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# I

## A PRINCIPLED AND BENEFICENT RELATIONSHIP

The 60th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, just celebrated everywhere, has been a resplendent jubilee marking an epochal event in world history. This was preceded in August 1977 by the celebration of the 30th anniversary of India's independence which had meant the end of imperialist domination over the largest colonial country and hastened the process, not entirely completed still, of national liberation. Yet another 1977 jubilee, of considerable historical significance, was the commemoration, last April, of the 30th anniversary of the institution of diplomatic relations between India and the Soviet Union, both countries sensible of the importance of the occasion and appropriately celebrating it with some *eclat*.

The completion of three decades of state relationship, following upon the friendship and proximity of spirit between our two peoples which the erstwhile imperialist subjugators of India had failed to thwart, is in its own right a significant event and by no means only a chronological item in history. Reflection on it will help a better understanding of the beneficent impact of Indo-Soviet amity on our two countries and on world politics in general and

also obtain a perspective picture of its role in the future.

The formal declaration of Indian independence was made on August 15, 1947. The fact that full-fledged diplomatic relations could be set up with the Soviet Union even before that event appears to have no precedent and is proof of the friendliness which had grown earlier between the two countries in spite of the many barriers then deliberately and craftily placed by imperialist rule over India. In his very first broadcast as head of the Interim Government on September 7, 1946, Jawaharlal Nehru had greeted the Soviet Union which, he said, "carries a vast responsibility for shaping world events", and added that "as neighbours in Asia, we shall have to undertake many common tasks and much to do with each other." One is likely to forget the atmosphere those days, for it needed courage to make this statement at a point of time when the United States of America, with its then monopoly of the atomic secret, and with Britain, still India's political mentor, in its train, had unleashed what was called the "cold war" against the Soviet Union, but Jawaharlal Nehru, close analyst as he always was of world trends, knew and assessed correctly what India should seek to do for furthering the cause of freedom and of peace for all mankind.

Some months previously, the Soviet Union had sent 14 delegates from its Asian republics to the first Asian Relations Conference held at New Delhi (March-April 1946). Nehru inaugurated it and welcomed the Soviet delegates as "friends from the Soviet republics of Asia which have advanced so rapidly in our generation and which have so many lessons to teach us." Some nine months later, in January 1947, a delegation from the Soviet Academy of Sciences came, on invitation sent at the instance of Nehru,

to the session of the Indian Science Congress where, on January 7, he told the guests that "once diplomatic relations are established, the door will be opened for closer contacts in many fields of beneficent human activity." One can see, in retrospect, how these were prophetic and pregnant words which have come true in deeds.

The April 1947 announcement of Indo-Soviet diplomatic relations touched India's heart and was hailed by Delhi's *Hindustan Times*, then edited by the Mahatma's son, Devadas Gandhi, as "a significant recognition of the 'de facto' independence of India even in advance of her formal constitutional independence." It further commented that "it goes without saying that the Indian people have been profoundly stirred by the epoch-making Russian Revolution", and expressed the hope that by "the exchange of accurate information between the two countries" and the mutual intercourse also of scientists and technicians "the applicability of Russian experience to Indian economic conditions" could be examined.

Jawaharlal Nehru and Rabindranath Tagore, visiting the Soviet Union in 1927 and 1930 respectively, had rejoiced to report the truly epic endeavour of that country to build a new society rid of exploitation over a sixth of the earth's surface in a multi-racial, multi-lingual, multi-religious stretch across Europe and Asia. A great stalwart of the freedom struggle in southern India E.V. Ramaswami Naicker, ('Evoo') spokesman of the disinherited, travelled secretly to the USSR through Odessa in the late '20s and came back highly impressed. Indeed, the national liberation movement in India had come naturally to think of the Soviet Union as a friend in the struggle against imperialism. Great all-India leaders like Tilak, Gandhi, Lajpat Rai had not failed to see in the

Soviet Union an ally in that struggle.

Though ideologically, but not emotionally, distant from socialism, Mahatma Gandhi did not hesitate to see behind "the Bolshevik ideal" the nobility and sacrifice of innumerable people, the foremost among them being the great Lenin, which, he felt, "would inevitably bear fruit." When the British Viceroy of India, Lord Chelmsford, had appealed to him to desist from struggle and to cooperate with the government to repel what was called the "Bolshevik threat", he rejoined that he "never believed in the Bolshevik bogey" and would not walk into the trap. No wonder the Montagu-Chelmsford report (1918) on constitutional changes in India was constrained to admit that "the revolution in Russia was regarded in India as a triumph over despotism. . . (and) has given impetus to Indian political reforms."

The Soviet declaration, as soon as state power was seized, in support of peace, freedom and self-determination of all peoples had exhilarated Indian freedom fighters. Lenin's celebrated call, "Workers of all countries and all oppressed peoples unite!", stirred Asia and stressed the alliance between the movement for socialism and that for national liberation. After his Soviet visit, Jawaharlal Nehru said in 1928 that the Asian constituents of the Soviet Union had just and generous treatment, for the Russian Revolution had gone to the East entirely as an equal and not by any means as a conqueror or a superior racial element.

When one remembers this essential background, one understands why India's freedom movement, even before independence, largely shared the Soviet stand and extended sympathy and support to all victims of fascism-cum-imperialism in Abyssinia, Spain, China, Palestine and

Czechoslovakia during the '30s. Even in 1942, when India fought British rule during world War II at its height, the Congress emphasised that "the freedom of Russia", then endangered, was "precious" and must be upheld, and Nehru, in particular, full-throatedly supported the Soviets' fight against fascist aggression.

After freedom, India and the Soviet Union found themselves working together in the United Nations on such issues as racialism in South Africa, the continuing colonialism in Indonesia, administration of trust territories, and questions of world peace generally. Thus, a close correspondence of views on major international issues accelerated cooperation and mutual respect. During the Korean war, the Soviet Union strongly supported Jawaharlal Nehru's thoughtful initiatives for a settlement—this was evidence of Moscow's high estimation of India's peaceful foreign policy. When, in 1954-1955, the Five Principals (*Panchsheel*) came to be evolved, the Soviets complimented India for her powerful contribution to the cause of safeguarding peace in Asia on the basis of a profound Asian understanding of the coexistence principles, and thereby easing international tensions.

India and the Soviet Union were instrumental in convening the Geneva Conference (1954) after the defeat of France at the hands of the liberation forces in Indo-China. In spite of being kept out of the conference for technical reasons deliberately devised against her, India made a large and qualitatively important contribution to its work. Over the Suez crisis (1956), the two countries jointly played an effective role in averting the threatened war. When Anglo-US aggression took place in Lebanon and Jordan (1958), it was again India and the Soviet Union which moved jointly at international forums like the UN.

They fought consistently and indefatigably to seat the People's Republic of China at the world body. When the Arab-Israeli crisis burst dangerously in May-June 1967, both countries were again found together, calling for the withdrawal of troops from Arab territories and denouncing Israeli aggression.

Every time imperialists made a bid to undermine India's sovereignty and independence and her policy of non-alignment and peace, the Soviets have stood by India. The pressure on India by the formation of aggressive military blocs like SEATO, CENTO and NATO can be said to have been frustrated, largely, by the Soviet Union. On such issues as the problem of Kashmir, the liberation of Portuguese-held territories in India, the Chinese aggression in 1962, the Indo-Pakistan war in 1965, it was the Soviet Union that acted as a true friend and upheld India's stand. On May 15, 1965, the then Indian Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri, very appropriately remarked that Indo-Soviet friendship was based not upon any temporary expedients but upon a genuine realisation that the larger interests of humanity could be served best by the promotion and enlargement of the area of peace and cooperation.

It is common knowledge that trade and economic cooperation between the two countries have played a highly significant role in bringing them together. India's desire to build her own self-reliant economy accorded well with the Soviet Union's policy, laid down creatively by Lenin, of helping to make the economy of the developing countries powerful and truly independent through all possible economic, technical and scientific assistance. Special attention has thus been paid to the construction and consolidation of basic industries in the public sector

in order effectively to overcome the ravages of the old colonial economy. Cooperation between the two countries has brought in new provisions on trade, the mode of payment, industrial collaboration in the true sense (and not the distorted manner of neo-colonialism), the transfer of know-how, the training of specialists and of skilled manpower both in the Soviet Union and at Soviet-aided projects in India, the development of technical consultancy, and various other measures intended to help India rapidly build and fortify her own self-reliant economy. More than 70 projects set up by the Soviets in India and worked, as all reports testify, with a careful regard for India's self-respect as well as self-interest, are witness to this massive phenomenon of genuine international cooperation. At Bhilai and Bokaro, Ranchi and Hardwar, and at so many other centres one can see what Jawaharlal Nehru once called the "new temples" of India—places humming with the work of industrial construction which wipes out the one-time humiliation of subject India as an agrarian hinterland to the metropolitan economy of imperialism. Soviet-aided projects account for 80 per cent of India's iron and steel equipment, 60 per cent of oil, 30 per cent of oil products, 30 per cent of steel and about 20 per cent of electricity. Some 60,000 skilled workers have had Soviet help in special training, about 3,000 Indian specialists having gone through courses and acquired production experience in the Soviet Union. Today, India is one of the 10 top industrialised countries in the world and by launching **Aryabhata** (where, again Soviet help was most valuable) has been able to enter, as it were, the space age. All this has happened because India's friendship is also to the Soviet Union a precious asset which, as Leonid Brezhnev has often declared, the USSR cherishes.

During the last 30 years, thus, India has had many a grim challenge to encounter and many arduous tasks to perform. She has successfully resisted being tied to the chariot-wheels of imperialism in the sphere of foreign policy. Defying the pressure of such leaders of world reaction as the United States' John Foster Dulles, who thundered in the '50s against the principle of non-alignment as "short-sighted and immoral" and did his best to try and encircle India with military-pact blocs—a policy which foisted three wars on the Indian subcontinent—India stuck to her independent foreign policy, the essence of which was non-alignment. At home, India's objective has been a non-exploitative society and socialism in its broadest sense to be achieved through processes that the "West", that is, neo-imperialism, working in many guises would not easily permit. From the Soviets, however, she had consistent sympathy and support; the Leninist imperative of a natural alliance between socialism and national liberation was working, and for the Soviets to assist in the consolidation of India's independence was service also to the cause of world freedom and peace that they had at heart. Thus, the first big dent, so to speak, in the old economic order in India came with the Soviet offer to build a mighty metallurgical plant in Bhilai—as a reputed economist and one-time Union Minister, V.K.R.V. Rao, put it: "If there had been no Bhilai, there would have been no Rourkela or Durgapur", for the "Western" governments, whenever approached by India for help, would lecture her and other under-developed countries about the virtues of letting foreign private investment do the job in their own way for benighted economies which should never hope to be at par with the "advanced" countries of capitalism.

It was against this entire background of increasing Indo-Soviet understanding in world affairs that the first full-scale Industrial Agreement was signed by the two countries (February 1955) and the magnificent iron and steel complex at Bhilai began to come up as the foundation, so to speak, of heavy industry in India's public sector. Nehru's visit to the Soviet Union (June 1955), where he said on parting that he was leaving a part of his heart behind, gave a vivid human orientation to a relationship that was already very far from being cold and diplomatic. The sentiment was warmly reciprocated by the Soviets and there was a genuine feeling on either side that the friendship and cooperation that already shone like a beacon were important not only for the respective peoples but also for the wider cause of world peace and security which could thrive only on the basis of freedom and progress in all countries. The first-born among the countries of socialism, the Soviet Union, and India, the first great country to break away from the shackles of modern imperialism, had come thus to realise how by going ahead together in amity and cooperation they could help themselves and help also the very process of history. Friendly hands stretched, as it were, across the Himalayan mountain barrier were now firmly clasped on either side. India and the Soviets did not, of-course agree on every issue, but in the spirit of true coexistence they worked, in nearly all major spheres, side by side in peace and concord and for the common good.

Let it be stressed and re-stressed that this was no fortuitous happening but was rooted in history. It is a thrill to recall Lenin's description, in the early 20th century, of "the awakening of Asia", and his celebrated averment that "geographically, economically and histo-

rically Russia belongs not only to Europe but also to Asia". The deep traces of the first Russian Revolution (1905) could be seen in the upsurge in Asian countries such as Turkey, Persia, China and also India. It was in 1907 that Lenin welcomed the new phenomenon that "the class-conscious worker in Europe already has comrades in Asia and their number will grow by leaps and bounds". The emergence of the socialist system gave a big fillip to national liberation struggles everywhere, and when World War II ended the advance of the latter came on, as it were, to history's order of the day. Imperialists, now adopting changed tactics, still had hopes of reversing the process and holding onto their hegemony which was badly threatened. Crafty arrangements like the now nearly forgotten "Truman Doctrine" and "Marshall Aid" and "Mutual Security" represented the policy of trick and cajolery and coercion in order to prevent countries that had shaken off colonial subjection from embarking and advancing on the road of independent development. An eminent Gandhian, J.C. Kumarappa, was constrained to warn in 1952: "The USA is proceeding on various plans to entrap the nations by guile, by compulsion, by coercion and financial entanglements". This was the time—not entirely passed yet—when there were more than 500 air, naval and land bases of the United States in every continent, when millions of US troops were stationed overseas, when "projects" and "aids" and spy-rings every where had for their object, as set out in the US Mutual Security Act, "the promotion of the interests of the United States." In the Indian Parliament (September 1954) Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru lashed at SEATO as "an area of potential war" and a "disturbing development". He must have known US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles

bemoaning "the gloomy world situation" represented by the advance of popular forces in many continents in spite of the American "investment" of billions of dollars to ensure obedient vassals, while, as Dulles told the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee (January 15, 1953) with laughable pathos : "The Russians have achieved all their aims without using a single Russian soldier". This was a strange and revealing complaint and a measure of the ignorance in US ruling circles of the power of Marxism whose tenets, perceptively followed, had brought about friendly contacts between the forces of socialism and of national-liberation. India and the Soviet Union meanwhile had decided definitively—and 1955 is, in this regard, a crucial data—that their friendship and cooperation were a most important factor in safeguarding world peace and security and they were resolved to develop and strengthen the relationship on the principled and beneficent foundation that had been laid, as it were, by the process of history.

## II

# INDO-SOVIET TREATY—A NEW DIMENSION OF AMITY

It was entirely on the fitness of things and an example of the unique convergence of immediate and long-term interests of India and the Soviet Union when, on August 9, 1971, the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation came to be concluded. The existing reality of the relationship between the two countries was then, as a result of experience gathered in the meantime, elevated to a new and higher dimension of development by its formalisation in the shape of a solemn international legal document. In its first four articles, fittingly, one finds re-affirmation of the lofty principles and aspirations which had cemented friendship of the two countries in the cause of national liberation, peace and social progress.

That the treaty received ardent applause in India was due to the fact that it was in conformity with the deepest interests of either country. As indicated earlier, the fruits of Indo-Soviet friendship were so happily visible that the desire of consolidating its gains came naturally to our people. It is not that the two countries saw eye to eye on every single international issue. That surely could not be expected since the social systems were different and carried their own presuppositions which could not

always be entirely reconciled. Sometimes, though very rarely, there were pinpricks, but they did not leave a trace, because they were like dust in the balance against the shining advantages flowing from a genuine friendship which never insists on complete and categorical conformity with each other's point of view in every detail. If on very rare occasions there emerged the hint of some slight misgivings, it was only on account of a certain difference in ideological orientation and was easily blown over, without detriment to mutual esteem and cooperation. There were occasions, again extremely rare, when the Soviet effort to improve relations also with Pakistan connoted a certain irritation to India, but again such tension would quickly and entirely abate. India's abstention from signing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, in spite of the Soviets' particular keenness that she joined the signatories, caused no more than a ripple that brought no harm at all to their relationship.

Writing in *Link* magazine (August 15, 1971), Jagjivan Ram, top national leader and presently India's Defence Minister who was also holding the same office then, described the treaty as a move in the right direction—a treaty of peace and a treaty against war, as he called it in meaningful words—adding, in the context of the Bangladesh resurgence at the time, that “I have no doubt that this treaty may work as a positive deterrent to any action which may endanger peace in this part of Asia.” It will be remembered that Western imperialism looked askance at the liberation struggle of Bangladesh, fearing a certain weakening of a state that then generally did its bidding, namely, Pakistan, and fearing even more the emergence of truly independent and effective national forces in the Indian subcontinent. With peculiar arrogance, the US Seventh

Fleet had thus sent its battleship *Enterprise* into the Bay of Bengal, so that India, taking the hint, would withdraw the assistance she was rendering to Bangladesh whose upsurge would then perhaps be condemned to a collapse. The Indo-Soviet Treaty did, of course, have no military terms or trappings—a treaty for peace and *never* for war as it was but India, sure of herself on her own no doubt, drew fresh confidence and assurance from this friendly arrangement with the Soviet Union. As a matter of fact, on the first anniversary of the signing of the treaty (August 9 1972), Jagjivan Ram did not hesitate to affirm that India had been able to liberate Bangladesh partly because of the confidence generated by the conclusion of the Indo-Soviet Treaty. He further stressed its importance by explaining its deeper socio-economic connotation, that poverty was the gravest threat to world peace and progress and that India and the Soviet Union had joined hands to work shoulder to shoulder to solve problems and and to bring about an era of prosperity (see report in *Indian Express*, August 10, 1972).

India's present External Affairs Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, whose eloquence is a byword, spoke powerfully in Parliament on August 10, 1971, fervently welcoming the treaty because, he said, "it provides us a friend—a friend in whom we can repose our confidence and who can be helpful to us in times of crisis." This statement is indeed a remarkable proof of Indo-Soviet friendship and mutual trust having become, in India, a concept that cut across and transcended party and politico-economic differences. While India certainly relies on herself in the main for safeguarding her interests and promoting her standing in the comity of nations, she has never hesitated to acknowledge and affirm the value of Soviet friendship

and the invaluable assistance that has flowed from it, a friendship that has stood the test of time and has been proffered in fair weather and foul, in weal and woe.

India's great international prestige is the creation, no doubt, of her own principled and perceptive policy in world affairs, but the fact that the Soviet Union rated her so highly and often stood by her so powerfully came, in the shape of the treaty, to be impressed on the world. That after Pakistan's plan of retaining power over its eastern wing (Bangladesh) was foiled, steps to heal the wounds that might have fostered in the Indian subcontinent were taken at the Simla meeting (June 1972) and elsewhere was due, doubtless, to India's correct and generous approach to accruing problems but also to the Soviets' friendly interest in an understanding that subserved the needs of peace and development in our region. Countries that hated the guts of an India seeking to move, as she proclaimed to the world, in the socialist direction of her own choosing, or looked at her with the green eye of envy and loathing, learnt also that India, befriended as she was by the Soviet Union and the community of socialist countries, had, willy-nilly, to be treated with heightened respect.

Perhaps one should also emphasise what to the knowledgable is superfluous, namely, that the Indo-Soviet Treaty is in full conformity with the United Nations Charter. The latter document clearly recognises and approves of "regional arrangements or agencies" aimed at the maintenance of international peace and security. The entire tenor of the treaty and its clearly enunciated clauses is such that its operation helps strengthening the friendship and cooperation of all nations. It is the crown and the culmination, so to speak, of the principled and consistent

policy which the two countries have pursued for years.

In Articles I-IV are incorporated the determination of the signatories to strengthen peace in Asia and the world, to halt the arms race and speed towards disarmament, both nuclear and conventional, to wipe out colonialism and racialism in any form by giving all support to the just struggle against the evil, to cooperate with other states to the same end, and to sustain and develop regular meaningful contact of the representatives of the two countries at every level for implementing decisions reached after exchange of views. Not merely through the somewhat necessarily slow-moving and ponderous diplomatic channels but also through personal exchange, as during CPSU General Secretary Brezhnev's historic visit to India in late November 1973, the then Indian Prime Minister's direct dialogue with Moscow, and Prime Minister Morarji Desai's widely hailed visit to the USSR in October 1977, has the implementation of mutually agreed decisions been vitalised and expedited. When, over Bangladesh the Indo-Pakistan war appeared inevitable, for example, the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister N.P. Firyubin came to Delhi on October 22, 1971, for high-level talks in pursuance of the procedure laid down in Article IX of the Treaty. While Article VIII lays down properly that the two countries shall not enter into or participate in any military alliance directed against the other party, Articles IX and X provide that each party should "abstain from providing any assistance to any third party that engages in armed conflict with the other party, and in the event of either party being subjected to an attack or a threat thereof, to enter immediately into mutual consultation in order to remove such threat and to take appropriate effective measures to ensure peace and security of their countries." Following,

thus, on Firyubin's visit, the then External Affairs Minister Swaran Singh assured the Indian people that relevant articles of the treaty would be invoked and India could "count on Soviet support in the event of conflict with Pakistan." The arrival in India of Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Air Force Marshal Kutakov for consultation with his Indian counterpart (October 30) was also a rapid demonstration of Soviet seriousness about India's peril. With heightened confidence, therefore, Indira Gandhi, then Prime Minister, went on a tour of Western Europe and the United States to warn government leaders abroad, including the US President, that India could no longer wait supinely for a political solution of the Bangladesh crisis that would meet the yearning of the fighting people of that country. She returned to report that the "West" still remained entirely un-sympathetic whereupon the Soviet friends again moved speedily. On December 5, 1971, the Soviet Government called upon all outside powers "to refrain from steps leading to a further aggravation of the situation in the Hindustan peninsula." On December 7, Brezhnev condemned "the bloody suppression of the basic rights and the clearly expressed will of the people of East Bengal and the tragedy of 10 million refugees." At the United Nations, the US, with a compliant China at its side, tried to castigate India and the Bangladesh uprising; the US President wrote to the Indian Prime Minister insinuating that he would invoke "US commitments and treaty obligations to Pakistan under SEATO and CENTO." As noted earlier, the US Seventh Fleet's task force led by the nuclear powered aircraft carrier *Enterprise* was ordered to steam into the Bay of Bengal. The Soviets, however, stood firm as rock; their spokesman in the United Nations, Yacob Malik, said they were "proud to have friendship

with India and we cherish it like the apple of our eye. This is Lenin's dream and we have realised it." In deeds, as well as in generous words, this friendship was proved. A luminous chapter was thus added to the annals of Indo-Soviet amity. As in the case of every external crisis that independent India had so far to face, the Soviets stood resolutely by India while the US and other Western countries opposed her with all their strength. This is a phenomenon which can never be forgotten and is the guarantee of the permanence of Indo-Soviet friendship.

In Article IV of the treaty there is clear affirmation of the Soviet Union's high appraisal of India's policy of non-alignment. Since the celebrated Bandung Conference (1955), the Soviet attitude to its declaration of 10 principles, which corresponded essentially with the concept of peaceful co-existence, was and consistently continued to be positive. The support of the Soviet Union to the non-aligned movement, to which Bandung, it may be said, was the prolegomena and helped notably, as Brezhnev once said, to "make Asia and Africa continents of peace and cooperation" is a recurrent feature of the history of our times. From the Soviet Union has come repeated appreciation of India's role in the non-aligned movement as one of its founders and consistent promoters. Moscow has never failed to welcome the decisions reached at momentous meetings of the leaders of non-aligned countries (whose number has grown) from Belgrade in 1961 to Colombo in 1976. Abhorrence of colonialism which, though dying, is by no means yet dead and is fighting last ditch battles in Southern Africa, for example, and a thorough distaste for any link-up with power blocs came natural to India that had known the agonies of subjection and by her success in attaining independence had

contributed sharply to a change in the political climate of the world.

The Indo-Soviet Treaty, far from tying India's hands in regard to foreign-policy options, leaves her entirely free to pursue her aims as a sovereign country, just as the Soviets on their part do the same. As a matter of fact, since the treaty was signed India has taken notable initiatives in improving relations with her own neighbour states in particular and has by no means hesitated to aver her intention, which the Soviets applaud, of being friends with all countries, never renouncing of course her irrevocable antagonism to colonialism, racialism and such other enormities. The treaty is aimed exactly at what is its nomenclature—it is a treaty of peace, friendship and cooperation. One might well recall that India's External Affairs Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee himself had in the course of his speech of welcome to the treaty in Parliament (August 10, 1971) drawn special attention to Article I which he had quoted with approval : "Each party shall respect the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the other party and shall refrain from interfering in the other's internal affairs." Indeed, many a lie spread about the treaty (but never believed in India) could be nailed if only its provisions were read and its implementation so far reviewed correctly and perceptively.

The wide expansion of mutually-beneficial cooperation that has followed the treaty can be seen, strikingly, in the 15-year Economic and Trade Agreement signed at the time of Leonid Brezhnev's memorable visit to India in November 1973. It envisaged the further development of basic production in many spheres which, in this broad essay, need not be enumerated. Thus, it was with good reason, indeed, that a body like UNCTAD has gone on

record with its evaluation of the Indo-Soviet Treaty as "a model relationship". This is because it holds out, shiningly, the opportunities open to developing countries to work, on the basis of a sensible policy of peace and understanding, for progress towards the non-acquisitive society which is fundamentally the heart's desire of newly-liberated peoples. "Close political and economic cooperation with the Republic of India", as Leonid Brezhnev observed in his report to the 25th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, "is our *constant* policy". Friendship could not be more positively averred. It will be recalled also that in his address to the Indian Parliament (November 29, 1973) Brezhnev had hailed India as among the countries that are today "*equal* participants in and architects of international life." (Italics added.) Indeed, the USSR full-throatedly accords India the respect which is the only sure foundation of friendship between peoples and their states.

On August 9, 1942, the Indian people, then facing the rabid repression of imperialism, had given strident notice to the then British rulers of the country in words which made history: "Quit India" on August 9, 1971, India signed with the USSR the Treaty of Peace Friendship and Cooperation which we should hail as a weapon enabling the peoples of our continent sharply to tell all colonialist remnants: "Quit Asia" As was said during the Bangladesh crisis (1971), the Indian Ocean is not an American lake and gun-boat diplomacy has gone down the drain of history.

### III

## PERSPECTIVES OF INDO-SOVIET FRIENDSHIP

The eminent idealist philosopher Benedetto Croce, who had suffered under Mussolini's fascist rule in Italy, was once asked about the future of liberty and gave a memorable answer. Liberty, he said, had "more than a future, it has eternity."

However, "eternity" is a concept that need not be sought to be related to issues that arise in a work-a-day world in a tangible, objective form. Keeping "eternity" aside, one can think of long-range projections, of concretely emerging perspectives, of charting out the future to the extent possible.

It is from this point of view that one reaches the conviction that Indo-Soviet friendship, being by no means a fortuitous development and an opportunistic arrangement, has certain basic elements of what may be called permanence about it. World statesmen surely weigh their words, and when Brezhnev spoke, as noted earlier, of friendship and cooperation of our two countries as the Soviet Union's "constant policy", it was no doubt fully meant. India's experience can also be said to have led, through vicissitudes, to a realisation, which happily the Soviets share, that Indo-Soviet friendship is rooted in the

logic of history and has been strengthened by a kind of mutual affinity; it has grown to be what might, without hyperbole, be termed, for as long as one cares to look into the future, a categorical imperative of our national policy.

In the country-wide elections (March 1977) to India's Lok Sabha (House of the People), the people, in exercise of their sovereign right, have decisively voted out of power the government which was at the helm. Foreign policy, however, was not an issue at the elections which were fought almost entirely over certain serious aberrations in the country's internal administration. Besides, over India's foreign policy, there has grown, in three decades after independence, a broad national consensus. In relation, especially, to India's relations with the Soviet Union, a near-unanimous approval of the friendship and amity that has developed has, in spite of the occasional emergence of a very few carping critics, become the national decision. Thus it was no mere diplomatic formality when India's Prime Minister Morarji Desai, replying to the Soviet Premier Kosygin's message of congratulations and good wishes, said that he shared the latter's conviction that the relations of traditional friendship between India and the Soviet Union would continue to flourish in the interests of the two peoples and of international peace and understanding. Similar exchanges between the Foreign Ministers of the two countries have also a great deal more than formal significance.

It is a happy sign of the fundamental maturity of India's public life that Prime Minister Morarji Desai has shown that in his own candid way he has a thorough grasp of the essentials of world politics and intends to keep India off its aberrant influences. Nobody could put words

into his mouth, and it is good to recall that as early as April 13, 1967, addressing a meeting in Delhi of the Indo-Soviet Cultural Society in celebration of the 20th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and the Soviet Union, he said in his then capacity of Deputy Prime Minister: "The friendship *between our two governments and our two peoples* has gone on growing without any interruption and with hardly any misunderstanding... We shall continuously behave in such a manner that this friendship is not only not impaired but that it grows *stronger and stronger, so strong that nothing can come in its way at any time in future.* (Italics added). (Quotation from *A model Relationship: 25 years of Indo-Soviet Diplomatic Ties*" by J. Vibhakar, 1972, p. 38)

These words are just as valid in 1977—more valid, really, on account of the experience of the last decade—as they were a decade ago. Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee, India's present External Affairs Minister, has thus said on the occasion of the completion of three decades of Indo-Soviet diplomatic relations that mutual cooperation and understanding would "continue to flourish in the interests of the peoples of the two countries and in the cause of strengthening peace and international understanding." He referred particularly to "the many concrete deeds of co-operation" since India's attainment of independence. As an Indian proud of his stupendous past he noted, significantly, that Russian scholars as far back as 150 years ago had shown deep interest in Indian civilisation and the classics of Sanskrit literature. He recalled how "the October Revolution had evoked the interest of the Indian people following their own path to progress and freedom, while the Indian liberation movement and non-aligned policy in turn had substantially strengthened the cause of

anti-colonialism and world peace espoused by the Soviet Union and like-minded nations." It is especially to be noted that Shri Vajpayee expressed the hope that this mutual understanding and cooperation "transcending the framework of government-to-government contacts" would be a powerful factor for peace and international understanding. Here is evidence, which has multiplied since, of the Indian Foreign Minister's approval of the personal human touch which has been a feature of Indo-Soviet relationship at the highest level in recent years, a feature that has reinforced the two countries' friendship which has been described as unbreakable just as Bhilai steel is.

Let there be no mistake that while, from time to time in India, voices of misgiving about the developing Indo-Soviet amity have not been unheard, responsible national elements do not and cannot deny the fundamental value of this phenomenon to either country. There is no lack of a clear appreciation of the fact that India and the USSR have jointly countered the policy of aggression and interference of imperialism *vis-a-vis* India and have fought together in international forums and otherwise for the elimination of the vestiges of neo-colonialism, racial discrimination, apartheid, etc., so that freedom could be safe for all peoples and international economic norms of interstate relations on the basis of respect for national sovereignty, equality and mutual benefit prevail. It cannot be forgotten that the peoples of Asia and Africa had for generations been treated as hewers of wood and drawers of water, producing raw materials which the West could buy cheap and make big money by selling the finished product at fabulous profits. The collective desire, so long thwarted, of the disinherited peoples of the world, in Asia, Africa and Latin America, for turing political freedom

into economic independence finds expression in the unanimous demand for a new international economic order which the USSR has eagerly supported in the United Nations and has made efforts, as in her bilateral relations with India, to implement in practice. Authoritative spokesmen have listed some of India's gains in the economic arrangement with the USSR being as follows: enhancement of India's productive apparatus; growth of non-traditional export items without promotional expenditure; repayment through goods; more favourable prices of exports to and imports from the USSR; increase in India's bargaining power with the Western countries; elimination of scope for under-invoicing of exports and over-invoicing of imports; perspectives of new forms of cooperation, including mutually agreeable arrangements for industrial specialisation and integration. There may be some controversy over these matters, but there can be no manner of doubt the truly national consensus in India that Indo-Soviet relations, especially after the conclusion of the Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation (1971) fortify our economy and safeguard our independence and sovereignty. This is not, as the Soviet leaders often point out, a one-way operation at all. Both our countries derive from the relationship truly mutual benefit and there never has been an instance where the USSR, by far more powerful, has failed to treat India with the utmost consideration for our ancient country's dignity and self-respect.

Before the results of the 1977 Lok Sabha elections were announced, there was in some interested circles an idea that the Indo-Soviet Treaty might be in jeopardy if the Congress party was defeated at the polls and the coalition, known as Janata, formed the government at the

centre. Though international policy was hardly, if at all, mentioned during the election campaign, some stray observations happened, perhaps with deliberate intent, to be reported which warmed the hearts of Sovietophobes. However, a week before the results were announced and the new government formed, the Bombay weekly *Blitz* sent its editor to enquire of Shri Jaya Prakash Narayan, virtually the patron-saint of the Janata movement, his views in the matter. Asked whether he was anticipating anything like the abrogation of the Indo-Soviet Treaty if the Janata Party formed a new government, Jaya Prakash Narayan categorically stated: "I am quite sure that the opposition (later to be government) will loyally abide by the treaty. I hope on the Soviet side, too, a change of government in India will not make any difference in the Treaty of Friendship. *I consider this treaty to be above parties and it should remain so.*" (Italics added)

The CPSU General Secretary and the President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet Leonid Brezhnev, spoke of Indo-Soviet friendship in 1976 as "*a common asset which needs to be carefully guarded.*" (Italics added) On India's part it was then noted that with a view to "making the world a better, a more harmonious place to live in", our two countries would continue "to march side by side and in step with history." The Indo-Soviet Treaty has been indeed "a covenant of open hearts... nourished by the concepts of coexistence and ever expanding cooperation, not only between ourselves but as many others as possible."

It may be that a microscopic minority in India, which in a large country like ours cannot be whisked away, frowns on the Indo-Soviet accord which has grown so naturally, but there can be no manner of doubt that, as

the CPSU General Secretary and the President of the USSR, Leonid Brezhnev, said on October 21, 1977, in the presence of Prime Minister of India Morarji Desai and Foreign Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, our two countries' "exceedingly rich and multi-form relations" represent "widely ramified, durable and mutually-advantageous co-operation", and that this friendship "will live through the centuries". Making his first official visit as India's Prime Minister to any foreign country — this is what Foreign Minister Vajpayee especially stressed —, Prime Minister Morarji Desai handsomely reciprocated in Moscow the sentiments of his hosts, reiterating the national desire of our people to be friends with the USSR that has stood by us repeatedly in times of crisis and lent us unstintingly a helping hand. It will be rewarding for all who wish to understand the world scene to go through the speeches in the USSR during Prime Minister Morarji Desai's recent visit by accredited spokesmen of both countries and the Joint Declaration by India and the USSR. It warmed one's heart to learn in Moscow of India's Foreign Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee having been inspired by his direct personal contact with leaders of a country born of an "epochal event!, the October Revolution, to write verse in his own language, Hindi — so deeply touched by the global perspectives in the making of which he was participating! Prime Minister Morarji Desai, convinced of the significance of the new Soviet Constitution and the total commitment of the USSR to "a foreign policy of peace and cooperation", thus felt himself at home, as it were, in Soviet land and could fittingly conclude an important speech with a traditional Indian invocation: "May all people be happy; may all people be joyous; may

all people perceive the good; may no one feel sorrow and misery!"

There is not a department of life, whether politics or economics, science, culture or art, that does not enter today in the mutual cordiality of Indo-Soviet relationship. Our two countries are dedicated to accomplishing, in Prime Minister Morarji Desai's words, "the victories of peace and not the disastrous triumphs of war". India and the USSR, unique in their own ways, have very distinct entities. But in the very logic of life, as it were, we have come together and forged a friendship — in Leonid Brezhnev's felicitous phrase, "a time-tested treasure" — that will endure and facilitate the march of all mankind towards freedom, peace and progress.

*[Faint, illegible handwritten text]*

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