by his visit to the
Soviet Union. He was fascinated by the Soviet experiment
that made him make the following remark:

"For us in India the fascination is greater and
even our self-interest compels us to understand
the vast forces which have upset the order of
things and brought a new world into existence
where values have changed utterly and old
standards have given place to new."

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Elsewhere, he wrote, "A study of Marx and Lenin produced
a powerful effect on my mind and helped me to see history
and current affairs in a new light. The long chain of
history and social development appeared to have some
meaning, some sequence, and the future lost some of its
obscenity." See in his, *The Discovery of India* (Bombay,
1964), p.29.
He added:

"Russia thus interests us because it may help us to find some solution for the great problems which face the world today. It interests us specially because conditions there have not been, are not even now, dissimilar to conditions in India. Both are vast agricultural countries with only the beginning of industrialization, and both have to face illiteracy and poverty. If Russia finds solutions for these, then our task is made easier."

The leader of the Indian National Movement, Mahatma Gandhi, too, did not remain unaffected. Gandhi, though critical of the Bolshevik method, appreciated some of the good points of Soviet experiment:

"There is no questioning the fact that the Bolshevik ideal has behind it the purest sacrifice of countless men and women who have given up their all for its sake, and an ideal sanctified by the sacrifices of such master spirits as Lenin cannot go in vain: the noble example of their renunciation will be emblazoned for ever and quicken and purify the ideal as time passes." 

4 Nehru, n.i, p.xi.

5 M.K. Gandhi, "The Students Interrogatories", Young India (Ahmedabad), 15 November 1928.
Bolshevik Revolution provided new impetus to the Indian nationalists in very many ways. Some of the Indian National Congress Resolutions during the pre-independence period lauded the achievement of Socialist Revolution and the Soviets. It is quite pertinent here to take note of Nehru's espousal of socialism and his appreciation for the Soviet people. His admiration for the Soviet system and aspiration to set up a similar society in India is well depicted in his presidential address to the Lucknow Congress, held in April 1936:

"I am convinced that the only key to 'solution' of world's problems and of India's problem lies in socialism and when I use this word I do so not in a vogue humanitarian way but in the scientific economic sense. Socialism is, however, something even more than an economic doctrine: it is philosophy of life and as such also it appeals to me. I see no way of ending the poverty, the vast unemployment, the degradation and the subjection of the Indian people except through socialism. Much has happened there which has pained me greatly and with which I disagree, but I look upon that great and fascinating unfolding of a new order and a new civilization as the most promising feature of our dismal age. If the future is full of hope, it is largely because of Soviet Russia and what it
has done, and I am convinced that if some world catastrophe does not intervene, this new civilization will spread to other lands and put an end to the wars and conflicts which capitalism feeds."

Leaving aside the Indian National Congress and its leaders, the other organisations/movements which were greatly influenced by the ideas and ideals of the Bolshevik Revolution were the revolutionary (terrorist) movements, working class movement and the communist movement.

The revolutionary organisations - inside and outside India - which were championing the cause of India's independence became more active after the First World War. Influenced by the upsurge of new working class and inspired by the socialist ideas of the Bolshevik revolution, the immediate objective of the revolutionary terrorists was to spread revolutionary consciousness among the people against the British rule in India. The terrorists in northern India formed Hindustan

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7 Early revolutionary movement included members like Rash Behari Bose, Sachindranath Sanyal. The new generation terrorist revolutionaries were: Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekhar Azad, Sukhdev, Jatin Das, Yashpal, Jogesh Chandra, Shiv Varma, etc. Some of the important organizations like Jugantar Party, Anushilan Samiti operated from Bengal. Those which were operating from abroad were Indian Independence Committee in Berlin, Indian Provisional Government at Kabul, Indian Revolutionary Association at Tashkent, Ghadar Party in USA, Canada and Latin American countries. Individual revolutionaries like M.N. Roy, Abani Mukherjee operated from abroad.
Republican Association in January 1925. Their approach to socio-economic problem was manifested in their programme where they stated:

"To start labour organisations, suitable men must be engaged on behalf of the association to organise and control labourers in different factories, the railways and in the coal-fields, and instill into their minds that they are not for revolution but that revolution is for them." 8

The revolutionaries tried to form an all-India organisation on 8 and 9 September 1928; different revolutionary groups from different parts of India, at a secret meeting in Delhi, decided to change the name of their organisation to 'Hindustan Socialist Republic Army'. That was how socialism in a very crude and immature sense had reached them and they looked to the Bolshevik Revolution as a source of inspiration. An important aspect of the Soviet influence was the eagerness of the terrorist revolutionaries to take monetary and other help from the Soviet Union and to send Indians there to get training in the arts, methods and organisation of the revolutionary process. 9


9 Bipen Chandra, Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India (New Delhi, 1981), p.226. For further details J.M. Edwart (compiled), Terrorism in India, 1917-1936 (Delhi, 1974).
The other side of the revolutionary movement was organised class movements of workers and peasants and the communist movement in the country. In the pre-1914 period, the revolutionary potentials of the working class were yet to unfold. It followed rather than preceded the national movement; the only outstanding political action was the Bombay general strike in July 1909 against the six years sentence on Tilak. But the post-war economic crisis brought the working class movement to prominence, when it emerged as an organised force on national scene. Though the initiative to form an all-India trade union centre was by the nationalists and humanitarians, "the real driving force behind this development was the spontaneous militant mass action of the industrial workers themselves, which took a qualitatively new form in the postwar years of 1918-20 and the activities of these democrats who, under the impact of October Revolution and Lenin in India were seeking new revolutionary paths for independence and were turning to the formation of Communist Party, the class organisation of workers and peasants." In 1928, India witnessed a mighty trade union movement in industrial cities of Bombay and Calcutta; in the previous year, the working class responded

in a militant way to the call of boycott of Simon Commission.

The Communist Movement in India arose in course of the liberation struggle of the country, as a result of the efforts of the Indian revolutionaries, under the impact of October Revolution, and as a search for a new path to achieve national independence. Prior to First World War, two revolutionary groups operated from outside India. First was the Berlin Committee from Germany, and the second was the Ghadar Party from America. But they failed to do any positive work in the country itself. In the First World War, after the defeat of Germany and its allies, the emigre revolutionaries looked towards the Soviet Union for all-round assistance. The provisional government of Raja Mahendra Pratap, because of stiff opposition from Kabul government, shifted its centre to Soviet Central Asia. Similarly, the Berlin Committee started keeping contacts with the Comintern. When the Ghadar movement was revived after the world war, they started keeping relations with the Soviet Communist Party. When some of the Muhajirin tried to return to Punjab, they were implicated in Peshawar conspiracy case in 1922. This was the "first ever Communist conspiracy" case which the British Government launched against those of the Muhajirins who not only crossed from Afghanistan into Soviet Union in their search for military training and help for India's independence movement but went ahead to become acquainted with communist ideology and
politics by joining the school in Tashkent and the Communist University in Moscow. 12

In the domestic scene communist groups were coming up. Those were the marks of the beginning of socialist ideas in a primitive form in India, out of which the Communist Party of India emerged. The earlier effort of M.N. Roy to form the Communist Party of India at Tashkent in October 1920 failed to make any progress. The British Government constituted the Kanpur conspiracy case in 1924 against noted communist workers, but nothing stopped the spread of Marxism in this country and later Communist Party of India was formed in Kanpur in December 1925.

Soviet Policy in the East

The genesis of the Soviet policy towards the Indian subcontinent can be traced back to the earlier writings of Lenin and Stalin. Lenin attached considerable importance to the prospects of revolution in India and China. His last article, written on 2 March 1923, captioned "Better Fewer, But Better", was a testimony to this fact. He predicted:

"In the last analysis, the outcome of the struggle will be determined by the fact that Russian, India, China, etc., account for the overwhelming majority

of the population of the globe. And it is precisely this majority that has been drawn into the struggle for emancipation with extraordinary rapidity, so that in this respect there cannot be the slightest doubt what the final outcome of the world struggle will be. In this sense, the complete victory of socialism is fully and absolutely assured."  

This emphasis in the Soviet strategy was not without any historical basis. In fact, the failure of the prospects of revolution in the West led the Soviet strategists to look forward to the East - the people of the colonial world where the national liberation movements were seen as playing a vital role. In this context, the Soviet Union, in accordance with policy adjustments, sought to utilize the revolutionary struggle of the colonial world to promote the international goal of communism, as well as to strengthen her defence against the Japanese expansion and the rise of fascism.

13 V.I. Lenin, Selected Works (Moscow, 1977), vol.3, p.725. Earlier, in a message dated 5 May 1922 to the Pravda on its tenth anniversary, he predicted that the people of India, China and rest of Asia were "inexorably and with mounting momentum .... approaching their 1905", Lenin, The National Liberation Movement in the East, 2nd Impression (Moscow, 1969), p.297.

14 This, of course, contradicted Lenin's earlier assessment where the proletarian revolutions in the highly industrialized Western countries were to become the decisive elements in the communist bid for world revolution.

15 On one occasion Lenin stated that, "We will apply all our forces to become close to and to unite with the Mongols, the Persians, the Indians and the Egyptians. We consider it to be our obligation and to our interest to do this because otherwise socialism (communism) in Europe would be unstable." V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, vol.23 (Moscow, 1964), p.67.
The new strategy called for bourgeois democratic revolution in the East which was to be carried out against the colonial powers. In this context the polemics between Lenin and M.N. Roy is quite fascinating. In his colonial theses presented to the Second World Congress of the Communist International that met in Moscow (July 19-August 7, 1920), Lenin came out with the new postulate according to which the nationalist movements in Asia, led by the bourgeois revolutionaries, were to be given support by the working class not only because they created the internal conditions necessary for capitalist (and the socialist) development but also because they were directed against the imperialist powers. Developing his ideas, Lenin emphasised that the Comintern policy in colonial and backward countries involved three steps:

(1) We must ... form independent cadres of fighters of Party organisations in all colonies and backward countries.

(2) We must ... carry on propaganda in favour of organising peasant Soviets and strive to adopt them to pre-capitalist conditions.

16 Their differences centred around three crucial issues: The assessment of the level of economic development in the colonies; the role of the bourgeoisie in relation to imperialism in the context of prevailing level of production relations in the colonies; and finally, the assessment of the revolutionary potential in the colonies and the tactical line of action to be pursued in relation to colonial bourgeoisie.
(3) The Communist International must lay down and
give the theoretical grounds for the proposition
that with the aid of the proletariat of the most
advanced countries, the backward countries may
pass to the Soviet system and after passing
through a definite stage of development to communism,
without passing through the capitalist stage of
development. 17

Lenin acknowledged that initially the national movements
in the developing areas would usually have a bourgeois character.
Nevertheless, he enthusiastically endorsed the temporary co-
operation with them, provided that the proletarian movement
maintains its sense of identity and independence of action.
Furthermore, the Comintern must not permit itself to be
overshadowed by any of these bourgeois national movements.

"... the Communist International must support bourgeois
democratic national movements in colonial and backward
countries only on the condition that the elements of future
proletarian parties existing in all backward countries which
are not merely communists in name, shall be grouped together
and trained to appreciate their special tasks, viz., the tasks
of fighting the bourgeois democratic movements within their
own nations; the Communist International must enter into a

17 V.I. Lenin, Selected Works (New York, 1938), vol.10,
p.243.
temporary alliance with bourgeois democracy in colonial and backward countries, but must not merge with it, and must unconditionally preserve the independence of the proletarian movement even in its most rudimentary form.\textsuperscript{18} In contrast, Roy's supplementary thesis "written mainly from the point of view of the situation in India", placed greater emphasis on the native proletariat. He pointed out that to support the national liberation movements in the colonies and semi-colonies would merely amount to supporting the bourgeoisie against the working mass of these countries. He pleaded that the foremost and revolutionary task of the Comintern was to encourage the formation of communist parties, and to help the communists take over the leadership of the national movements from the bourgeoisie. The communist movement in the colonies must remain separate from the bourgeois democratic movement, must struggle only for the class interests of the masses and must be the exclusive recipient of Comintern aid.\textsuperscript{19}

After prolonged debates regarding the question of strategy and tactics to be followed by the Comintern towards the nationalist struggle in the colonial countries, led by the national bourgeoisie, the theses of both were approved

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p.233.

by the Congress. However, it was Lenin's thesis that provided the theoretical bedrock for the Comintern's policy towards the nationalist struggles in the colonies and semi-colonies. The subsequent Baku Congress of September 1920 (the First Congress of the Peoples of the East) and Moscow Congress of January 1922 (the First Congress of the Toilers of the Far East) gave clarion call to the Eastern people to lend support and ally with Soviet Russia against the imperialist forces. At the Third Congress of the Comintern in June 1921, Lenin spoke of the colonial peoples becoming "an active factor in world politics and in the revolutionary destruction of imperialism. British India is at the head of these countries and these revolutions are maturing in proportion to the increase in the brutal terrorism of the British, who, with ever greater frequency resort to massacres (Amritsar), public flogging, etc."20

Under the new guidelines, that emerged out of the Second Congress and the following sessions, collaboration with the bourgeoisie became the basic line valid for the whole of the East, and the communist parties were asked to forge a common front with the national bourgeoisie against imperialism. But this tactical alliance did not produce the desired results as the first serious setback

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to the Comintern policy occurred when the United Front between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Kuomintang (KMT) collapsed in April 1927.

After the split in the CCP-KMT alliance, a dilemma arose as to whether to support the nationalist struggles in the colonies where the 'national bourgeoisie' was the vanguard. The answer to this complex question was provided in 1928 by the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, and in 1929 by the executive committee of the same organisation which ruled that the fight should be directed not only against the colonial powers but also against the national bourgeoisie which, according to them, "had come to terms with imperialists". After this decision, Gandhi and Nehru, considered to be the "leading representatives of national bourgeoisie", became the ideological targets of the Soviet Union. The policy change of the Comintern was clearly reflected in the thesis on "The Revolutionary Movement in Colonial and Semi-Colonial Countries". As it stated:

"It is absolutely essential that the communist parties in these countries should, from the very outset, demarcate themselves in the most clear-cut fashion both politically and organisationally, from all petty bourgeoisie groups and parties. In so far as the needs of the revolutionary struggle demand it, temporary cooperation is permissible, and in certain circumstances even
a temporary alliance between the Communist Party and the national revolutionary movement, provided the latter is a genuine revolutionary movement."

Regarding the position of the Indian leaders, the Comintern's approach was to "unmask reformism of the Indian National Congress, and in opposition to all the talk of the Swarajists, Gandhists, etc., about passive resistance advance the irreconcilable slogan of armed struggle for the emancipation of the country and the expulsion of the imperialists." Elaborating the "correct tactics" to be pursued in the struggle against such 'national reformist' parties such as Swarajists and the Gandhists, the theses stated:

"These parties have more than once betrayed the national liberation struggle, but they have not yet finally passed over, like the Kuomintang, to the counter-revolutionary camp. There is no doubt that they will do this later on, but at present they are particularly dangerous precisely because their real philosophy has not yet been exposed in the eyes of the masses.... If the communists do not succeed at this stage in shaking the faith of the masses in the bourgeois national reformist

22 Ibid., p.544.
leadership of the national movement, then in the next advance of the revolutionary wave this leadership will represent an enormous danger for the revolution -- It is necessary to expose the half-heartedness and vacillation of these leaders in the national struggle, their bargainings and attempts to reach a compromise with British imperialism, their empty nationalist phraseology."23

For a little more than five years, opposition to Gandhism and other independence movements, not affiliated with the Communist Party of India, remained the leitmotif of the Soviet Union's India policy.

The political situation of the West and particularly the rise of fascism prompted the Soviet leaders to revise their policies toward the national bourgeoisie. Till the rise of fascism in Europe, Marxist-Leninists had counterposed socialist democracy to bourgeois democracy. It was in the struggle against fascism that for the first time they vehemently defended bourgeois democracy and put forward the perspective of alliance with the forces of bourgeois democracy under the slogans of "popular fronts" or "united national fronts" to develop the people's movements as

23 Ibid., p.541. Gandhism, according to the Sixth Congress, was originally the ideology of the radical petty bourgeois movement which, however, later on, converted itself to the service of the big bourgeois.
distinguished from the class movements of the proletariat against the bourgeois democracy under the leadership of the communist parties. As a result, they appealed to the communist parties in these countries to support the progressive forces like Congress which was unlike the previous practice of isolation.

The implications of the new Comintern line in the form of a concrete policy were worked out by R.P. Dutt and Bradley in the "Dutt-Bradley thesis" of February 1936. According to them: "The National Congress can play a great part and foremost part in the work of realising the anti-imperialist front. It is even possible that the National Congress, by further transformation of its organisation and programme, may become the form of realisation of the anti-imperialist people's front; for it is the reality that matters, not the move." They argued, "The Indian National Congress has undoubtedly achieved a gigantic task in uniting wide forces of the Indian people for the national struggle and remains today the principal existing mass organisation of many diverse elements seeking national liberation. Nothing should be allowed to weaken the degree of unity that has been achieved through the National Congress."25


25 Ibid.
During the Second World War, the Soviet attitude toward the nationalist movement was largely shaped by the fast changes in the international situation and the formation of war-time alliance (USSR-US-UK) against the Nazis. For the Soviet Union, fascism had become the *hate-noire* of international communism. The German invasion of Russia in 1941 forced the Indian communists to play down their opposition to British government in common support of what had suddenly become a 'people's war'. Thus allied for the first time, the communists placed themselves in a position of opposition to the Indian National Congress, Socialist Party and the Indian public opinion generally. As a result of their collaboration with the imperial authorities, the communists at the war's end were isolated from the nationalist movement.26

**Anti-Imperialist Struggle in India and China: Mutual Fraternity**

The aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution witnessed eruption of intense nationalist struggles in China and India, though characteristically in different ways. However, both the countries had mutual sympathies for each other as the common cause was 'anti-imperialism'. Their solidarity against foreign imperialism was manifest in the pronouncements...
of the leaders of the two countries as well as in the cultural contacts. At the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities, held in Brussels in February 1927, the delegates of both countries denounced the British use of Indian troops to further British imperialistic aspiration in China. A joint declaration by the delegates of the two countries stated that "for more than three thousand years the people of India and China" had been united "by the most intimate cultural ties". "From the days of Buddha to the end of Moghul period and the beginning of British domination in India, this friendly intercourse continued uninterrupted", it asserted. 27 The Indian National Congress, at its annual session held in Madras in 1927, protested against the dispatch of Indian soldiers by the Government of India to suppress the Chinese nationalist movement. During the Japanese aggression against China in the thirties, India's sympathy was with the Chinese people. It was echoed in Congress Party resolutions, passed from time to time, and in the observance of 'China Day' throughout the country on 26 September 1937.

In August 1937, when British Government decided to send two army units to China, Congress outrightly opposed the decision. In a message, Nehru, the Congress President, said: "It is stated that Indian troops have been sent to Shanghai to protect interests there. What these Indian interests are, few

27 India quarterly (Delhi), 1 (1927), p.207.
people seem to know and it is manifest that the interests to be protected are British imperialist interests... it is a thin end of the wedge and might lead us to all manners of unforeseen entanglements. It might indeed lead us unwittingly to war. In Far Eastern conflict our sympathies are inevitably with China and we wish her people success in maintaining their freedom against imperialist aggression. But in this international game we cannot allow our manpower and resources to be used as pawns by others." During his war-time trip to China in August 1939, Nehru paid laudatory tributes to the brave people of China and emphasized the India-China cooperation as the key to world peace and freedom. In his words:

"I spent less than two weeks in Free China but these two weeks were memorable ones both personally for me and for the future relations of India and China. I found to my joy, that my desire that China and India should draw closer to each other was fully reciprocated by China's leaders, and more especially by that great man who has become the symbol of China's unity and her determination to be free. I met Marshall Chiang Kai-shek and Madame Chiang many times and we discussed the present and future of our respective countries. I returned to India an

even greater admirer of China and the Chinese people than I had been previously, and I could not imagine that any adverse fate could break the spirit of these ancient people, who had grown so young again. 29

Distinguished Indians like Tagore, Radhakrishnan, etc., during their visits to China, highly admired the determination of the Chinese people's united struggle against the imperialist powers.

Though India's relations with Nationalist China had by and large been friendly, Indian leaders considered Chinese communists to be more organised and dedicated to the people's cause than the nationalists. 30 Nehru discouraged Chiang Kai-shek's endeavour to solicit Asian cooperation for fighting the communists at home. 31 It is a fact that Nehru never appreciated the dictatorial and totalitarian behaviour of the nationalist regime. To quote him, "I did gather, however, that it was not a very democratic body, though it calls itself democratic." 32


30 This is evident from Dr. Atal's, the Chief of Medical Mission sent by the Indian National Congress, preference to work with the communists in Yenan and Sian, for which message of gratitude was received from Mao and not from the Nationalist Government. It is also clear in Dr. Radhakrishnan's appraisal in 1944 of the communist leaders as true Chinese "patriots", K.B. Vaidya, And Now China (Bombay, 1945), pp.16-7.


32 Jawaharlal Nehru, China, Spain and the War (Allahabad, 1940), pp.21-53.
Nevertheless, he expressed concern for the independence of China as well as India and wanted these two great countries of Asia to be friendly to each other. "There can be no stable order or effective cooperation in the world, if China and India are ignored; and relatively weak though they might be today, they are not so weak as to submit to any such treatment," he said. With the coming of World War II, the British government declared India's participation in the war against the Axis powers. The Congress protested against the unilateral act and refused its cooperation in the war effort. At the same time, it reaffirmed its solidarity with the people of China. In contrast, the Nationalist China wanted India to participate in the British war effort.

With the end of World War II and the gradual transfer of power to India, a conference of Asian Relations was convened in New Delhi in 1947, to which China was invited. Surprisingly, the Kuomintang delegates strongly objected to the display of a map of Asia in which Tibet was shown to be a territory outside China. Besides, the lukewarm attitude exhibited by Chiang on the issue of Indonesia and Kashmir in particular, and Asian freedom movements in general, was a matter of jolt to India's initiative for bringing the neighbouring countries together.

33 Atlantic Monthly (Massachusetts), April 1940.

34 See, W.F. Van Eekelen, Indian Foreign Policy and the Border Dispute with China (The Hague, 1964), pp. 25-6.
India's goodwill gestures and friendly attitude towards the Chinese people in pre-liberation period was not reciprocated by China with equal mood and momentum. Even the Chinese communist leaders like Mao and Zhou Enlai sometimes showed less enthusiasm to the method of India's independence movement. In 1946 Mao reportedly told Edgar Snow that India could liberate itself only by following the Chinese example.  

**Soviet and Chinese Assessment of India's Independence**

When India won independence, the international environment was marked by intense rivalry between the cold war protagonists. Both the United States and the Soviet Union were at loggerheads in their bid to contain the diametrically opposite ideologies. The proclamation of the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan by America was a challenge to the Soviet bloc. As a result, the Soviet Union enunciated the doctrine of "two camps", and its policy towards the non-communist world became more doctrinaire, militant and aggressive.

Zhadnov, the Soviet Communist Party Secretary, while affirming

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the celebrated Leninist-Stalinist doctrine of "two camps", stressed that a world revolutionary situation then existed and proclaimed that all communist parties had to go over to the offensive. Soon after India got independence, Nehru, the chief architect of India's foreign policy, spelled out India's determination not to take any side and launched the policy of nonalignment. No doubt, it stood antithetical to the doctrine of "two camps". In a major foreign policy speech addressed to the Parliament, he stated:

"We have sought to avoid foreign entanglements by not joining one bloc or the other. The natural result has been that neither of these big blocs looks on us with favour.... we propose to keep on the closest terms of friendship with all countries unless they themselves create difficulties. We shall be friends with America and intend to cooperate with them. We intend also to cooperate fully with the Soviet Union." 37

Elaborating the possible dangerous implications involved in identifying with one group or other, Nehru said:

"If by any chance we align ourselves definitely with one power group, we may perhaps, from one point of view, do some good. But I have not the shadow of a doubt that from a larger point of view, not only of India but of

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world peace, it will do harm. Because then we lose that tremendous vantage ground that we have of using such influence as we possess in the cause of world peace.” 38

However, India's nonaligned policy came under severe criticism by the Soviet Union. First of all, the Soviets refused to recognize India as a truly independent sovereign state. Secondly, they viewed the Indian leaders as 'reactionary' and in the "camp of imperialism". The Soviet assessment of new India was clearly reflected in an elaborate article written by E.M. Zhuknov, a Soviet Indologist, where he denounced Nehru's policy of nonalignment as an "imperialist device to slander the USSR by placing it (Russia) on the same level with American imperialism". He regarded India as a 'semi-colony' whose 'bourgeois' leaders were betraying her real interests. India's association with the Commonwealth, in fact, increased their distrust, and her policy of non-alignment, according to them, was "to justify a policy of collaboration with English capitalism, a policy of establishing close contact between the Indian bourgeois and English capitalism." 39 Characterising India as a 'semi-colony', another Soviet indologist further advanced his

38 Ibid., p.39.
39 Bolshevik (Moscow), December 1947.
arguments:

"The formal proclamation of dominion status for India has not altered the fact that the key economic position remains in the British hands... In foreign policy India is being progressively drawn into the orbit of the Anglo-American bloc... The reactionary home policy of the Congress is thus in complete line with its foreign policy." 40

It is quite clear from the Soviet assessment, that India continued to remain a 'semi-colony' from the Soviet perspective, and India had not yet become independent either politically or economically. The reason, put forward by the Soviet commentators, was that the "Indian capitalists and their British counterparts had entered into a kind of convenient arrangement for exploiting the Indian masses." 41 The ideological war between the two rival groups of cold war had its fall-out all over the world. Communist efforts concentrated on building up the strength of local parties and on fomenting internal unrest against "bourgeois-capitalist" governments. During this period, in China, the communists were on the verge of dethroning the nationalist regime from power. It further provided a fillip to the communist parties of the neighbouring countries to go for armed insurrections.


41 For a comprehensive analysis of this point, Overstreet and Windoiller, Communism in India (Berkeley, 1959), ch.12; John H. Kautsky, Moscow and the Communist Party of India (New York, 1956).
Following the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in October 1949, the Chinese leadership leaned towards the Soviet camp and perceived the existing international situation in the line of Soviet Weltanschauung. As a logical outcome, their assessment of free India's democratic experimentation and her pursuit of nonaligned policy was in conformity with the Soviet evaluation of India. Dubbing India as the "running dog of Anglo-US imperialists" and characterizing the policy of nonalignment as a "camouflage for alignment with imperialism", Mao asserted in June 1949 that "... sitting on the fence will not do nor is there a third road.... we oppose the illusions about a third road." 42 The very Indian independence, granted by the Labour Government, was denounced as "illusory and fake", 43 and her nonaligned policy was criticised as "nothing but deception, intentional and otherwise." 44 Despite the fact that India was the second non-communist country to recognize the PRC, China adopted a hostile attitude toward newly independent India. China not only became critical of India's foreign policy but also encouraged the Communist Party of India (CPI) to follow

43 World Culture, 16 September 1949.
Maoist path of armed revolution. In his message to the Secretary-General of the CPI, Mao underlined the similarities of the situation prevailing in India and China and anticipated the prospects of revolution in India. In his words:

"(India's) fate in the past and her path in the future are similar to those of China on many points. I firmly believe that relying on the brave Communist Party of India and the unity and struggle of all Indian patriots, India certainly will not long remain under the yoke of imperialism and its collaborators. Like free China, a free India will one day emerge in the world as a member of the Socialist and People's Democratic family; that day will end the imperialist reactionary era in the history of mankind."

In outlining the Maoist path, Liu Shaoqi emphasized the role of the armed struggles in national liberation wars in colonial countries:

"..... the armed struggle of the colonial and semi-colonial peoples ... are as mighty a force in strengthening and defending world peace as is the victory of the Chinese People's War of Liberation.... The fighters of the national liberation wars in Vietnam, Burma, Indonesia, Malaya and the Philippines are acting entirely correctly.... In the present circumstances

as shown by the experience of China, armed resistance to the imperialist plunders is the most effective form of the national liberation struggle in colonial countries."^46

The appearance of Liu's speech in the Cominform journal documented Moscow's authoritative approval of the 'Chinese path' for communist parties in underdeveloped countries. While challenging the universality of the Soviet revolutionary system, the Chinese leaders tried to project the relevance of their own model to the colonial countries on the ground that the socio-economic structures of these countries were similar to that of China. They did not seem to leave any scope for the revolutionaries to seek their own path to adapt the Marxist-Leninist framework to the special conditions prevailing in their respective countries. The strategy was accepted by the Indian communists and, as a result, armed uprisings took place in the southern part of India, led by the radicals.\(^47\)

This was a strategy which closely befitted Russian foreign policy of the cold war period. However, the initial militant postures by China towards the newly independent countries in

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^46 For a Lasting Peace, For a People's Democracy, 30 December 1949, p.2.

^47 The CPI under Ranadive was the chief advocate of the CCP line. CCP extended its support to the Telangana revolt in September 1949 which was considered to be a "triumph of Mao Tse-tung's Thought".
general, and India in particular, did bring a serious setback to their capacity to manipulate Asian politics. No doubt, the Soviet Union endorsed the 'Chinese path' for the Indian revolutionaries, but when it was found that the "objective condition" was not at all conducive to the Indian climate, it warned that it would be "risky to regard the Chinese revolution as some kind of 'stereotype' for people's democratic revolution in other countries of Asia." Ultimately, the CPI had to abandon the Chinese form of guerrilla warfare and followed the Soviet line. Finally, in January 1951, Moscow's new guidance arrived in an open letter from R.P. Dutt, and the CPI was asked to "build the peace movement and broad democratic front" since Nehru's foreign policy was a "very important development in international affairs." The very failure of the Chinese practice in India was a tactical victory for the Soviet Union. Besides, it had serious implications as far as the future Sino-Soviet relation was concerned.


Retrospectively, the Soviet endorsement of the Chinese model for the underdeveloped areas was motivated to win over the Chinese friendship and cooperation. The Soviets knew that the Chinese were destined to be economically and militarily weak for some more years to come, which would automatically prevent any effective expansion of their influence in the underdeveloped countries. The Soviets, presumably, also knew that the main area of Chinese interest for centuries had been South-East-Asia and it would be difficult to prevent China from exercising some sort of influence there. However, they were keen to retain South Asia with India, Afghanistan and points West as an exclusive Soviet sphere of influence. See Robert H. Donaldson, Soviet Policy Towards India : Ideology and Strategy (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), p.152.
scored a point over Mao's model. The lack of objectivity in
Beijing's assessment of the Indian situation and the subsequent
acceptance of Soviet line by the Indian communists ultimately
found expression in their differences over India. This explains
that even at that early stage the Soviet Union was anxious to
keep India free from influence of China.

Despite Chinese indifference toward India and the Soviet
Union's gloomy assessment of Nehru's foreign policy, India
tried to cultivate good relations with both. The initial
years of post-independent period witnessed India's active and
enthusiastic participation in the international forums to
diffuse the crisis situation and to preserve world peace.
While doing so, India adhered to an independent foreign policy.
Time and again, Nehru emphasized that India would not play a
'second fiddle' to anyone, no matter what reaction its inde-
pendent policy provoked abroad.

On the question of Tibet, India took a cautious step.
Nehru, though, described as 'deplorable' the Chinese use of
force in Tibet, and a sharp exchange of notes between the two
governments followed.\(^5\) India valued the friendship with China
as more important than harping on the Tibetan issue. When the
question of Tibet's appeal to the UN for help against Chinese
aggression came up for discussion for its inclusion in the

\(^{51}\) For the text of the notes, Ling Nai-min, *Tibetan
agenda of the General Assembly, India maintained 'that the matter be settled between Tibet and China themselves'. But the Chinese took it other way round, accused India of unwarranted interference, and claimed that the policy of the Indian government was "affected by foreign influences hostile to China in Tibet." India preferred not to take the initiative in internationalizing the Tibetan question, though this meant sacrificing some of her own interests.

The role played by India as conciliator during the Korean crisis in 1950 was an ideal instance where India followed an independent policy which, subsequently, led the Chinese policymakers to amend their views regarding India. When China intervened in the Korean war, India refused to provide support to the UN resolution which condemned Beijing as aggressor. Besides, India opposed the crossing of the 38th Parallel by

52 General Assembly Official Records (GAOR), 73rd meeting (24 November 1950), p.19. In an interview with the Reuter's Correspondent, Nehru stated that the Chinese attack on Tibet was not the expression of aggressive intentions but was based on Beijing's need, though unjustified apprehension of American hostility. M.R. Masani, "The Communist Party of India", Pacific Affairs (Vancouver), March 1951, p.36.


54 The critics charged the Indian Government with ignoring the strategic importance of Tibet as an autonomous buffer between India and China. They felt that China's imposition of its effective control on Tibet had made India's borders vulnerable to a direct threat from China. Sardar Patel was the leading representative of this line of thinking. See his letter to Nehru of 7 November 1950 in Durga Das, ed., Sardar Patel's Correspondence, 1945-50 (Ahmedabad, 1974), vol.10, pp.335-41.
the UN armies in October 1950 as well as the passage of the UN 'Acheson Plan' for collective security through the UN Assembly.

**China's Admission into the UN**

India not only recognised the PRC but also strongly advocated her admission into the world body. Despite the Chinese 'invasion' of Tibet and the Chinese action in Korea, India reaffirmed that China wanted peace and must not be isolated. At the opening meeting of the 5th session of the UN General Assembly, the Indian delegation moved a resolution supporting the cause of the Chinese people.\(^{55}\) Nehru compared the non-recognition of China by Western countries to the period following the Russian revolution of 1917:

"Now, I think that a very wrong step was taken by trying to suppress the Soviet Union, cut it off, isolate it and have a so-called cordon sanitaire around it. That failed, but it turned the Soviet Union into a bitter opponent of Western countries; and the memory of that isolation survives in Russia. It will be a very dangerous thing to repeat that experiment in China, more dangerous than it was because conditions were different. If we force

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\(^{55}\) For the text of the Indian resolution, UN GAOR, Fifth Session, 277th Plenary meeting (19 September 1950), p.2.
China into a kind of isolation, cut it off from
the great part of the world, the consequences of
that to the rest of the world will not be good.
China will suffer, of course, but the world is so
constituted that the rest of the world will suffer
as well."

Despite persistent pressure from the USA, India refused
to sign the Japanese Peace Treaty on the ground that mainland
China, one of the major victims of Japanese aggression during
the Second World War, had refused to accept the American draft
treaty.

Changing Soviet-Chinese Attitude Towards India

Chinese attitude towards India showed signs of improve-
ment from blind hostility to better cognition, when it became
apparent that Nehru's views on different issues were by no
means identical to those of the Western camp. "In 1950,
Nehru got from Beijing what he had failed to get from Moscow
since 1947 - recognition of Indian independence as a positive
force and of himself and his regime as a progressive element
playing a constructive role for international peace and freedom."

56 Norman Cousins, Talks with Nehru (London, 1951),
pp.54-55.

57 Bhabani Sen Gupta, The Fulcrum of Asia: Relations
Among China, India, Pakistan and the USSR (N.Y.,
People's China, on 1 January 1951, recognised the Indian national liberation as part of the great tide of liberation sweeping over Asia. Besides, Mao's speech on 26 January 1951 conveyed more than mere diplomatic courtesy: "The Indian nation is a great nation and the Indian people is an excellent people. For thousands of years excellent friendship has existed between these two nations, China and India, and between the two people of these two countries. Today in celebrating the national Day of India, we hope that the two nations, China and India, will continue to unite together to strive for peace. People all over the world need peace, only a few people want war. India, China, the Soviet Union and all other peace-loving countries and people unite together to strive for peace in the Far East and the whole world."58

Chinese change in attitude was reflected in the warm welcome of Indian visitors. An unofficial goodwill mission, led by Pandit Sunderlal, went to China in 1951, followed by an official delegation, led by Mrs. Vijaylaxmi Pandit, the very next year. Important trade transactions also took place during these days.59 Moreover, on the larger front, both India

58 People's China (Beijing), 16 February 1951, p.29.

59 Beginning with the Rice-Jute Barter Agreement announced on 1 January 1951, a number of friendly gestures were made by both the countries. Besides, the signing of an agreement between India and China on 22 May 1951 by which the latter agreed to supply 40,000 tons of millet to the former and the signing of another agreement between the two countries on 26 May 1952 in which China agreed to give 100,000 metric tons of rice to India.
and China were agreed on the urgent need for limiting U.S. advance into Asia. Towards 1953, India's differences with the US were accentuated mainly due to the latter's growing friendship with Pakistan. Speculations over the impending military pact between the US and Pakistan disturbed the Indian policy-makers. Thus, Sino-Indian amity became possible because of a better understanding of each other and a wider convergence of interests. India's refusal to sign the Japanese Peace Treaty was warmly received by the Chinese media. The People's Daily editorial welcomed India's decision and expressed the view that such an action proved "that age was past when imperialist governments can do whatever they please." 60 New Delhi was no longer considered tied to the 'apron strings of the West' and Nehru was no longer considered as the 'running dog of imperialism'.

India's nonaligned policy in the East-West cold war, probably, had an impact on Stalin who began to re-examine Soviet foreign policy in the light of international changes that had come about since the beginning of the cold war. In early 1952, two Soviet scholars discovered the importance of the 'national bourgeois' in India for the foreign policy interests of the Soviet Union. 61 According to them, "In the

60 People's China, 10 September 1957.

epoch of imperialism, the national bourgeoisie can play under certain conditions a relatively progressive role in colonial and dependent countries, in so far as it participates in the national liberation struggle against foreign oppression and feudal survivals. This implies in our days to the national bourgeoisie of India and some other colonial and dependent countries which fight for their national independence. The change in Soviet perception of India became evident at the 19th Congress of the CPSU in October of that year. In his report on the international situation, Malenkov implied that the Soviet Union would recognise India's nonaligned policy. Implications of Soviet change toward India came gradually.

In the Spring of 1951, the Soviet offer of 50,000 tons of wheat for famine relief was a surprise, since it was in sharp contrast to the situation in 1946 when she ignored a similar opportunity to impress Indian opinion. The policy shift in Soviet strategy first came when Stalin's Economic Problems of Socialism declared to review its trade policy towards the area outside 'socialist world market'. An International Industrial Exhibition, which opened in Bombay in January 1952.

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63 Donaldson, n.50, p.109.
offered further evidence of growing Soviet bloc interest in economic relations with South and South East Asia. The Russians, who seldom participated in trade fairs or exhibitions outside the communist bloc, indicated, by their presence at Bombay fair, interest in expanding trade relations with the newly independent countries. In the subsequent International Economic Conference, opened in Moscow in early April 1952, there was clear evidence that the Soviet bloc was looking to the East for trade contacts.

Thus, the Soviet adoption of an activist economic policy toward India was part of her positive reassessment of the newly-liberated nonaligned nations which could be a counterpoise to Western imperialists. At the political level, some events might be viewed as a change in Stalin's mind. His granting an interview to Indian Ambassador, Dr. Radhakrishnan, on 5 April 1952, on the eve of latter's relinquishing office, and the quick and immediate acceptance of a new Ambassador, K.P.S. Menon, could be seen as seeds of rapprochement between

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65 Pravda, 7 January 1952, p.3. in Oesp, vol.4, no.1, p.11.

66 "We are convinced", observed the Czech spokesman, Otakar Pohl, "not only that two different social systems can peacefully exist side by side, but also that it is possible to have peaceful cooperation between them, expressed in trade relations." See International Economic Conference (Moscow, 1952), p.52.
the two countries. In July 1952, a large Soviet delegation arrived in India to participate in the inaugural ceremony of the Indo-Soviet Cultural Society. The leader of the Soviet delegation, Nikolai Tikhonov, the present Prime Minister of the Soviet Union, welcomed the "peace policy" of the Indian government, and held the view that "without the active participation" of the "great Indian people", the struggle for peace was not possible.67