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# Indo-Soviet relations and cultural diplomacy during the premiership of Indira Gandhi

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## Introduction

This doctoral thesis aims to fill in the gap of in-depth studies on Indo-Soviet relations, taking into account political as well as cultural aspects of this long-lasting friendship, that laid the ground for the stable partnership between Russia and India today, and has as its focus India-USSR relations during the premiership of Indira Gandhi (1966-1984).

In 2008, Indian historian Ramachandra Guha wrote, “August 15, 1947, has led to a paradox - namely, that while India is the most interesting country in the world, we know very little about its modern history.” The year 1947 that brought independence to India led to an anomaly in the country’s historiography: “and what we do know about independent India is chiefly the work of sociologists, economists, political scientists, and journalists – not historians.” Guha pointed out the fact that the majority of studies of the history of India has been focused on the period from the Battle of Plassey in 1757 to the Partition of Indian subcontinent in 1947.<sup>1</sup> This doctoral thesis would be an attempt to challenge this convention and write a historical account of a complex and intricate period of independent India’s history.

In February 2020 when I was researching the papers of Indira Gandhi’s advisors and some exponents of Indian communist movement at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library in New Delhi, one Indian researcher working there approached me. A small talk in Hindi in front of a cup of *chai* was turning into a complex discussion. Once the colleague came to know that I study the period of Indira Gandhi (1966-84), he asked me what I think about her foreign policy. Not waiting for my answer that I was carefully pondering, he briefly said: “She managed to keep Americans at bay.” Up until now, Indira Gandhi remains a controversial and debated figure in India, the opinions on her ranging from general admiration to undying contempt. I. Gandhi’s foreign and domestic policy alike are still subjects to criticism and of vivid discussions as she arrived to govern the country in a peculiar moment of India’s and world’s history. The political consensus that had allowed Jawaharlal Nehru to govern an ethnically, linguistically, religiously diverse country ridden with casteism and to maintain the hold on the Indian National Congress, a party sharply divided between leftists and rightists, started to break apart already during

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<sup>1</sup> Ramachandra Guha, “The Challenge of Contemporary History,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 43, no. 26/27 (June-July 2008): 192–200.

his tenure. Besides, independent India emerged on the world map at the very moment when US President Harry S. Truman declared that the communist expansion ought to be contained, while Stalin's ideologist Andrei Zhdanov emphasized that from then on the world was divided into two warring camps. These internal and external polarizations profoundly shaped India's political, social, economic and cultural development.

After independence, the Indian National Congress dominated the democratic politics of the country for several decades. Jawaharlal Nehru himself, the first prime minister of India and the face of socialist wing of the Congress, initiated the collaboration with the USSR as diplomatic relations between the two countries had been established a few months before the official proclamation of independence of India. The apex of this long-lasting relationship was reached during Indira Gandhi's premiership (1966-84) due to the peculiarities of Indian domestic politics and the geopolitical circumstances that created the favourable conditions for even closer ties between the two countries and bolstered assertiveness of India as a regional power. In this historical moment in which India sought redemption after the painful defeat suffered against China in 1962 there was a qualitative and quantitative leap in the relations between India and the Soviet Union on a political, economic, military and cultural level, determined by convergence of interests of the two countries and peculiar domestic situation in India. For the Soviet Union, South Asia was a critical area for its security interests. After the 1955 Khrushchev's visit to India, this South Asian country started to receive large amounts of Soviet development assistance and both countries started to develop fruitful trade relations. In the early 1980s, India was placed among top ten non-communist trade partners of the Soviet Union.<sup>2</sup> A decade earlier, India had been surrounded by "unfriendly" countries such as Pakistan that had entered into a military alliance with the USA already in 1954 eventually facilitating US-China rapprochement in the early 1970s. In the same period though, India headed by Indira Gandhi compromised Pakistan's territorial integrity and enhanced its international status by winning Bangladesh War and helping to carve an independent state out of former East Pakistan.

My interest in Indo-Soviet relations rose in the years of my master thesis when I was investigating Hindi travelogues dedicated to the Stalin's Soviet Union. Indian intellectuals' fascination with Soviet economic and social institutions, its culture and

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<sup>2</sup> Linda Racioppi, *Soviet policy towards South Asia since 1970s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1.

aesthetics suggested me that this interest, often bordering on admiration, was one in the series of attempts to find a model for the future of India and to identify an effective recipe to overcome the socio-political problems affecting Indian society created after centuries of colonial exploitation and dominance of traditional social institutions. However, this interest had been reciprocal, as the Soviet state had had a special regard for the colonial countries. In the end, I have supposed that this reciprocal interest was destined to grow as well as the Soviet efforts to gain India's favour. Then I barely touched these topics deeming them deserving a more profound study.

Growing in Lithuania, once part of the USSR, in the decade following the fall of the Soviet Union I saw the evidences of the Indo-Soviet friendship. Often, I used to hear the stories about Indian movies screened between the 1960s and the 1980s that brought commotion and amusement to the audience, while in my parents and grandparent's homes, old but robust tin cans that once contained Indian instant coffee with beautiful logo depicting an elephant were used to keep threads, needles and buttons. Later, my visits to India started to disclose to me the Indian side of this relation. I heard the accounts of Soviet organized children's painting contests, of Soviet leaders' celebrated visits to India and met some Indians who used to participate in the activities of Indo-Soviet friendship societies.

Up until now, Indo-Soviet relations have not been thoroughly researched. Surprisingly, somewhat less intense Indo-American relations during the Cold War have received a lot of scholarly attention. I had the proof of this imbalance at the Nehru Memorial and Library that contained a myriad of insightful publication on US-India relations written by Indian and Western authors alike while, in comparison, Indo-Soviet section was very limited. Besides, the bulk of publications on India-USSR relations, especially those written in the 1970s and 1980s, rather than analysing the strategic aspects of these relations contained panegyrics and a celebrative rhetoric and thus were interesting merely as vivid documents of the propaganda of the era. Furthermore, the Western studies written in the 1980s and 1990s often concluded that the Soviets did not have any significant influence on Indian political elite and the masses and minimized the scale of Indo-Soviet collaboration.<sup>3</sup> These conventional narratives depicting Soviet Union's efforts to bring its culture and message to India as a failure should be challenged by investigating diplomatic,

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<sup>3</sup> Duncan, Peter J.S. *The Soviet Union and India* (London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1989), 97–108 and Stephen Clarkson, "Non-Impact of Soviet Writing on Indian Thinking and Policy," *Economic and Political Weekly* 8, No. 15 (April 1973): 715–724.

economic and cultural relations between the two countries. In the end, I suspect that this relative neglect of Indo-Soviet relations was also influenced by the sensational claims regarding Soviet hand in India made by some Soviet defectors that distanced the academic interest from this field. Most of these defectors were former KGB officers. In the late 1960s, ex-KGB Yuri Bezhmenov worked in India from where he defected to the West. In 1984, he gave a lengthy interview to the controversial journalist G. Edward Griffin, where he revealed many “secret” Soviet methods used in India. Since 2004, the controversial archive of Vasiliy Mitrokhin, the senior Soviet archivist who defected to the West, has been accessible to the public at the Churchill Archives Center in Cambridge, UK. After its opening, the archive became the subject of numerous controversies and debates as it revealed presumably immense Soviet involvement in the politics of non-communist countries to the point that the Churchill College declared that it is not in the position to establish the veracity of the information contained in it.<sup>4</sup> The archive’s considerable section is dedicated to Indian subcontinent in which I. Gandhi’s India is distinguished as major theatre of KGB operations outside the Eastern bloc. The first group of claims regards the alleged Soviet influence in the Indian government, intelligence and counter-intelligence, the Defence and Foreign Ministries and even in the police.<sup>5</sup> Other regards Soviet propaganda efforts to penetrate Indian newspapers and press agencies, and claims the successes of the USSR’s disinformation campaigns in India.<sup>6</sup> The goal of this study is not to deny or verify these particular claims but to investigate the various aspects of Indo-Soviet relations against the backdrop of Cold War and Indian history, using physical and electronic documents retrieved from Indian, American, Russian, Lithuanian and Chinese archives, newspapers, magazines and monographs.<sup>7</sup>

Quite soon after I have started to investigate Indo-Soviet relations during the premiership of Indira Gandhi, I understood that the subject of my PhD has to be enlarged. I found out that it is nearly impossible to explain the intricate dynamics of Indo-Soviet relations in

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<sup>4</sup> “The Papers of Vasiliy Mitrokhin (1922-2004),” Churchill College Cambridge, <https://www.chu.cam.ac.uk/archives/collections/papers-vasiliy-mitrokhin-1922-2004/>

<sup>5</sup> GBR/0014/MITN 1/4, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge, United Kingdom.

<sup>6</sup> Ch.5, p.19, GBR/0014/MITN 1/4.

<sup>7</sup> Besides numerous digital archives I have consulted, I have also visited Churchill Archives Centre (Cambridge, United Kingdom), South Asian Studies Library (Cambridge, United Kingdom), Nehru Memorial Museum & Library (New Delhi, India), Delhi University Central Library (New Delhi, India), Library at the Centre of Asian and Transcultural Studies CATS (Heidelberg, Germany) and Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania (Vilnius, Lithuania).

this period without tracing their origin that lies in the first two decades following Indian independence, when the country was guided by Jawaharlal Nehru. Moreover, the history of this dynamic friendship is strongly embedded in the larger context of the Cold War, implying the agency and policies of both the superpowers towards India. For this reason, I was compelled investigate the phenomenon entirely examining the origins of Cold War and the means that both the USA and the USSR utilized to spread their messages abroad. Next, the actions and messages of both superpowers abroad can be hardly explained without taking a more attentive look to the underlying ideologies that influenced their Cold War strategies and shaped their propaganda destined to the developing world. In the end, the consequent and decisive Soviet policy turn towards the Third World and India can be explicated only taking into account the fluctuations of US policy towards the developing countries and India.<sup>8</sup>

The doctoral thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter 1 traces the origins of the Cold War and examines the post-war policies that created the conditions for the emergence of the ideological polarization that defined more than forty years of the twentieth century's history. It pays particular attention to the new diplomatic practices widely utilized by the two superpowers to "win hearts and minds" abroad and argues that the ideological and cultural element of the Cold War was at least as much as important as military and economic interventions. Chapter 2 deals with American ideology, cultural beliefs and political discourses on economic progress, society and liberty that shaped the US Cold War foreign policy and fusing together became an American export to the world. In addition, it shows how the US policy derived from these political and cultural peculiarities manifested itself in the Third World, examining the case of Indian and American interactions in the 1940s and the early 1950s. The second half of the chapter identifies the principal components of Russian and Soviet ideology that motivated the Imperial Russia and its successor Soviet Union's interest in the colonial world and led to the latter's marked policy preference for India.

Chapter 3 discusses diplomatic, political and economic Indo-Soviet relations and argues that during the tenure of Indira Gandhi, the close relations with the Soviet Union became

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<sup>8</sup> The term "Third World" was coined in the early 1950s. At first, it referred to the people who have been downtrodden and exploited through colonialism but now were liberating themselves and gaining influence in the world. As the Cold War tensions gathered momentum, former colonial countries were reluctant to adhere to either of the two major power blocks, Third World also started to imply a distinct and independent position towards both the First World guided by the USA and the Second World headed by the USSR.

a political instrument not only to strengthen the position of India internationally but was also used by the Indian Prime Minister to consolidate her own position on the Indian political scene. Chapter 4 focuses on the actual cultural manifestations of Indo-Soviet relations arguing that this cultural exchange left an enduring legacy in both countries that even today continues to be used as a shared narrative binding together India and Russia. The last chapter reconstructs the history of the influential Indo-Soviet Cultural Society (ISCUS) and highlights its connection with Indian political scene of the time. Moreover, it examines India's agency in the Soviet-sponsored international organizations and Soviet publishing activities in India, concluding with analysis of the Indo-Soviet cinematic exchange.

## **1. Culture and Cold War origins**

The Secretary is authorized, when he finds it appropriate, to provide for the preparation, and dissemination abroad, of information about the United States, its people, and its policies, through press, publications, radio, motion pictures, and other information media, and through information centers and instructors abroad.<sup>1</sup>

The following chapter investigates the subtle connection between propaganda and information, culture and politics. During the Cold War marked by proxy wars in the developing world and high tensions elsewhere, so-called traditional diplomatic practices such as negotiations and official meetings continued to be used. However, they were increasingly followed by the type of diplomacy carried out by the state more like public affairs or publicity campaigns whose protagonists were also ordinary citizens and even children. These new diplomatic practices were the products of the Cold War years whose emergence was encouraged by the vast diffusion of mass media. Before, two world wars had given the governments a golden opportunity to test their ability to manipulate information on a mass scale. After the WWII, in the world tired from the wars, culture started to play a much more important role in the diplomatic realm than before while propaganda battles became the most important trait of the Cold War. This chapter will examine the phenomena of public and cultural diplomacy against the backdrop of the Cold War. The discussion on the Cold War origins will not only help to contextualize two theoretical concepts, but will serve as a frame for further analyses presented in this doctoral thesis.

### **1.1. Public diplomacy**

For long years, the study of international relations had not regarded the culture as one of its underlying principles. The second half of the nineteenth century in Europe and the twentieth in Asia and Africa saw new nations identifying themselves along the axis of a shared language, territory or more broadly speaking, some sort of national character based

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<sup>1</sup> Sec. 501, Smith-Mundt Act (US Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948), Public Law 80-402. <https://www.usagm.gov/who-we-are/oversight/legislation/smith-mundt/>

on symbols and messages comprehensible to the members of a particular state. Generally, shared values which could be called “culture” was the prerequisite for the establishment of sovereign state.<sup>2</sup> Benedict Anderson, an Anglo-Irish political scientist and historian, in his ground-breaking study *Imagined Communities* suggested that nationality, “nationness” and the complex construct of nationalism itself were cultural artefacts of a peculiar kind.<sup>3</sup> According to Anderson, nationalism as a phenomena ought to be analysed in the context of cultural systems that preceded it.<sup>4</sup> From this follows that interaction between different states inevitably involves cultural component.

The studies of international history and relations had originated in the British school after the First World War, and at first, it had regarded the relations between governments on official level, or in other words, traditional diplomatic practices. The twentieth century saw the massive expansion of the means of communication and transportation that not only permitted governments to reach *their* citizens but also gave much easier access to foreign audiences and markets far away than ever before. This fast “interconnectedness” of the world, which now is defined by vague and all-encompassing term “globalization”, inspired scholars to look at international history and international relations in new ways. In fact, after the end of the Cold War, the studies on international relations that had taken into consideration the cultural aspect started to appear. Since then, the light of the day saw various studies that thoroughly analysed different strategies employed by the US government abroad, ranging from American dance export to setting up “cultural freedom” organizations all around the world.<sup>5</sup> The cultural dimension of the Soviet conduct during the Cold War was also the subject of quite numerous studies. Already, in the 1960s Western publications appeared, though few in number, that examined the aspects of Soviet propaganda and “cultural offensive”, but caused controversies abroad.<sup>6</sup> For instance, according to Indian liberal politician Mino Masani, Peter Sager’s original study *Moscow’s hand in India* (1967) had long-lasting resonance in his country. However, like

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<sup>2</sup> Jessica E. Gienow-Hecht, Frank Schumacher (ed.), *Culture and International history*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004), 28.

<sup>3</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 4–6.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>5</sup> Naima Prevots, *Dance for export: cultural diplomacy and the Cold War* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2001) and Frances S. Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (London: The New Press, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> Frederick C. Barghoorn, *Soviet Cultural Offensive: The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960) and *Soviet Foreign Propaganda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964).

not few of his contemporaries writing on the subject during an extremely polarized period of history, Sager was known for his staunch anti-communism that no doubt influenced some judgements present in the study. Besides, the lack of reliable information on the developments inside the Soviet Union, virtual isolation of the country from the Western world, sensational news and rumours about incredibly efficient “subversive” methods employed by the Soviet secret services abroad, created an aura of mystification around everything that regarded the Soviet country during the Cold War. At the end of the conflict, the studies on the Soviet cultural activities were slower to catch up with those dedicated to the US due to the stalling opening of archives in the former Soviet Union that slowed down the whole research process. Only very recently, studies were published that examine Soviet cultural activities abroad, even if they predominantly regard the USSR’s relations with the West.<sup>7</sup>

In the twentieth century, two devastating World Wars and especially the resulting Cold War posed fundamental questions about the capacity of cultural messages and communications to influence domestic and international public opinion. In fact, during the Cold War historians of foreign relations began to investigate the use of a blend of culture and diplomacy as an instrument of state policy. Later, international history studies admitted the existence of various civil society actors and organizations beside the state who contribute and influence international relations. Until the 1970s, the studies of diplomatic history remained divided between a realist approach that endorsed studies of policymaking process exclusively at the highest level and a revisionist one that stressed the importance of domestic influences on the foreign policymaking process.<sup>8</sup> Near the end of the twentieth century, scholars as Michael Hunt and Odd Arne Westad highlighted the central role of ideology in the political decision making process.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the same period saw the publishing of studies focused on cultural “products” like cinema, music and literature, investigating their influence on the Cold War diplomacy.<sup>10</sup> This new cultural approach to international history emerged at the end of Cold War and permitted to examine international affairs “in terms of aspirations and other manifestations of

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<sup>7</sup> Anne Searcy, *Ballet in the Cold War: A Soviet-American Exchange* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

<sup>8</sup> Gienow-Hecht and Schumacher, ed., *Culture and International history*, 4.

<sup>9</sup> Odd Arne Westad, “The New International History of the Cold War: Three (Possible) Paradigms,” *Diplomatic History* 24 (Fall 2000): 551–565 and Michael J. Hogan, Thomas J. Paterson (ed.), *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 221–241.

<sup>10</sup> Prevots, *Dance for export*, and Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Iron Curtain: Propaganda, Culture and the Cold War 1946-1961* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998).

human consciousness.” It is clear that culture in this context assumes a very broad meaning since it encompasses ideology, life styles, artistic and scholar works.<sup>11</sup> In conclusion, the culture started to be analysed and considered as a factor influencing nations and global systems along with political and economic interests.

### *First diplomatic practices*

Diplomatic practices emerged when single civilizations tried to establish contact with different cultures. The earliest known diplomatic correspondence dates back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century BC. The Amarna letters, sometimes referred to as the Amarna Tablets, were a series of communications between the Egyptian administration and the leaders and representatives of neighbouring kingdoms. The Egyptian-Hittite peace treaty was signed in the thirteenth century BC and is considered the earliest surviving legal agreement of this kind. The ancient Greek city-states employed a practice of dispatching envoys to other Greek cities and non-Hellenistic lands and kingdoms in charge to negotiate issues of war and peace or commercial relations. They did not reside permanently in host country but would return once their mission was completed. The origins of early modern diplomacy, which attributes the main function to the figure of ambassador, are traced back to the states of Northern Italy in the early Renaissance. Milan under Francesco Sforza broke new ground by establishing permanent embassies to the other city-states of Northern Italy. Furthermore, Milan was also the first state to send a representative to the court of France in 1455. By the late sixteenth century, permanent diplomatic missions became customary until the Congress of Vienna of 1815 gave formal status to a system of diplomatic ranks. Finally, the diplomatic rights were definitely formalized as the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations defined framework of diplomatic relations between independent countries.

This very concise premise on the evolution of diplomatic practices serves as starting point. At present, the diplomatic correspondence, peace treaties, exchange of envoys and similar practices are widely recognized as traditional methods of diplomacy. The common feature of abovementioned practices is that all of them are conducted between official representatives or international institutions. Mainly, diplomacy uses dialogue and negotiations short of war and violence to influence decisions and behaviour of foreign

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<sup>11</sup> Hogan and Paterson (ed.), *Explaining the History*, 241–257.

governments. However, coercive practices such as economic or diplomatic sanctions still fit into the realm of diplomacy. In 1917, Sir Ernest Satow described diplomacy as “the application of intelligence and tact to the conduct of official relations between the governments of independent states, extending sometimes also to their reactions with vassal states; or, more briefly still, the conduct of business between states by peaceful means.”<sup>12</sup> By other definitions, diplomacy was “the process and machinery by which...negotiation is carried out” or “the peaceful management of international relations.”<sup>13</sup> However, all these definitions are mainly centred on the role of professional diplomats, rather than other unofficial actors and means. In the twentieth century, the official character of diplomacy, its conduct by trained professionals revealed itself insufficient to grasp the dynamics of the fast-changing realities. Two world wars, which ravaged in the twentieth century and especially the Cold War tensions transformed the whole concept of warfare and laid the ground for the emergence of diplomacy that could be conducted by and through less formal actors and channels.

This century saw the emergence of “Total War,” which was much bigger than anything seen in previous centuries in its scale and level of peoples’ involvement. The war became a matter affecting directly the entire nations and their populations. It mobilized economic, industrial and human resources of the countries to secure victory or avoid defeat. Furthermore, the October Revolution, which broke out in Russia during the World War I revealed that physical destruction of the countries was not the only possible outcome of a conflict since the annihilation of old socio-political order was to be kept in mind.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the same century witnessed the rapid diffusion of the modern mass media. *The Daily Mail*, world's first mass circulation daily newspaper, was founded in 1896, while a year earlier, the Lumière brothers had screened a single film in Paris, which probably was the first presentation of projected film. In the same year, Italian inventor Guglielmo Marconi engineered the first experimental radio transmission system.<sup>15</sup> In merely two

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<sup>12</sup> Ernest M. Satow, *A Guide to Diplomatic Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1.

<sup>13</sup> Harold Nicolson, *Diplomacy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 3–4 and Peter Barber, *Diplomacy* (London, 1979), 6.

<sup>14</sup> Philip M. Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind: a history of propaganda from the ancient world to the present day* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 173.

<sup>15</sup> Disillusioned by the lack of appreciation for his work in Italy and encouraged by the Ambassador of Italy in London, Marconi travelled to England in 1896 with a hope to convert his experiments into practical use. Few months later Marconi patented his invention, which is considered the first license for a radio wave based communication system.

years, press, cinema and radio became the principal means of mass communication that permitted to not only spread but also manipulate information.

### *Propaganda*

Although the term “propaganda” came into wide use only in the twentieth century, it is an inherent part of human communication and dates back as far as reliable recorded evidence. The term “propaganda” derived from Latin word *propagare* meaning “to spread” or “to propagate.” Etymologically, propaganda is neutral descriptive term but could be defined as a discourse propagating certain ideas. The term started to be used more widely in 1622 when the Catholic Church created a new administrative body, called *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*, to counter the spread of Reformation ideas. The main task of the organization was to defend Catholic faith and doctrine against the challenge of Protestantism.<sup>16</sup> Along with it, the Society of Jesus or Jesuits worked hard in propagating their message as the religious order was engaged in evangelization campaign worldwide.

Pejorative connotations of the word “propaganda” has emerged quite recently and date back to the years of the World War I (WWI). During this period, the term started to be associated with sheer falsehood and in the following decades it was employed by the Nazi, Soviet and other regimes that degraded it further. However, it should be stressed that the United Kingdom was the first country to distinguish itself in the use of modern propaganda during the WWI.<sup>17</sup> In 1914, the British government established Wellington House or British War Propaganda Bureau, which operated under the supervision of the Foreign Office. The British were particularly eager to secure American sympathies for their cause in the war, and slander and vilify Germans at once. This propaganda campaign adopted highly selective approach based upon persuasion. Besides, it was realized that “it is better to influence those who can influence others than attempt a direct appeal to the masses.”<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, Britain controlled the direct cable communications between Europe and the United States that enabled them to monopolize the sources of the news and practice pre-censure techniques.

The principal aim of British war propaganda campaign was to cast blame on the enemy for starting the war upon peace-loving nations. A myriad of stories depicting German

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<sup>16</sup> Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind*, 3.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

atrocities, often completely made up, spread quickly in the USA and Europe. However, a few German blunders significantly aided to the British propaganda campaign efforts, the most important of German errors being the Zimmerman Telegram. At the beginning of the war, British had managed to decipher three German naval codes. On 16 January, 1917, intelligence officers intercepted a ciphered telegram from the German foreign minister, Zimmermann, to the German ambassador in the United States. The cable contained a suggestion to introduce submarine warfare and to take first tentative steps towards a military alliance between Germany and Mexico in case of American involvement in the war.<sup>19</sup> In exchange, Germans would have helped Mexicans to recover Texas, Arizona and New Mexico. At the beginning of the war, the British had managed to cut the German international cables, thus making the direct transmission of telegrams impossible. Germans were constrained to use American cables and retransmit telegram to several different locations. Although having this propaganda bombshell in hands, the British were cautious to publicize it. For obvious reasons they were reluctant to reveal to Americans the extent of their intelligence activities. Besides, the public reports about the Zimmerman telegram would have informed Germans that their codes were deciphered. Thus, the British invented a cover story claiming that they had stolen the telegram in Mexico and passed it to Americans.<sup>20</sup> The publication of the telegram in the USA caused commotion and alarm. The President of the USA Thomas W. Wilson, who had won the election with non-interventionist slogans, decided to declare war on Germany on 6 April 1917. The publication of the Zimmermann Telegram was the crown achievement of British intelligence in a series of propaganda efforts to help Americans “to take the right view” of the War and revealed the complex relationship between propaganda, censorship and secret intelligence.<sup>21</sup> After the American entrance in the war, the main goal of British propaganda achieved, the Wellington House declined in importance. At the end of the WW1, some German military officials admitted that the subtle and sophisticated British propaganda was instrumental in their defeat. Adolf Hitler himself believed that war propaganda contributed to the collapse of the morale of German soldiers and to the civilian betrayals on the home front. According to the right-wing circles during the Weimar Republic years, the country did not lose the war on the battlefield but was

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<sup>19</sup> Nigel West, *The Sigint Secrets: The Signals Intelligence War, 1990 to Today-Including the Persecution of Gordon Welchman* (New York: William Morrow&Co., 1988).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind*, 183.

betrayed by the civilians at home, especially by Jews and socialists who incited strikes and unrest in Germany.<sup>22</sup> This legend, later propagated by the Nazis and known as the stab-in-the-back myth, eventually had become the part of official narrative of the defeat in the WW1.

If the British distinguished themselves in their skilful use of propaganda techniques during the First World War, the same could not be said about the Second World War, as all the participants of the war engaged actively in propaganda warfare. The main reason behind this strategical shift was the continued development of the means of communication that were becoming more widespread, pervasive and accessible. Cinema and radio in particular had then become an integral part of people's everyday life. Furthermore, these technologies not only allowed governments to keep in touch with its own citizens, but also to easily reach foreign masses. In this very way, information aimed at influencing public opinion insinuated into the realm of diplomacy.

The harshest and longest to date propaganda conflict lain ahead and started right after the end of the World War II. The year 1945 brought the end of military hostilities, but the victory over Nazi Germany was achieved through an uneasy alliance with the Soviet Union. In the West, the war was justified in the terms of defending democracy. Even though, at the time, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill had dubbed the Anglo-Soviet agreement of 1941 "the pact with the devil." Once the war was over, the animosities between former allies resurfaced.

### *Beginning of the Cold War*

Where exactly is the beginning of the Cold War, is a question still open to debate, but widespread consensus traces back the baseline of this unconventional conflict which characterized the twentieth century to the announcement of the Truman doctrine. On 12 March 1947, President of the United States Harry Truman, having in mind the national security of his country, delivered an address before a joint session of the Congress. Citing the example of Greece, ravaged by the Nazi occupation, Truman said that destruction of country's infrastructure combined with human misery created favourable conditions for political chaos. Immediately after the war, the Greek state "was threatened by the terrorist

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<sup>22</sup> Eberhard Kolb, *The Weimar Republic* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 140.

activities of several thousand armed men, led by Communists.”<sup>23</sup> The President referred to the Greek Civil War (1946-49) fought between Greek government and the Democratic Army of Greece (DSE), the military branch of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE). For this reason, Truman was trying to obtain the Congress’s approval for economic aid for Greece as in his words “there is no other country to which democratic Greece can turn.”<sup>24</sup> In the same speech, US president without much elaboration insisted that Greece’s neighbour Turkey also needed American support. In the eyes of US policymakers, both countries were at risk of falling into the communist sphere of influence. The USA had started to articulate a geopolitical theory that very soon would be known as the domino theory: if one country falls into communists' orbit it would pose a serious risk to its neighbours to meet the same fate. Most importantly, Truman’s address set as one of the primary objectives of the foreign policy of the United States “the creation of conditions in which we and other nations will be able to work out a way of life free from coercion.” The explanation for this assumption was that “totalitarian regimes imposed on free peoples, by direct or indirect aggression, undermine the foundations of international peace and hence the security of the United States.” In addition, Truman reiterated that the United States should “support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.” On the whole, without referring directly to the bastion of communism, Truman’s announcement signalled definite shift of US policy. Wartime anti-fascist alliance with the USSR ended for good and was followed by a policy of containment of USSR’s further ideological and territorial expansion, formalizing the antagonism between the conflicting ideologies that distinguished the countries.

The basis of the US containment policy included in the Truman doctrine had been formerly elaborated in the famous “Long Telegram” by US diplomat George F. Kennan, appointed as Charge d’Affaires at the US Embassy in Moscow in July 1946. Kennan found out that US State Department was still amicable towards the Soviet Union, ex-ally in the war against Nazi Germany. Few months later, the US Treasury asked the US embassy why the Soviets were reluctant to support the newly created World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Kennan, a history graduate of Princeton University, who later specialized in the Soviet Union's affairs, replied. In his opinion, there was no hope

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<sup>23</sup> “President’s Harry S. Truman’s address before a joint session of Congress,” The Avalon Project: Documents on Law, History and Diplomacy, [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/trudoc.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/trudoc.asp)

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

of any peaceful coexistence with the Soviet Union as the latter “still lives in antagonistic capitalist encirclement.”<sup>25</sup> In the initial part of the telegram, Kennan pointed out the basic features of Soviet post war outlook as presented in Soviet internal propaganda. He went further in explaining that Soviet worldview was not based on any objective analysis of the situation outside Russia, but it had arisen from inner-Russian complexities which were still working in before the war. Kennan wrote that “at bottom of Kremlin's neurotic view of world affairs is traditional and instinctive Russian sense of insecurity.”<sup>26</sup> Kennan offered an interesting historical explanation of Russian socio-political peculiarities. Speaking about Marxism in Russian soil he argued that “only in this land which had never known a friendly neighbour or indeed any tolerant equilibrium of separate powers, either internal or international, could a doctrine thrive which viewed economic conflicts of society as insoluble by peaceful means.” He added that Lenin’s interpretation of Marxism became a vehicle for this sense of insecurity by which Bolsheviks were affected and a justification for their suspicion towards the world, for dictatorship and related cruelties. The in-depth analysis was concluded with the following words: “Without [Marxism] they would stand before history, at best, as only the last of that long succession of cruel and wasteful Russian rulers who have relentlessly forced country on to ever new heights of military power in order to guarantee external security of their internally weak regimes.”<sup>27</sup> In the second half of Long Telegram, Kennan examined Soviet foreign policy and its diplomatic techniques. According to him, the Soviet policies were conducted on two levels: the official one on behalf of the Soviet Government and a “subterranean” one undertaken by the agencies for which the Soviet Government did not admit responsibility. According to him, in the near future, the Soviets would put substantial resources in strengthening cultural links with various countries without opening up to foreign ideas. In addition, Kennan claimed that the Soviet Union “has an elaborate and far flung apparatus for exertion of its influence in other countries, an apparatus of amazing flexibility and versatility, managed by people whose experience and skill in underground

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<sup>25</sup> “George Kennan's 'Long Telegram',” February 22, 1946, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, National Archives and Records Administration, Department of State Records (Record Group 59), Central Decimal File, 1945-1949, 861.00/2-2246; reprinted in US Department of State, ed., *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, Volume VI, Eastern Europe; The Soviet Union* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 696–709, <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116178.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

methods are presumably without parallel in history.”<sup>28</sup> At the end of the telegram, the diplomat made few observations and suggestions. First of all, he proposed to study extensively the USSR and educate American public in the realities of Soviet situation in order to avoid hysterical anti-Sovietism. Secondly, the USA should formulate and “put forward for other nations a much more positive and constructive picture of sort of world we would like to see than we have put forward in past.” He argued that “it is not enough to urge people to develop political institutions similar to American ones and many foreign peoples are less interested in abstract freedom than in security.” In Kennan’s view, “they [people] are seeking guidance rather than responsibilities.”<sup>29</sup> Kennan observed that Soviet propaganda abroad was “basically negative and destructive. It should therefore be relatively easy to combat it by any intelligent and constructive program” and enigmatically claimed that the Soviet power is “impervious to logic of reason and it is highly sensitive to logic of force.” Finally, he warned that the greatest danger that could befall the USA in coping with Soviet communism was that the Americans should allow themselves to become like those with whom they were coping with.<sup>30</sup>

The importance of the Long Telegram cannot be underestimated. Few months after the arrival of the telegram, Truman requested his senior advisors to prepare a report on Soviet-USA relations with the aim of proving the Soviet disregard for the post-war agreements. The advisors converted the telegram into concrete policy recommendations. Truman feared that the leak of this report would cause a great scandal. However, the Long Telegram became the base for another report entitled “The Sources of Soviet Conduct” Kennan prepared for the Secretary of Defence James Forrestal. The editor of *Foreign Affairs*, US foreign policy magazine, pressed Kennan to print it. The diplomat obtained the permission to publish it under the pseudonym “X” in July 1947. The author of the article was found out promptly and important connections with the announcement of the Truman doctrine were made. Afterwards, Kennan publicly claimed that his ideas regarding policy on the containment of the Soviet Union were distorted. This misinterpretation led up the USA to challenge the USSR globally rather than put efforts to contain it. Kennan and Marshall criticized Truman’s containment address for excessive rhetoric, while others like Dean Acheson and Arthur H. Vandenberg pressed the president to define the communist threat in even starker terms. At last, the Truman administration

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

undertook a huge commitment “to support free peoples” and claimed the foundation of containment policy, that as time went by became more offensive and led to the formation of the NATO.

Few months after Kennan wrote his Long Telegram, Soviet ambassador to the US Nikolai Novikov attempted to describe the advent of a more assertive American foreign policy. Novikov’s telegram, since its discovery in the Russian archives in 1990 in the wake of *glasnost* policy, has been compared with Kennan’s historic telegram. Nikolai Novikov had been the Soviet ambassador merely for some months, from April to the end of October 1946. On 27 September 1946, Novikov wrote his “report”, destined to Stalin and Molotov in the first place, as a sort of reply to Kennan’s highly critical telegram. “Reflecting the imperialistic tendency of American monopoly capital, US foreign policy has been characterized in the post-war period by a desire for *world domination*,”<sup>31</sup> the telegram started and pointed at this “desire” as the real meaning behind more belligerent statements of top American officials with President Truman ahead.<sup>32</sup> According to Novikov, American designs for global domination, which had been growing continuously and by then not completely fulfilled, after the Second World War could have been accomplished as the geopolitical conditions were favourable:

The two main aggressor powers, fascist Germany and militarist Japan, at the same time the main rivals of the US both in the economic and in foreign policy fields, were defeated as a result of the war. A third great power, Great Britain, having been dealt strong blows from the war, is now faced with enormous economic and political difficulties. The political foundations of the British Empire have been noticeably undermined <...>. Europe came out of the war with a thoroughly shattered economy, and the economic devastation which resulted during the war cannot soon be repaired. All the countries of Europe and Asia are feeling an enormous need for consumer goods, industrial and transportation equipment, etc. Such a situation opens up a vista for American monopoly capital of enormous deliveries of goods and the importation of capital to these countries.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Emphasis here and from this point on indicates where V. M. Molotov underlined the original document.

<sup>32</sup> “Telegram from Nikolai Novikov, Soviet Ambassador to the US, to the Soviet Leadership,” September 27, 1946, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, AVP SSSR, f. 06. op. 8, p. 45, p. 759, published in *Mezhdunarodnaya Zhizn'* #11, 1990, 148–154, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110808>

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

The US, in order to achieve this design of “world capitalist domination” had not but one impediment: “On the other hand, the expectations of those American circles have not been justified which were based on the Soviet Union being destroyed during the war or coming out of it so weakened that it was forced to bow to the US for economic aid. In this event it could have dictated such conditions which would provide the US with an opportunity to carry out its expansion in Europe and Asia without hindrance from the USSR.”<sup>34</sup> As much as the USA, the USSR strengthened its international position through the historic victory in the war and the “liberation” of Eastern Europe. Novikov’s impression of current American top leadership was strongly negative. President Truman was portrayed as “a politically unstable person with certain conservative tendencies” and his rise to power was an evidence of “strengthening of the influence of the most reactionary circles of the Democratic Party on foreign policy.” Alarming for the Soviets, the “bloc of reactionary Southern Democrats and the old guard of the Republicans” had started to cooperate. This was evident from the fact that “in their statements about foreign policy issues the leaders of both parties are essentially advocating the same policy.” President Roosevelt’s policies that had brought the wartime cooperation between the three great powers (USA, USSR and Britain) were no longer present, as “the influence on foreign policy of the followers of the Roosevelt policy of cooperation with peace-loving powers has been sharply reduced.” Clear indicator of the US desire to obtain “world domination” was the country’s impressively growing military expenditure, “the colossal growth of expenditures for the Army and Navy, comprising \$13 billion in the 1946-1947 budget (about 40% of the entire budget of \$36 billion) and is more than 10 times the corresponding expenditures in the 1938 budget.” Anglo-American imperialist designs also found a place in Novikov’s report: “One of the stages in the establishment of American world domination is their agreement with Britain about a partial division of the world on the basis of mutual concessions. <...> they have agreed that the United States include Japan and China in the sphere of its influence in the Far East whereas for its part the US has agreed not to hinder Britain in solving the Indian problem or the strengthening of [British] influence in Thailand and Indonesia.” In the end, Novikov drew few conclusions:

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

The primary goal of this anti-Soviet campaign of American "public opinion" consists of exerting political pressure on the Soviet Union and forcing it to make concessions. Another, no less important goal of the campaign is a desire to create an atmosphere of a fear of war among the broad masses who are tired of war <...>. All these steps to preserve the great military potential are not an end in itself, of course. They are intended only to prepare conditions to win world domination in a new war being planned by the most warlike circles of American imperialism <...>. It ought to be fully realized that American preparations for a future war are being conducted with the idea of war against the Soviet Union, which in the eyes of American imperialists is the chief obstacle in the American path to world domination.<sup>35</sup>

In 1950, Truman asked the Department of State and the Department of Defence for yet another evaluation and reassessment of US foreign policy. There were several reasons for this step. First of all, in 1949 the Soviet Union conducted its first nuclear test while in China the communist party took control of the country. After the pound was devaluated by 30%, the British sterling-dollars crisis was undermining both the objectives of the Marshall Plan and posing risks to the US economy.<sup>36</sup> The policy paper *United States Objectives and Programs for National Security* (better known as NSC 68) was drafted under the chairmanship of Paul Nitze. In the paper he wrote along with hawkish advisors, the USSR was depicted in the harshest terms, and Soviet global domination was the most immediate and actual threat hanging over the USA and Western world. Kennan's more moderate view was categorically disregarded. He and his fellow Kremlin experts strongly suggested that then the unique focus of the Soviet Union was to tighten its hold over its boundless territory and its satellites without ambitions of further expansion. Kennan's containment strategy emphasized diplomatic action and gradual coercion over military operation, and advocated moderate peacetime defence spending, while the NSC 68 called for tripling the budget for defence.

The language and tone of NSC 68 was particularly revealing because it is quite clear that the document was meant to have a strong impact on its intended audience. In his address on the containment policy, Truman had been criticized for stressing excessively the communist threat, while NSC 68 went much further in depicting it. According to NSC

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Curt Cardwell, *NSC 68 and the Political Economy of the Early Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 128–159.

68, the USA was the only real bastion of individual freedoms and rights, standing in contrast to the stronghold of slavery, the Soviet Union.<sup>37</sup> If Truman had been moderate in tone and content of his speech, the NSC 68 contained a simplistic message that could be easily transmitted to wider public. In this way, *United States Objectives and Programs for National Security* invented a new type of narrative that became the starting point for both domestic and international American propaganda campaign throughout the Cold War era. However, the first and institutionalized attempts to influence global public opinion had been made already during the World War II.

Few months after the USA entered the war, the US President Franklin D. Roosevelt set up the Office of War Information (OWI). The office was to conduct large-scale information campaigns abroad and inform American public. Such a power on the distribution of wartime information in a government agency that worked basically as distributor of propaganda immediately alarmed the press, the congress and the civil society. If the press workers saw the OWI as a forthright and unambiguous menace to the independence of all the media, some congressmen expressed their worries about its resemblance to the centralized Nazi's propaganda machine. But the major daunting task had the agency to face was to change the minds of Americans, not willing give up the deep-rooted isolationism of the previous decades and get into a global war.

The OWI was divided into two branches, the Domestic and Overseas. The Domestic section of the OWI produced movies, the bulk of them in collaboration with the Hollywood movie studios, documentaries and radio programmes. Internationally, the Overseas section conducted leaflet warfare, informed civilians in Allied countries and terrorized enemy troops under supervision of Psychological Warfare Branch of the organization. In 1942, the OWI took control of Voice of America (VOA), American international broadcaster, and significantly expanded its operations. At the end of the war, newly elected President Truman dissolved the Office of War Information but after the conflict, the need to convey American message worldwide not only did not disappear, but also increased significantly.

In 1948, the US Congress passed the U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Act, popularly known as the Smith–Mundt Act. The bill authorized the U.S. Department of State to establish communication with foreign masses through the channels of

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<sup>37</sup> "NSC 68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security," National Security Council, <https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsc-hst/nsc-68.htm>

broadcasting (radio and motion pictures), direct exchanges in educational, technical and cultural fields and distribution of printed material. In short, the Smith-Mundt act encouraged US propaganda activities in other countries and put the Department of State in charge of the operations. As the Office of War Information, the Smith-Mundt Act became a matter of concern for the Congress, especially worried about the Department of State's power to supervise any information programmes. In some congressional representatives' opinion, the Department was "chock full of reds", while others feared growing usurpation by the state of private functions.<sup>38</sup> Simultaneously, McCarthyism, or the Second Red Scare, saw many individuals, especially those working for federal agencies, falsely (more often than not) accused of communist sympathies in general or even spying for the Soviet Union. After initial hesitation, the Congress approved the bill. Earlier, the law had received support from prominent personalities such as Walter Bedell Smith, US ambassador to the USSR, Dean Acheson and George C. Marshall who said in unison that it was stupid to spend millions for foreign aid without explaining US aims properly.<sup>39</sup> The growing apprehension about the power of ideas, the need to tackle the spread of Soviet propaganda and explain American mission and responsibilities to the world highly contributed to the passing of the act.

In January 1953, the new president of the USA, "Ike" Dwight Eisenhower, was sworn in. He, endowed with uncommon communicative sensibility, after winning the elections with the catchy slogan "I like Ike", quickly understood the power of catchphrases and mottos in spreading ideas and principles, and the significance and value of psychological warfare. The President himself carefully avoided to use the term "propaganda", unless talking about the deceptions of adversaries.<sup>40</sup> He even invented his own expression to describe emerging new dimensions of diplomacy. His "P-factor" meant the psychological, political, persuasive and public relations dimensions of diplomacy.<sup>41</sup> Right after assuming the presidency, Eisenhower appointed the Committee on International Information Activities in order to evaluate the government's information policies and activities. The same year, on his initiative, the United States Information Agency (USIA) that was

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<sup>38</sup> Frank Ninkovich, *The diplomacy of ideas: U.S. foreign policy and cultural relations, 1938-1950*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 122.

<sup>39</sup> <http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,793708-1,00.html>

<sup>40</sup> Chester J. Pach, ed., *A Companion to Dwight D. Eisenhower* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017), 370.

<sup>41</sup> Eisenhower, a war hero and army chief of staff, was convinced of the effectiveness of propaganda operations.

*Ibid.*, 373.

engaged in propaganda battles abroad during the Cold War, was founded.<sup>42</sup> With the USIA's growth in importance and size, the implementation of American worldwide information campaigns became highly centralized. Eisenhower was the first president to emphasize clearly the connection between propaganda and policy. In his view, American foreign policy had a deep and dramatic impact on the perception of the United States abroad. Thus, he argued that US policies should be conceived having world public opinion in mind.<sup>43</sup> Eisenhower, unlike Truman, believed that the US propaganda abroad should avoid excessive stress on the vices of communism and should be concentrated on presenting the virtues of the American way of life instead. As Eisenhower himself said: "I am tired – and I think everyone is tired–of just plain indictments of the Soviet regime...Instead, just one thing matters: what have we got to offer the world?"<sup>44</sup> On the matters of the conduct of propaganda activities, the US president insisted that the biggest portion of operations should be covert as people would be suspicious of government-sponsored information, advocacies and points of view.<sup>45</sup> In consequence, he rejected so-called white propaganda that does not hide its origin and its source could be identified clearly, but preferred "unattributed" or "grey" propaganda.<sup>46</sup> This strategical preference had two major consequences: the CIA started to play a much more active part in information campaigns resorting to covert manipulation of the media and the USIA's operations relied heavily on the use of grey propaganda and thus came to resemble those of the CIA.<sup>47</sup> Besides, Eisenhower believed that private groups like NGOs, businesses and even ordinary Americans should be involved in creating favourable image of the USA abroad. Reinvigoration of US cultural programmes abroad pushed by the President assumed different forms. In 1956, famous jazz musician Dizzy Gillespie with his interracial band embarked on a government-sponsored tour to Yugoslavia, Greece and the Middle East. Once returned, Gillespie wired to Eisenhower: "Jazz is our own American folk music that communicates with all peoples regardless of language or social

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<sup>42</sup> However, the agency ceased to exist only in 1999. After, its functions were assigned to the newly created Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs at the US Department of State.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 374.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006), 97.

Unattributed, grey or better known as covert propaganda is a set of media materials prepared by a government agency but disseminated by a non-government outlet with the source unattributed.

[https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/covert\\_propaganda](https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/covert_propaganda)

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 97–98.

barriers.”<sup>48</sup> The American National Exhibition that took place in 1959 in Moscow is considered the landmark of Eisenhower’s Cold War propaganda strategy. The grandest and most ambitious American cultural diplomacy project at the time presented to Soviet citizens the American culture and capitalism at its best. American art, fashion, cars, model homes and myriad of other everyday use articles dazzled 3 million Soviet citizens who attended it. Therefore, the principal goal of the US government, to present the best of the country to its Cold War adversary was reached, but it is clear that these cultural initiatives were aimed at influencing international and domestic public opinion as well.

Another push to engage more actively in the war of words arrived from the Secretary of State John Foster Dulles who served under President Eisenhower. In 1952, Dulles, known for his hawkish attitude towards the communism, harboured strong criticism regarding containment policy. Thus, the containment, as perceived by Dulles, developed in an even more offensive strategy and he committed himself to hastening the government to form military alliances to contain Soviet expansion. In addition, he entered into the Cold War history as a mastermind behind “massive retaliation” concept which saw “massive retaliatory power” as the main deterrent to communism.<sup>49</sup> Simultaneously, the new military strategy called the New Look policy emerged whose main objective was to enable the USA to meet its military obligations worldwide without straining too much its financial resources by increasing air force and nuclear weaponry expenditure. However, Dulles, as President Eisenhower, did not believe only in the retaliatory power of nuclear weapons. In the article “A Policy of Boldness”, he reiterated his confidence in massive retaliatory power but at the same time understood the high value of propaganda to complement military actions: “Once the free world has established a military defence, it can undertake what has been too long delayed – a political offense...We should be dynamic, we should use ideas as weapons; and these ideas should conform to moral principles...”<sup>50</sup> Concluding his statement, Dulles described concrete guidelines for dealing with the Soviet communism and called for the better coordination of the cultural relations and the activities of the Voice of America.

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<sup>48</sup> “Hope for America: Performers, Politics and Pop Culture,” Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/hope-for-america/cultural-diplomacy.html>

<sup>49</sup> “John Foster Dulles on Massive Retaliation,” Project of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, [https://web.archive.org/web/20080514020511/http://www.nuclearfiles.org/menu/key-issues/nuclear-weapons/history/cold-war/strategy/article-dulles-retaliation\\_1962-01-25.htm](https://web.archive.org/web/20080514020511/http://www.nuclearfiles.org/menu/key-issues/nuclear-weapons/history/cold-war/strategy/article-dulles-retaliation_1962-01-25.htm)

<sup>50</sup> John Foster Dulles, “A Policy of Boldness,” Teaching American History <https://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/new-policy-of-boldness/>

Until 1965, all the various practices to influence foreign public opinion were given different names starting from traditional “propaganda”, “psychological warfare” and “public relations.” The first two had accumulated too much negative connotations and got associated with sheer deception or war while the third seemed not proper and did not define accurately the spectrum of activities conducted. Most probably, Eisenhower’s “p-factor” was the term which managed to encompass the essence of this blend of new and old practices aiming at influencing public opinion, but it was quite complex to be comprehended by wider audiences. In 1965, Edmund A. Gullion, retired diplomat and Dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, came up with the solution and coined the term “public diplomacy.” The same year he founded Edward R. Murrow Center of Public Diplomacy that provided concise summary of the new concept:

Public diplomacy . . . deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy; the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; communication between those whose job is communication, as diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the process of intercultural communications.<sup>51</sup>

Gullion himself revealed that he preferred the old term “propaganda” but it had accumulated too many negative overtones. The earliest use of the phrase “public diplomacy” appeared in London *Times* in 1856. It was used as a synonym for civilized conduct, a set of more honest and “open” diplomatic practices. During the World War I up until the early 1950s, the term did not fall out of use and it continued to be utilized alternatively with “open diplomacy.” At the beginning of the Cold War, the meaning of public diplomacy started to shift from the realm of “traditional” diplomatic practices such as negotiations towards the domain of propaganda, international information and public relations. The same period witnessed a decisive change in diplomatic practices that often saw important diplomatic events being held as public meetings.<sup>52</sup> The customary practices of strictly closed-door meetings were not forgotten but transformed to go hand in hand

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<sup>51</sup> Nancy Snow, Philip M. Taylor, ed., *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 19.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

with changing times and heightened rhetoric between antagonist countries. Sometimes the term was used to elicit the spectacular element in the diplomacy of American and Soviet leaders, especially Khrushchev's.<sup>53</sup> Thus, the described practices of public diplomacy came to overlap with the previously known exercises of propaganda.

By the 1965, the above-mentioned United States Information Agency had impressively expanded its worldwide operations. Somewhat neutral term associated with the realm of public relations as "information" or negative "propaganda" did not manage to describe properly the activities of the USIA and other similar agencies but the new term "public diplomacy" was capable to grasp and define more accurately all the spectrum of their activities.<sup>54</sup> In addition, the new coinage was linked to the respectable and prestigious realm of diplomacy and thus, it lent legitimacy to its practitioners. However, the term got firm ground in public discourse and in foreign policy only in the following decades, becoming a subject of studies in institutions and universities. For example, the Reagan administration (1981-89) founded the intra-agency *The Office of Public Diplomacy for Latin America and the Caribbean*, which in practice operated under the auspices of the White House and not under the Department of State as it was declared officially.<sup>55</sup> In 1999, the Clinton administration created the position of Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs nominated directly by the President of the United States. After the end of Cold War, the phrase "public diplomacy" entered in common use even abroad. In 2002, the UK Blair administration established the Public Diplomacy Strategy Board in order to coordinate efforts to promote the country overseas. In the United States, the term firmly entrenched in American public dominion after the September 11 attacks when the country was eager to improve its image in the Arab countries.

As could be perceived, to understand what exactly public diplomacy means is not the easiest of tasks. Furthermore, this concept often appears in association with propaganda, psychological operations or warfare, and strategic communications. Each and every of these notions mean different things for different audience as the boundaries between them are blurred but all these practices have a shared purpose: to advance the national interest by influencing thoughts, ideas, perceptions and values of others.<sup>56</sup> An alternative term for public diplomacy is people's diplomacy. This synonym stresses the receiver's role, the

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Peter R. Mitchell, John Schoeffel, ed., *Understanding Power* (London: Penguin Books, 2002), 2.

<sup>56</sup> Pach, *A Companion to Dwight D. Eisenhower*, 374.

addressed citizens of a country, recipients of foreign government sponsored initiatives, since public diplomacy includes all official practices that aim to persuade targeted sectors of foreign opinion to support or tolerate the strategic maneuvers of a foreign country. Its methods include specific campaigns conducted by government organizations, and efforts to persuade the international media to portray positively the official policies of a foreign government. Two types of public diplomacy are distinguished: branding or cultural communication, and political advocacy. The first one is used to foster country's reputation and image abroad without seeking support for any immediate policy objective. The second type is a set of different strategies put in place to reach immediate policy goals.<sup>57</sup> While cultural communication is meant to influence the perception of the country in the long-term, political advocacy's campaigns use public diplomacy to build foreign support for immediate both domestic or foreign policy objectives. Needless to say, to make a clear distinction between public diplomacy and propaganda is a confusing matter as these two terms are sometimes used interchangeably. Skillful manipulation of information or "propaganda" is the one of the main traits of public diplomacy. From the above, it is clear that public diplomacy is an incredibly vast phenomenon encompassing public relations, culture and psychological warfare. The next section will analyze cultural diplomacy, a subcategory of public diplomacy, and the concept of soft power that is connected with both public and cultural diplomacy.

## **1.2. Cultural diplomacy**

An inherent part of public diplomacy is the communication of cultural values abroad. In a very broad sense, all relations between different nations could be considered as cultural. Whether diplomatic negotiations or trade bargains are taking place, the planning of joint maneuvers or an attempt to read the intentions of other government, a cultural encounter occurs.<sup>58</sup> More specifically, cultural diplomacy is defined as a combination of practices that includes "the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among

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<sup>57</sup> "Public Diplomacy and Branding: a Clarification," CPD Blog, USC Center on Public Diplomacy, + <https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/blog/public-diplomacy-and-branding-clarification>

<sup>58</sup> Charles Frankel, "Culture, Information, Foreign Policy," *Public Administration Review* 29, no. 6 (1969): 593–600.

nations and their people to foster mutual understanding.”<sup>59</sup> Cultural diplomacy’s functions overlaps with public diplomacy’s, as it is practiced mainly by competent public institutions. The proponents of cultural diplomacy point out that the provision of cultural products eventually will draw support for economic and political goals of the country which pursues them. For this reason, cultural diplomacy is regarded as a long-term strategy that will pay dividends in the future.

Already in the 1960s and the 1970s, numerous political scientists and policy experts eagerly discussed about the importance of cultural relations to foreign policy and their role in influencing foreign public opinion. Some pointed out that cultural relations could not only complement foreign policy, but also have symbolic and political internal uses. Thus, cultural relations could have both external and domestic political utility.<sup>60</sup> During the Cold War, the cultural relations were considered as a sort of barometer indicating political tension. Willingness to collaborate on a cultural front was perceived as a sign of the receptivity for further cooperation and this would be the most obvious external utility of cultural relations.<sup>61</sup> For instance, in July 1972, after the USSR and USA signed a ground-breaking technical cooperation agreement, one American official said, “the next few months will show whether the cooperative relationship between the two countries, is indeed entering a new stage.”<sup>62</sup> In addition, cultural contacts trigger curiosity among the masses and offer opportunities for tangible gains among interested organized groups. Thus, a program of cultural relations could give rise to a network of sympathetic groups and associations in foreign states, which in turn could exercise influence within their national political systems, for instance pressuring for a change in the foreign policy orientation. This external utility of cultural relations is closely related to a domestic one when the interests of concerned groups are satisfied by the policies pursued by the national government in this way avoiding an open conflict with interest groups.<sup>63</sup> As could be perceived, these types of relations do not remain confined to the realm of culture and their direct beneficiaries.

Cultural diplomacy as the public one includes political and ideological arguments and the Cold War years revealed this in obvious way. Besides, cultural diplomacy too uses the

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<sup>59</sup> Federico Donelli, “Persuading through Culture, Values and Ideas,” *Seta Vakfi* 21, no. 3 (2019): 113–134.

<sup>60</sup> William R. Pendergast, “The Political Uses of Cultural Relations,” *Il Politico* 38, no. 4 (1973): 682–696.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 684.

<sup>62</sup> “A U.S. –Soviet Research Accord is Signed,” *The New York Times*, July 8, 1972.

<sup>63</sup> Pendergast, “The Political Uses,” 687–688.

language of persuasion and is a proof of the power of a given country. Thus, both types of diplomacy are susceptible to propaganda and can be used as an instrument of political warfare.<sup>64</sup> As mentioned above, cultural diplomacy is capable to alter the environment of state interaction. The countries employing the practice of the export of culture could garner support for their foreign policy objectives abroad and, in this way, enhance countries' prestige and national interests.<sup>65</sup> Nowadays, it would be a difficult task to find a diplomatic mission, which does not engage in cultural activities.

Cultural relations between two sovereign countries often grow without any government intervention and thus the question arises over what kind of interactions could be considered cultural diplomacy. Transactions of trade and tourism, migration, inter-marriages, student and scholar exchanges are the most obvious cultural interactions. When professional diplomats and government institutions attempt to shape the flow of these organic exchanges in order to cultivate given country's foreign policy objectives, then the term "cultural diplomacy" could be evoked.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, cultural diplomacy is a government activity that can promote and even merchandise a particular society and its culture. It goes without saying that institutions and authorities alone do not create culture and governments can influence the creation of cultural artefacts by issuing funds for particular cultural projects. By a cursory glance at cultural relations in the Cold War context becomes clear that both superpowers put substantial effort into shaping cultural intercourse to best serve their foreign policy objectives and consequently, pushed forward their own national interest.

### *Cultural exchange*

The following section addresses the importance of cultural exchange as the favourite mean used by cultural diplomacy. Next, it analyses the case of cultural visits of foreigners in the Soviet Union and the impact they had eventually helping the country to overcome the diplomatic isolation. In the end, it is argued that the changes in Soviet cultural bureaucracies closely followed those in foreign policy orientation.

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<sup>64</sup> Michael J. Waller, ed., *Strategic Influence: Public Diplomacy, Counterpropaganda and Political Warfare* (Washington, DC: Institute of World Politics Press, 2009), 93.

<sup>65</sup> Sergei Gavrov, Lev Vostryakov, *Cultural diplomacy as a tool for constructing and broadcasting an attractive brand of the Russian state* (Moscow: Moscow State University of Culture and Arts, 2018), 26–33.

<sup>66</sup> Waller, *Strategic Influence*, 74–75.

The widespread practices of cultural diplomacy are exhibitions, concerts, film screenings, educational programs, exchanges (artistic, educational, scientific, professional), broadcasting and publishing activities. Among them, exchanges occupy a special place because they deal not with the presentation of particular image or information, but involve human factor. In addition, since culture is a product of a specific civilization and operate within the broader political context of international affairs behind their creation, there are either political intent or the purpose to develop cross-border relation.<sup>67</sup>

The participants in exchange programmes could be apt to become what U.S. communication researchers defined as “opinion leader” in his home country. During the World War I, the British excelled in propaganda use and adopted a low-key approach that “it is better to influence those who can influence others than attempt a direct appeal to the masses.” From this viewpoint, the exchange participants once returned to their home countries could work as a sort amplifier for all ideas, thoughts, lifestyles and values that fascinated them abroad. This was verified in the twentieth century that witnessed the emergence of so-called political tourism, or as political scientist, Paul Hollander put it “political pilgrimage.”<sup>68</sup> In the second decade of the twentieth century, the charm of the Soviet Union determined the beginning of political tourism. The country’s institutions started to invite numerous Western intellectuals to visit the country to understand the functioning of the Bolshevik government and the social changes it was pursuing and implementing. Most probably, the Soviet government was the first one to comprehend the opportunities inherent in such trips. During the Stalin years, when the country locked up and started mass purges, the first-hand accounts of Western visitors could have lent credibility to Soviet propaganda claims. Various scholars who analyzed the phenomenon, afterwards named “tourism of revolution” or “political pilgrimage”, pointed out huge incongruences between the accounts in the writings of these travelers and the actual conditions of the time in the USSR.<sup>69</sup> These inconsistencies were strongly conditioned by the hospitality technique employed by the Soviet government called *Delegacija*. The system of *delegacija* worked as follows: the delegate was invited (invitation to socialist country was the only chance of obtaining a visa, currency, accommodation and means of transport); the delegate was privileged over the local population (in conditions of scarcity,

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<sup>67</sup> Snow and Taylor, *Routledge Handbook*, 50.

<sup>68</sup> Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims: Western Intellectuals In Search of the Good Society* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

<sup>69</sup> Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Palaver: considerazioni politiche* (Torino: Einaudi, 1976).

he enjoyed privileges denied to the locals); the delegate was always assisted by a special institution and entrusted to a personal companion. The central role played by this sort of tourist guide who is responsible for the travel program was to mediate most of the contacts with the realities of the host country.<sup>70</sup> The system worked effectively to influence the judgements of foreign intellectuals who once returned to their countries, could portray an almost enchanting image of the USSR or even justify some of the atrocities of the regime. During the early years of Stalin's leadership, the enormous number of foreign guests revealed a potential that could pay back in the near future and yield good geopolitical gains.

In the third decade of the twentieth century, the Soviet Union was still isolated diplomatically. International network of communist parties, Communist International (Comintern), and classic institutions of foreign policy such as diplomatic and consular systems had been established in the early 1920s. The resolution of the second Congress of Comintern held in 1920 declared that "the Communist International sets itself the aim of fighting with all means, also with arms in hand, for the overthrow of the international bourgeoisie and for the creation of an international soviet republic as a transition to the complete abolition of the state."<sup>71</sup> The strident and menacing tones of the Comintern hardly helped the Soviet Union to overcome diplomatic isolation and continuously drew suspicion of the Western governments.

In 1925, the Soviet government founded the All-Union Society for Cultural Ties (VOKS). The first chief of the organization was Olga Davidovna Kameneva, Leon Trotsky's sister. The Soviet cultural relations with foreign countries were official and entirely supervised by the government, even though various associations that participated in the network of Soviet cultural exchange originated spontaneously from the civil society.<sup>72</sup> The main purpose of the organization was to "to promote cultural contact between Soviet writers, artists, composers, scientists, educators and athletes with those of other countries." Another rarely uttered aim was to disseminate abroad positive image of Soviet life.<sup>73</sup> The insinuating and apparently harmless character of cultural exchange converted the VOKS into a powerful instrument of Soviet foreign policy. In the initial years of its existence,

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> "Evening Session of August 4", Marxist Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/2nd-congress/ch10a.htm>

<sup>72</sup> Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht, Mark C. Donfried, *Searching For a Cultural Diplomacy* (New York: Barhahn Books, 2010), 33–50.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

the VOKS used the methods refined few years earlier by the Workers International Relief (WIR or Mezhrabpom).

The Russian Civil War (1918-20) had seriously disrupted agricultural production. In addition, the Bolshevik policy of forced requisition of food supplies led to a crisis in food chain storage and supply. Furthermore, in the summer of 1920, a terrible drought struck the European part of Russia, in particular the Volga region, usually the most productive agricultural region, causing widespread famine. Regime-friendly writer Maxim Gorky launched an international plea for help and assistance which was heard by the American Relief Administration (ARA) led by Herbert Hoover. Begrudgingly, Lenin agreed to the ARA's terms but immediately gave an order to his secret police (Cheka) to infiltrate the organization.<sup>74</sup>

In 1921, at Lenin's request, the German communist and talented propagandist Willi Münzenberg formed the Workers International Relief (WIR), or Mezhrabpom, in Berlin. Mezhrabpom's official aim was to complement international efforts to aid famine-stricken Soviet Russia. The IWA gathered funds, distributed informational material, organized tours by Soviet artists and scientists, conferences attended by foreigners, imported and even produced films. The organization managed to involve in its activities such celebrities like Fridtjof Nansen and Albert Einstein.<sup>75</sup> It had a twofold function: humanitarian and ideological.<sup>76</sup> In short, the Soviets coined their own brand of cultural propaganda. Meanwhile, with the help of Soviet funding, Münzenberg set up a series of front organizations "for famine relief efforts" like the Friends of Soviet Russia established in the USA in 1921. Unwilling to raise any suspicion and hamper fundraising efforts, the role of the Soviet government in organizing these groups was concealed. Nonetheless, some Western organizations that participated in famine relief had serious doubts about ostensibly declared non-partiality of the IWA and its affiliates.<sup>77</sup> The IWA progressively grew in importance and gained political influence. Thus, it became an influential political body, established a solid network of intellectual professionals, and most importantly, before its dissolution, helped the Soviet Russia to open to the West.

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<sup>74</sup> Sean McMeekin, *The Red Millionaire: A Political Biography of Willi Münzenberg, Moscow's Secret Propaganda Tsar in the West, 1917-1940* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 105.

<sup>75</sup> Gienow-Hecht and Donfried, *Searching For a Cultural Diplomacy*, 37.

<sup>76</sup> E.H. Carr, *A History of Soviet Russia* vol.3 (London: Macmillan, 1953), 404.

<sup>77</sup> McMeekin, *The Red Millionaire*, 105–115, 128.

While the IWA tended to expose its strong proletarian character, the VOKS chose to present itself differently. VOKS recruited members exclusively from the liberal professions and the progressive sections of the society in order to “penetrate the circles and institutions that remained outside the working area of the Comintern and the People’s Commissariat for Foreign Affairs (NKID) of the USSR.”<sup>78</sup> The activities of VOKS especially targeted international bourgeoisie and middle classes. In this way, institutionalized cultural exchange, alongside with the activities of NKID and Comintern, offered a new dimension of Soviet foreign policy. Stalin’s tightening grip on any opposition inside the USSR in the late 1930s, drew growing suspicion towards cultural exchange and foreign ideas which were insinuated in the USSR. Olga Kameneva herself, the first VOKS’s chief, was executed in the Medvedev Forest Massacre in 1941. All her family had perished earlier in the Great Purge. Post-war period saw a massive clampdown on cultural exchange whose total control was entrusted to the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs headed by Viacheslav Molotov.<sup>79</sup> Soviet Union’s paranoid self-isolation and American McCarthyism turned USA against the USSR because a too close relation was seen as a mean to clear the way for Soviet propaganda. The Congress passed several acts that virtually denied non-official Soviet visitors to enter the United States.<sup>80</sup> Both superpowers resorted to bellicose and intrusive propaganda campaign to weaken each other’s claims over their respective populations. The US embassy in Moscow publicly stated that “satisfactory cultural exchange . . . will be achieved only after a fundamental political settlement is made of the existing areas of conflict.”<sup>81</sup>

In 1946, a post WWII Stalin’s foreign policy based on the Zhdanov’s “two camp” approach emerged. According to this doctrine, the world was divided into two opposite camps, democratic and imperialist, and inevitably, this approach strictly limited Soviet Union’s contacts with the rest of the world. Furthermore, it did not left much space for newly emerging countries of Asia and Africa, especially India, whose leader Jawaharlal Nehru was reluctant to adhere to either power block and advocated an independent, non-aligned position for the ex-colonial countries. During the Khrushchev Thaw instead, the Soviet Union, in contrast to the former Zhdanov doctrine, adopted the model of peaceful

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<sup>78</sup> Gienow-Hecht and Donfried, *Searching For a Cultural Diplomacy*, 38.

<sup>79</sup> Nigel Gould-Davies, “The Logic of Soviet Cultural Diplomacy,” *Diplomatic History* 27, no. 2 (2003): 193–214.

<sup>80</sup> J.D. Parks, *Culture, Conflict, and Coexistence: American-Soviet Cultural Relations 1917-1958* (Jefferson: McFarland, 1983), 126.

<sup>81</sup> Ninkovich, *The diplomacy of ideas*, 142.

coexistence, according to which two countries that differed in their economic, political and social systems must cooperate on the basis of mutual respect and non-interference in other's domestic affairs. Furthermore, the 1950s saw the emergence of newly independent countries in Asia and Africa and a shift in Soviet Union's international relationship from two camps approach to "three world strategy."<sup>82</sup> In conclusion, the de-Stalinization announced on the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956 was also the result of the intention to create and export a different image of the Soviet Union abroad.

This ideological and geopolitical shifts required rapid intensification of the Soviet contacts with the world. In 1956, one American diplomat was noted saying that the Russians suddenly became "ruthlessly friendly."<sup>83</sup> Ten years earlier, it must be recalled, American diplomat Kennan had predicted that the Soviets would put substantial resources in strengthening cultural relations with other countries without opening up to foreign ideas. How the Soviets managed to keep the country locked up and open to the world at the same time, and especially whether they were successful, remain the questions to answer.

Stalin's death in 1953 allowed the Soviet Union to change its orientation in foreign policy. Besides, this implied more active and vigorous cultural contact with the world, especially with the United States. The change of context and tactics required changes in organization and methods. To the dismay of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, cultural relations of the Soviet Union were brought under direct control of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Within days of Stalin's death, a Department for Ties with Foreign Communist Parties was created ad hoc and was in charge, among other things, to supervise the work of VOKS.<sup>84</sup> The changes in the Soviet bureaucratic machinery suggested that the country would not only seek to restore severed ties with the West, but would also open up to the emerging nations of Asia and Africa, in particular to India and the Middle East. For instance, already by 1957, Soviet friendship societies were established in 47 countries.<sup>85</sup> The same year, the Union of Soviet Societies of Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (SSOD) replaced VOKS. Along with the SSOD, the State Committee for Cultural Ties (GKKS) was created to coordinate cultural exchange plan not only with other communist countries as before, but also with the rest

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<sup>82</sup> Barghoorn, *Soviet Cultural Offensive*, 61.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> Gould-Davies, "The Logic of Soviet Cultural Diplomacy", 203.

<sup>85</sup> <http://documentstalk.com/wp/voks/>

of the world.<sup>86</sup> Formally, GKKS was meant to work as a state body, but in practice, it functioned like a department of the Central Committee of the CPSU. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs that previously had controlled cultural relations reluctantly acquiesced to all those changes and often criticized the activities and conduct of new cultural bodies.<sup>87</sup> In 1967, after Nikita Khrushchev was ousted and replaced by more conservative Leonid Brezhnev, ministerial control was re-established as GKKS was replaced by a new Department of Cultural Relations within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Cold War was a novel genre of war but nonetheless war. Several factors contributed to the evolvement of post-war tensions into a global conflict. First of them was the bipolar power setting that followed the World War II. Without doubt, the invention of nuclear weapons, that guaranteed total annihilation in case of their use on a vast scale, diminished the possibility of direct “hot” conflict between the two superpowers. Notwithstanding, it did not prevent them to engage in indirect military conflicts, to expand their sphere of influence within rival’s camp or in “undecided” countries, or to arm newly-emerged Third World countries. However, these skirmishes did not reduced the intensity of the Cold War because the decisive element was the deep-rooted power bipolarity that both the superpowers fuelled over the past decades.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, the Cold War ended when the Soviet Union abandoned its ideological antagonism that characterized the conflict, despite that such an entrenched bipolarity continued to exist and stockpiles of nuclear weapons did not diminish. Thus, the propagation of ideology, “way of life” and ideas was not a less effective and harmful weapon. The battle for “the hearts and minds” using economic and cultural influence rather than coercion and use of force was the main characteristic of the conflict.

### *Soft power*

In 1992, President George Bush senior famously declared that America finally won the Cold War. Since the late 1970s, some observers beyond Iron Curtain had predicted the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the near future.<sup>89</sup> Consequently, the revolutionary wave

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<sup>86</sup> Gould-Davies, “The Logic of Soviet”, 206.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> “Anticipations of the Failure of Communism,”

<http://web.archive.org/web/20060502123923/http://bailey83221.livejournal.com/80804.html>

that swept across Soviet satellite states in Eastern and Central Europe in 1989 seemed the outcome of the natural course of events for international public and observers. On March 11 1990, Lithuania restored its independence, the first Soviet-occupied state to do so and by the 1990s the dissolution of the Soviet Union was a fact hardly to be confirmed by the central government on 26 December 1991.

In the 1990s, scholars, experts and observers started to discuss the reasons behind the fall of the Soviet communist state. Some of them pointed not only to the inherent flaws of Soviet economic system or *glasnost* reforms carried out by Gorbachev, but also gave serious thought to the role of western culture and propaganda in fuelling resistance to communist regimes. Attention was drawn to some curious facts as the dissidents' habit to wear blue jeans and secretly listening to the Voice of America (VOA) and Radio Free Europe (RFE) in their own way to claim their resistance to the ruling regime.<sup>90</sup> Therefore, the transformative power of culture and cultural infiltration started to be considered along with the other factors that brought the end of Soviet state. It is clear that the Cold War was mainly a conflict of ideas, the clash between two different "ways of life."

Once the Cold War was over, the USA found itself without an opponent whose threat had been remembered continuously to the country for more than forty years. This meant that America had to reconsider its status, role, alliances and the would-be character of a likely global leadership. Two alternatives laid ahead: to go back to traditional protectionism and isolationism or to get involved even more in world affairs. The survey conducted after the demise of the USSR reported that half of the Americans believed that the USA was in decline and the majority of those who believed in decline counselled withdrawal from international commitments.<sup>91</sup> Joseph Nye, a political scientist who co-parented the theories of neoliberalism and complex interdependence in the 1970s, in 1990 strongly advocated global American leadership and introduced the concept of "soft power." This concept became a fashionable term in the late 1990s and 2000s and the first attempt to measure soft power resources through a composite index was made in 2010. Five sub-indices were considered: culture, diplomacy, government, education, business/innovation.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Pach, *A Companion to Dwight D. Eisenhower*, 372.

<sup>91</sup> Joseph S. Nye, "Soft Power", *Foreign Policy* 80, 1990: 153–171.

<sup>92</sup> "The new persuaders: An international ranking of soft power," Institute for Government, [https://web.archive.org/web/20110724053803/http://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/publications\\_download.php?id=20](https://web.archive.org/web/20110724053803/http://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/publications_download.php?id=20)

Early articulation of soft power concept appeared in various Nye's articles and his study *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (1990). Nye defined it as the second aspect of power, the first one, "hard power", being more coercive and tangible. According to Nye, for years, the economic resources countries possessed or the military might they had measured their power resources. However, the Cold War years and the changing nature of international politics made intangible forms of power, such as information or culture, more valuable and important.<sup>93</sup> Thus, for Nye soft power was another facet of power exercised by a certain country, its ability to co-opt, to shape the preferences of the citizens of other states through appeal and attraction and persuade others to do what it wants, rather than command, order or coerce.<sup>94</sup> Later on, Nye elaborated a concept of "smart power", a combination of both hard and soft power.<sup>95</sup> In his later view, soft power alone was not enough to attract others to follow; hard power (military and economic) was required too.

Nye argued that the attractiveness or soft power of a country arises from its culture, political ideals and policies. For instance, soft power of a certain country is enhanced when others consider its policies being legitimate.<sup>96</sup> It is clear that the main soft power resources are all kinds of cultural products capable to convey ideological messages, values and practices along with the propaganda of international and transnational institutions. Nye admitted that this "co-optive power" was no novelty because in his opinion, the Soviet Union profited greatly from such soft power resources as powerful communist ideology or the formidable web of transnational communist institutions.<sup>97</sup> There is evident connection between soft power and public diplomacy. If soft power is a country's resources to attract and persuade others, public diplomacy is a mean and strategy to promote and diffuse them. The strategies of public diplomacy such as broadcasting, promotion of cultural export and exchange, and so forth, are powerful instruments that the governments can employ in order to mobilize soft power resources and then spread them effectively.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Nye, "Soft Power," 164.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>95</sup> Nye, "Soft Power," 153–171 and Joseph S. Nye, "Get Smart: Combining Hard and Soft Power," *Foreign Affairs*, (2009): 1–3.

<sup>96</sup> Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), x.

<sup>97</sup> Joseph S. Nye, "Soft Power," 167.

<sup>98</sup> Joseph S. Nye, "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616 (March 2008): 95.

The aim of this chapter was to introduce to the reader the theoretical concepts of public and cultural diplomacy, and soft power. As the emergence of all these concepts was the result of the peculiar nature of the Cold War, the analysis of the conflict's origins was inevitable. Precisely in this period, cultural export started to play increasingly important role in the international relations and became an intrinsic part of the strategies of both Great Powers. The emergence of new diplomatic practices that were used to transmit cultural messages abroad had been facilitated by the vast diffusion of the means of mass communication as well as by the tensions and ideological polarizations of the Cold War when black-and-white rhetoric was invented to vilify or claim moral superiority over adversary. In essence, the Cold War was a cultural war fought with ideas instead of weapons as two antagonistic sides possessed the nuclear weapons whose use would have resulted in Mutual assured destruction (MAD). Both the United States and the Soviet Union understood that military support or economic aid alone were not sufficient or in many cases incapable of winning popular support. Thus, the export of cultural artifacts and values to different parts of the world became a key element of the Cold War strategy. Culture appeared to be a subtle, insinuating and less alarming mean to influence public opinion abroad.

## 2. Cold War ideology

In the settlement of America we have to observe how European life entered the continent, and how America modified and developed that life and reacted on Europe. Our early history is the study of European germs developing in an American environment. Too exclusive attention has been paid by institutional students to the Germanic origins, too little to the American factors. The frontier is the line of most rapid and effective Americanization.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of the opinion of the Slavophiles it is impossible to find an organic unity in Russian history. The Russians held sway over too vast an expanse of territory—the danger from the East, from the Tartar invasions (from which it protected the West as well), was too great. And the danger from the West itself was also great.<sup>2</sup>

The second chapter will examine the underlying ideologies of both USA and USSR that shaped their respective Cold War strategies and their implementation in the Third World with a particular focus on India. The chapter is divided into two broad sections. The first one examines cultural beliefs and political discourses on economic progress, society and liberty that constituted US ideology and eventually became American export to the world. Initial US interactions with the emerging Third World and India were cautious and uncertain because the USA had not had a significant history in its earlier contacts with this part of the developing world. Besides, general distrust towards each other existed on both Indian and American sides alike. Therefore, the first section will also analyse the motifs that impeded Indo-American rapprochement in the late 1940s and early 1950s paving the way for the future Soviet rapprochement with India. The second section outlines Russian and Soviet ideologies. The bulk of the beliefs about the country's special mission in the world, ever-present to varying degrees in the history of Imperial Russia, were

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<sup>1</sup> Fredrick J. Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History (1893)," American Historical Association, [https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/aha-history-and-archives/historical-archives/the-significance-of-the-frontier-in-american-history-\(1893\)](https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/aha-history-and-archives/historical-archives/the-significance-of-the-frontier-in-american-history-(1893))

<sup>2</sup> Nicholas Berdyaev, *The Origin of Russian Communism* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1972), 7.

eventually transformed and picked up by the Soviet state. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, like the USA, USSR was cautious and often suspicious towards the former colonial countries. However, unlike its Cold War adversary, the Soviet Union inherited from the Russian Empire the history of frequent contacts with and keen interest for India.

## **2.1. American ideology**

The question whether or not and if so, to what extent the USA should be involved in the world affairs had troubled the Americans since the XVIII century. The country, proud of its civil liberties enshrined principally in the Bill of Rights, ten amendments of the US Constitution, had long wondered whether its promise of American liberties was to be confined solely to Americans or should be exported to the peoples of the world. The American conduct during the Cold War gave a clear-cut answer: America, “the best country in the world”, should lead “peace-loving” peoples to the realm of democracy and material abundance. In the previous century, the USA got involved extensively in propaganda as well as military operations around the world, even if after the USA’s victory in the World War II, many Americans had not been seeing a necessity for the country to continue its international engagement after the conflict. However, already by the 1950, the USA was fighting its first proxy war in Korea and was entering into the cold war with the Soviet Union, encouraged by the increasing consensus among American public. This globally activist foreign policy was related to the perceived US global responsibility to check the expansion of communism stemming from the widely held cultural beliefs about America’s role as a leader of the world.

Already before the shock attack on Pearl Harbour in 1941 that pushed the USA into the WWII, Henry R. Luce, American magazine magnate, named the new forthcoming era the “American century.” In the article originally published in *Life* magazine, Luce pointed out that even though the majority of Americans were rich and, compared to the rest of the world, also blessed to enjoy their privileges, the sense of insecurity about the future of the country and the likelihood of further global conflicts and wars poisoned their

existence.<sup>3</sup> Luce stated that the “sickness of the world is also our sickness” and urged the US government to get into the war waging in Europe either, in order to defend the founding principles of the American state itself, namely liberty and democracy. Overall, America was responsible, to itself as well as to the history of the world for the future of humankind. According to Luce, America, even being the most powerful nation in the world, in the past had failed to live up to its natural role of leader and superpower. Sharing industrial American products and technical skills as well as liberty, civil rights and free will with the other world's nations should be the basis of a new internationalist US vision. Luce maintained that although politically USA was still reluctant to abandon isolationism, the country had already been exercising an internationalist attitude through the export of Hollywood movies, American jazz and all cultural products.<sup>4</sup> In his article, Luce had predicted the active and global role that the US played until the end of the twentieth century. Furthermore, he identified some of the main components of the future US Cold War ideology: American nationalism based on the ideas of exceptionalism, liberties and the material wealth generated by the capitalist system and the free market economy.

The birth of the United States at the time had no similarities with any other state in the world history. Unlike its European counterparts, where such attributes as common language, historical territory, ethnic, religious and cultural tradition or common descent were primary elements in the formation of nationhood, the core of American nationalism was the “universal message” of the US Declaration of Independence that proclaimed that all men were created equal and have certain unalienable rights as liberty and the pursuit of individual happiness.<sup>5</sup> Little more than 80 years after the proclamation of the Declaration of Independence, President Abraham Lincoln referred to this “universal message” as a force of national unity, because it bound together and amalgamated people of different ethnic ancestries into a common nationality.<sup>6</sup> Thus, this freedom, which also enabled US citizens to practice freely profession and business and owning property

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<sup>3</sup> Henry R. Luce, “The American Century,” *Diplomatic History* 23, no. 2 (Spring 1999): 159–171.

<sup>4</sup> Luce, “The American Century,” 169.

<sup>5</sup> “Declaration of Independence: A Transcription,” 4 July 1776, America’s Founding Documents, National Archives, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>  
Hans Kohn, *American Nationalism: an interpretative essay* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1980), 3–4, 8–10.

<sup>6</sup> “Speech at Chicago, Illinois,” 10 July 1858, Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, Volume 2, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/l/lincoln/lincoln2/1:526?rgn=div1;singlegenre=All;sort=occur;subview=detail;type=simple;view=fulltext;q1=Let+us+discard+all+this+quibbling>

distinguished the country among the others. Similarly, the citizens' opportunity to express their own will and talent to earn material comfort contrasted with rank and birth that still played crucial role in Europe.<sup>7</sup> Needless to say, these immense possibilities were granted to white Americans, the black slave population and other marginalized groups like native Indians did not enjoy them. In addition, continuous growth of American economy attracted flocks of foreigners looking for better life. For some of those white Americans the arrival of foreigners was a proof of US economic might, while others saw them either as elements difficult to assimilate or as a threat to the core values of American lifestyle.<sup>8</sup> At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, USA witnessed an unprecedented economic growth that made it the largest producer and supplier of goods and services in the world. Capitalism and free market were the sheer symbols of US economic liberties. In the liberalist ideology, private property rights go alongside with individual and civil rights and the successes of American capitalism became for American elite a further proof of the country's greatness. In 1893, four hundred years after Christopher Columbus' ships touched the shores of the New World, Chicago hosted the World's Columbian Exposition.<sup>9</sup> In the spectacular "White City", specially built for the event, America presented its latest technological achievements from farm machines, trains and dishwashers to processed food products and mass culture. As the Great Exhibition became a symbol of the might of the Victorian United Kingdom, the World's Columbian Exposition showed to the world the incredible potential of American capitalist system characterized by laissez-faire philosophy and minimum government interference in the economic affairs. The American dream was promoted by the ideology that Emily S.

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<sup>7</sup> "Correspondence from Thomas Jefferson to John Adams," 28 October 1813, Founders Online, National Archives,

<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-06-02-0446>

<sup>8</sup> The Chinese Exclusion Act was a United States federal law signed by President Chester A. Arthur on May 6, 1882, prohibiting all immigration of Chinese labourers.

The Immigration Restriction League was an American nativist and anti-immigration organization founded in 1894. The group's members felt that the American way of life was threatened by immigration from southern and eastern Europe and lobbied the U.S. government to pass anti-immigration legislation.

<sup>9</sup> The 1893 World's Parliament of Religions—held in conjunction with the Columbian Exposition in Chicago—took place at the Permanent Memorial Art Palace, now known as the Art Institute of Chicago. An Indian delegate, Swami Vivekananda, riveted the audience with his call for religious tolerance and an end to fanaticism. Over the next several weeks, thousands of attendees came to hear Swami Vivekananda and other leaders speak, making the Parliament a watershed moment in interfaith dialogue.

Rosenthal called “liberal developmentalism.”<sup>10</sup> She pointed out that the very peculiar historical experience shaped US brand-new liberalism. Precisely this ideology helped to elevate already-existent ideas about America’s uniqueness, in addition, the applicability and universality of its developmental model. Rosenthal broke the ideology into five major features: (1) belief that other nations *should* replicate America’s developmental experience; (2) faith in private free enterprise; (3) support for free access for trade and investment; (4) promotion of free flow of information and culture; (5) growing acceptance of governmental regulation in order to protect private enterprise and to stimulate American participation in international economic and cultural exchange.<sup>11</sup> At the time of the World’s Columbian Exposition, Americans started to conceive their mission in a new, modern sense inspired by the unprecedented economic growth the country was experiencing. Some commentators called the Exposition the Divine Exposition or New Jerusalem.

This new faith in the successes of capitalism had religious and intellectual roots. The widespread belief that Protestant Christianity was a prerequisite for modernization was the source of the idea of the superiority of “Anglo-Saxon race.” Josiah Strong (1847-1916), an American Protestant clergyman, in his popular book *Our Country* (1885) argued that two great needs of humankind, “the light of the highest Christian civilization [Protestantism]” together with civil liberties were the most efficient ministers to humankind’s progress. Logically, the Anglo-Saxons, the embodiment of these two ideas, bore a special responsibility to the fate of the world.<sup>12</sup> Strong’s view on the race was quite distinct as it excluded the existence of a “pure race” and often defined Anglo-Saxons as simply English-speakers, “assimilated Americans.” He stressed that “the marked superiority of this (Anglo-Saxon) race is due, in large measure, to its highly mixed origin.”<sup>13</sup> In order to support his argument, Strong cited the thoughts of British orientalist Sir Henry Rawlinson who had claimed that the mixed races of humankind were superior to the pure ones. Besides, Strong was quite confident that the recent influx of immigrants “be expected to add value to the amalgam which will constitute the new Anglo-Saxon

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<sup>10</sup> Emily S. Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 7.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Josiah Strong “Our Country” (excerpt),

<https://www.hazlet.org/userfiles/31/Classes/1171/1%20-%20josiah%20strong-excerpt.pdf?id=3241>

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

race of the New World.”<sup>14</sup> The Protestant preacher also touched another two crucial points. According to him, the mobile American society was superior to “fixed and fossilized” European society, as in the USA “everyone is <...> free to transform himself from a rail splitter or a tanner or a canal-boy, into the nation's President.” Besides, Anglo-Saxons had an instinct or genius for colonizing, unequalled energy, indomitable perseverance and personal independence, the characteristics of a real pioneer. Thus, in Strong’s view, the blessed Anglo-Saxon race would spread itself over the Earth, “will move down upon Mexico, down upon Central and South America, out upon the islands of the sea, over upon Africa and beyond.”<sup>15</sup> American philosopher John Fiske (1842-1901) shared Strong’s conviction about America’s glorious future and the faith in Anglo-Saxon race. According to him, the success of the USA lay in in federal system that limited Central government’s power and in a unique combination of racial and cultural inheritance.<sup>16</sup> Fiske extolled Anglo-Saxon productivity and called for a worldwide extension of American institutions and industrial civilization.<sup>17</sup>

The history of the USA seems to manifest Strong's American instinct for colonizing. During the World’s Columbian Exposition, American historian Frederick J. Turner the presented his essay “The significance of the Frontier in American History.” Though Turner’s “frontier thesis” had dealt primarily with the American past, it had strong implications for the future.<sup>18</sup> He wrote that “up to our own day American history has been in a large degree the history of the colonization of the Great West. The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development. Behind institutions, behind constitutional forms and modifications, lie the vital forces that call these organs into life, and shape them to meet changing conditions.”<sup>19</sup> Therefore, the emergence of both American liberal democracy and the so-called “the American way of life” was basically the result of both territorial and spiritual expansion. “The peculiarity of American institutions is, the fact

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> “Democratic Imperialism,” American Empire, [http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/history/waughj/classes/gildedage/private/american\\_empire/history/democratic\\_imperialism.html](http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/history/waughj/classes/gildedage/private/american_empire/history/democratic_imperialism.html)

<sup>17</sup> Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream*, 8.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 14

<sup>19</sup> Fredrick J. Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History (1893),” American Historical Association, [https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/aha-history-and-archives/historical-archives/the-significance-of-the-frontier-in-american-history-\(1893\)](https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/aha-history-and-archives/historical-archives/the-significance-of-the-frontier-in-american-history-(1893))

that they have been compelled to adapt themselves to the changes of an expanding people—to the changes involved in crossing a continent, in winning a wilderness, and in developing at each area of this progress out of the primitive economic and political conditions of the frontier into the complexity of city life.”<sup>20</sup> Unlike in Europe, US Constitution and institutions were not the products of theoretic discussions, but arose from of the real life and practical experience. In addition, Turner argued that Americans as a nation were very different from the others who progressed in circumscribed regions and whose development was strongly influenced by the other nations living nearby. Turner’s frontier thesis tried to explain the difference between the frontier Europe and the United States: “The American frontier is sharply distinguished from the European frontier—a fortified boundary line running through dense populations. The most significant thing about the American frontier is, that it lies at the hither edge of free land. In the census reports, it is treated as the margin of that settlement which has a density of two or more to the square mile. The term is an elastic one, and for our purposes does not need sharp definition.”<sup>21</sup> The pioneer spirit of the settlers that led to the conquest of American nature forged American nation and its socio-economic development: “American social development has been continually beginning over again on the frontier. This perennial rebirth, this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character.” Turner elaborated on power of wilderness on the European newcomer that made him a brand new American character:

<...> The wilderness masters the colonist. It finds him a European in dress, industries, tools, modes of travel, and thought. It takes him from the railroad car and puts him in the birch canoe. It strips off the garments of civilization and arrays him in the hunting shirt and the moccasin. It puts him in the log cabin of the Cherokee and Iroquois and runs an Indian palisade around him. Before long he has gone to planting Indian corn and plowing with a sharp stick; he shouts the war cry and takes the scalp in orthodox Indian fashion. In short, at the frontier the environment is at first too strong for the man. He must accept the conditions which it furnishes, or perish, and so he fits himself into the Indian clearings and follows the Indian trails. Little by little he transforms the wilderness; but the outcome is not the old Europe,

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

not simply the development of Germanic germs, any more than the first phenomenon was a case of reversion to the Germanic mark. The fact is, that here is a new product that is American.<sup>22</sup>

The establishment of the frontier was unfinished, the country itself fluid and mouldable and the building of America yet incomplete. Not surprisingly, the thoughts of Turner, Strong and Fiske were often employed for justifying and encouraging American sphere of influence's expansion in order to "save" or "regenerate" the USA. However, at the time, the question was how far the frontier should be pushed and whether the entire American continent would be enough for a nation of adventurers and pioneers. At any rate, at the end of the nineteenth century, America overthrew Hawaiian Kingdom, once an independent nation, and took over Philippines and Cuba in the aftermath of Spanish-American War. The Monroe Doctrine stood in contrast to European powers' meddling in the Americas and gave sanction and impetus for American actions up until the end of the Cold War.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, newly seized territories fell into American commercial interest area and the direct defence of them would allow expanding trade market for all. For example, at the end of nineteenth the century, Cuba exported 90% of its production to the United States whose exports in turn comprised 40% of all Cuban imports.<sup>24</sup> Even though the United States officially had always sided with non-interventionist powers, since then the protection of the economic interest of the country had justified any territorial annexation. American interventionism manifested itself in various forms much before its total exposure during the Cold War and some scholars argued that the capitalist system demanding new markets was a perennial guide of the US foreign policy.<sup>25</sup> The thoughts of Thomas W. Wilson, future president of the USA but still in the role of academic in 1907, summed up this conclusion: "Since the manufacturer insists on having the world as a market, the flag of his nation must follow him, and the doors of nations which are closed against him must be battered down."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> The doctrine, first articulated by US President James Monroe in 1823, opposed European colonialism in the Western Hemisphere. It held that any intervention in the political affairs of the Americas by foreign powers was a potentially hostile act against the US.

<sup>24</sup> Pérez, Louis A., Jr, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 149.

<sup>25</sup> Odd Arne Westad, *Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 28.

<sup>26</sup> Matthew F. Jacobsen, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), 46.

The boundless West, the conquest, its appropriation and the consolidation of the American state coined a peculiar American character based on individualism. In fact, many sociologists and psychologists of the twentieth century analysed the distinctiveness of the American individualism, while in the nineteenth century, R. W. Emerson, the main exponent of transcendentalist movement, had called it “self-reliance.” In the famous essay bearing the same name, the philosopher advocated the ethical and individualistic lifestyle that according to him was the only one enabling an individual to grow mentally and spiritually. In his view, the society with its petty needs and institutionalized religious dogmas hindered the natural self-growth of the individuals.<sup>27</sup> A century later, the sociologist Robert M. Williams argued that in the American society the ultimate “source of action, meaning and responsibility is the individual, not the group.”<sup>28</sup> Thence the members of a society rooted in the culture based on individualism should not explain the events of life merely in terms of faith, destiny or circumstances, but in those of individual interests and will. Various sociological and psychological experiments confirmed that Americans were likelier to feel that they have full control of their lives than were the citizens of Western European democracies, not to mention more traditionally collectivist Asian and Arabian societies.<sup>29</sup> Since then, the ideas about American liberties and the prevalence of individualism highly contributed to the view spread in the country that the very antipode of liberty was the state of submissiveness. Jefferson in his correspondence quite often voiced his horror about feudal system still ongoing in Europe or Europeans’ dependence on “tinsel-aristocracy.” In fact, the USA at least for two hundred years since its foundation had not done anything to build a highly centralized state.

The pronounced individualism and the unfavourable attitude towards the highly centralized state evolved into an anti-collectivist sentiment that became one of the elements of American Cold War ideology.<sup>30</sup> All kinds of collective forms of government were looked upon suspiciously in the United States, as collectivism along with traditional and antimodernist trends seemed to be the cause of all the wars in Europe.<sup>31</sup> The advent of communist in Russia in some Americans triggered feelings of anxiety, fear, uneasiness

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<sup>27</sup> “Self-Reliance” in Ralph W. Emerson, *Essays*, Gutenberg Project,

<https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/16643/pg16643-images.html#SELF-RELIANCE>

<sup>28</sup> Claude S. Fischer, “Paradoxes of American Individualism,” *Sociological Forum* 23, no. 2 (June 2008): 363–372.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Westad, *Global Cold War*, 11.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

that went to nurture and exacerbate the ideology that defined Cold War America: anti-communism. At first, many Americans welcomed the October Revolution that ended the tsardom in Russia as it was considered the most reactionary absolute rule in Europe. Quite soon, it became clear that the Bolsheviks were not going to follow along on the American revolutionary path. On the contrary, the new regime proclaimed a permanent and international revolution stressing the role of the masses, not individual's. Already on July 1918, US President Wilson, under pressure of Britain and France, agreed to deploy in Archangelsk 5,000 American soldiers, Polar Bear Expedition, that would take part in the Russian Civil War against Bolsheviks.<sup>32</sup> Another contingent of 8,000 soldiers, American Expeditionary Force Siberia, was shipped to Vladivostok. However, the American involvement in the Russian Civil War was only one side of the medal, as the nascent anti-communism found fertile ground in the USA itself.

Almost simultaneously with the American campaign in Russia, the First Red Scare had started targeting communist and anarchist groups on the American soil and all people suspected of leftist leanings. The end of WWI saw an increased social and political turmoil in the form of labour strikes and the bombings aimed at the federal authorities.<sup>33</sup> The political leaders and the press presented these occurrences to American public as deeply frightening, anti-national and as the signs of approaching communist conspiracy to subvert "the American way of life." But the strikes and other radical activities were the expressions of growing social discontent in US society especially among migrant populations and other marginalised groups. In the period between 1870 and 1920, the United States received 26 million of migrants.<sup>34</sup> All these people became so-called hyphenated Americans, a term that was first used at the very end of the nineteenth century. The term, which initially referred to the migrants of foreign origin who used a hyphen between the name of their ethnicity and the word "American" such as Irish-American and similar, later became a disparaging and derogatory epithet. This metonymical reference became an ethnicity indicator and only after they dropped the use of hyphen they could have become fully integrated members of the American society as the hyphenated

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<sup>32</sup> Robert R. Willet, *Russian Sideshow: America's undeclared war, 1918-1920* (Dulles: Brassey's, 2005), 267.

<sup>33</sup> I refer particularly to the 1919 United States anarchist bombings, a series of bombings and attempted bombings carried out by followers of the Italian anarchist Luigi Galleani from April through June 1919.

<sup>34</sup> Westad, *Global Cold War*, 14.

Americans were considered only half Americans.<sup>35</sup> American Presidents Roosevelt and Wilson were among the harshest critics of “hyphenated Americanism.” The former stressed that “there is no place in this country for hyphenated Americanism,” while the latter went further in saying that “any man who carries a hyphen about with him carries a dagger that he is ready to plunge into the vitals of this Republic whenever he gets ready.”<sup>36</sup> The growing social unrest in the USA and the emergence of Soviet communism could have threatened the growth of capitalism and with it the role of the USA as a purveyor of modernity.

Soviet communism disturbed American conscience for various reasons. As argued before, the latter represented a collectivist ideology, diametrically opposed to American one centred on the individual. The Soviets had produced not only strong symbol for poor and downtrodden to grapple to, the October Revolution, but at the same time they found a state based on the one-party rule that proclaimed the internationalism in its revolutionary promises and set the layout of an economy entirely controlled by the state. In the eyes of many Americans, the Soviet state embodied everything that the official US ideology stood against: dictatorship, centralism, full state control over the economy and collectivism. The irony was that both countries were founded on universal and messianic premises aiming at the betterment of humanity, rather than on the concepts of nationhood in an European sense. Most importantly, the Soviets offered an alternative to the American type of modernity. Therefore, the worries of the USA did not end because in proclaiming the internationalism, the Soviets challenged the growing American ambitions in the world. For this reason, the two states were programmed into stark rivalry since their first direct encounter, American involvement in the Russian Revolution against Bolsheviks.

When the WWII ended and the USA found itself in stark antagonism with the USSR, cultural symbols assumed particular importance as the nature of the Cold War impeded *direct* military action between two superpowers. For US leadership became clear that the Cold War could be won by showing to the world the best of America, its culture and the achievements of capitalist system. Luce, who before the US entrance to the WWII

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<sup>35</sup> Mary Ann Trasciatti, “Hooking the Hyphen: Woodrow Wilson’s War Rhetoric and the Italian American Community,” in *Who Belongs in America? Presidents, Rhetoric, and Immigration*, ed. Vanessa B. Beasley (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2006), 107–133.

<sup>36</sup> Woodrow Wilson, “Final Address in Support of the League of Nations,” September 25, 1919, <https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/wilsonleagueofnations.htm>

advocated the active American involvement in the world affairs, had suggested that that the USA was already exercising an immense cultural power through its music, cinema, literature and consumer products. In 1986, French philosopher Régis Debray had famously said that “There is more power in rock music, videos, blue jeans, fast food, news networks and TV satellites than in the entire Red Army.”<sup>37</sup> Both of them were right – in the twentieth century American products and mass culture filled the world’s shops and cultural venues, while the Soviet Union was dissolved in an incredible speed and even the might of the Red Army was unable to prevent political, socioeconomic and cultural dismemberment of the country. However, the persistence of the social phenomenon of nostalgia for the Soviet Union’s socioeconomic system, aesthetics and culture poses many questions. The Soviet Union exercised an immense attraction even (or especially) among those who have never set the foot in the country, but were drawn towards it by the strong symbolism represented by the Soviet communism.

## **2.2. USA policy towards the Third World and India**

The Cold War ended when the Soviet Union collapsed and consequentially abandoned its ideological antagonism since the conflict between the two Great Powers was defined primarily in the ideological terms. However, in the post-cold war world, the USA did not disentangle itself from its international engagements that country had earlier undertaken before in the developing countries. In some cases, its involvement even increased as the Third World during the Cold War had become an area of special interest to the United States.<sup>38</sup> Once the periphery of the conflict, after the Korean War, the developing world became a major theatre of both ideological and military warfare as the status quo in the divided Europe had stabilized.

A blend of cultural and religious beliefs about America’s special mission in the world marked the history of the country from Jefferson’s “Empire of Liberty” theme to the

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<sup>37</sup> “The fall of the wall: revelation, not revolution,” <https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/the-fall-of-the-wall-revelation-not-revolution/gQGMJ7Az?hl=en>

<sup>38</sup> Valsamma Sebastian, “US policy towards the third world: shifting contours of containment,” *Indian History Congress* 69 (2008): 965–978.

widespread “Manifest Destiny” concept.<sup>39</sup> All these facets of a single firm ideology had teleological roots – American development model should guide other nations towards social and economic betterment. However, the questions arose how the USA should introduce itself to and interact with the world. The period before the Cold War saw the dominance of European imperialism and the US, itself a former colony was reluctant, almost horrified to follow the European model in its interactions with other nations. Inherently, the conventional role of the imperialist power was alien to the USA, but at the end of the nineteenth century, the country established a formal empire by acquiring control over the Philippines, Cuba, Puerto Rico and Guam in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War (1898).<sup>40</sup> In addition, already after the WWI, America also started to assert itself as the protector of democratic liberties and balancer of a capitalist world market.<sup>41</sup> Paradoxically, in the regions that immediately were not vital to the US national interests during and after the WWII, the homeland of capitalist democracy relied on the advice offered by former colonial powers, in the case of India, by the British.

As a watershed event, the WWI victory formalised America’s new role in the world as “make the world safe for democracy” was the slogan with which the country had entered the war. The Fourteen Points speech, a manifesto of Wilsonian idealism, clearly defined a likely new role for the USA as free trade on the seas, equal trade conditions and settlement of territorial disputes should be regulated primarily by the United States as the war had reduced to a very great extent the strength and importance of Europe. As the end of the WWII saw the beginning of decolonization processes, European colonial powers had to face and admit in front of a new world order guided by the USA, that they had failed to fulfil their proclaimed mission in the colonies, that is, to “civilize” them. Quite the contrary, the colonialism halted the social and economic development and created possible breeding grounds for social unrests. The rise and expansion of Western capitalism in particular shaped the destiny of colonial countries.<sup>42</sup> If, during the interwar period, the US had remained somewhat aside from world affairs caught in the middle of

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<sup>39</sup> “Empire of Liberty” is a theme developed by T. Jefferson that stressed the responsibility of the USA to spread freedom across the world.

“Manifest Destiny” was a widely held cultural belief of the nineteenth century that claimed the USA is destined to expand its dominion and spread democracy and capitalism across North America.

<sup>40</sup> Atul Kohli, *Imperialism and the Developing World: How Britain and the United States shaped the Global Periphery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 209.

<sup>41</sup> Westad, *Global Cold War*, 15.

<sup>42</sup> Kohli, *Imperialism and the Developing World*, 2.

the Great Depression and its aftereffects, the WWII cemented American role as the Great Power. The US-led coalition defeated Nazism proving that the US could fulfil its mission in the world, to “defeat evil.” At the same time, both world wars showed to the US that the world needed “Americanism” in order to clear the whole world of such reactionary ideologies as Nazism or fascism. The decade following the Second World War would have provided a chance to rebuild and remake the world following America’s guidance. However, the Soviet conduct and attitude after the war shuffled all the cards.

In the election of 1948, Harry S. Truman, in defiance of many predictions and polls, secured the second mandate as the President of the United States. His second inauguration that was held on 20 January 1949 was a remarkable event by all means. The swearing in ceremony was accompanied by an air parade, the first one to be broadcasted on the US television. Besides, it was transmitted locally on radio and internationally by the Voice of America, translated into various languages, including Russian and German. For this reason, Truman’s inauguration attracted an audience bigger than all the previous inaugurations combined.<sup>43</sup> In 1947, when the Truman doctrine of containment had been announced, in his public statements, Truman had avoided any direct reference to the Soviet Union. However, in merely two years the situation had been changing rapidly. In 1948, the USA set up the Marshall Plan, and finalized the careful preparations of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Truman's inaugural address better known as the Four Point Speech was a milestone in US foreign policy because it summed up the future US global strategy and highlighted the universal mission of American nation, bypassing completely the domestic concerns that had previously prevented the country to engage in international affairs. The president stated that the US main purpose was to “work for a world in which all nations and all peoples are free to govern themselves as they see fit and to achieve a decent and satisfying life.”<sup>44</sup> As sworn enemies, both the communism and the Soviet Union, came under attack by the president, who proclaimed the first to be “a false philosophy” and the second, albeit without naming it, a hostile and ruthless purveyor of that humbug in the world. After a series of dramatic comparisons between the virtues of democracy and the flaws of communism, the president arrived to the four points that would mould subsequently the

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<sup>43</sup> “More Persons Expected to View Inauguration By Video Than Combined Previous Witnesses,” *The New York Times*, January 20, 1949.

<sup>44</sup> “Inaugural Address of Harry S. Truman,” January 20, 1949, The Avalon Project, [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/truman.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/truman.asp)

US foreign policy. First point affirmed US unfaltering support for the United Nations and related agencies. Second stated the US commitment in world economic recovery, namely the Marshall Plan. The third one vowed to strengthen “freedom-loving” nations against the dangers of aggression, in other words the expansion of military alliances. The fourth point announced a “bold and new” programme to share American scientific advances and industrial progress for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped countries.<sup>45</sup> The last point gave a fresh impetus to the creation of a specific US policy towards the developing world that quite soon would be named “The Point Four Programme.” In order not to fuel speculations on the subject, Truman in his speech reiterated that this objective was not a colonial venture to dominate other countries, not “the old imperialism – exploitation for foreign profit”.<sup>46</sup> Neither it would be a stream of capital investment as the Marshall Plan was, because “the material resources <...> to use for the assistance of other peoples are limited. But our imponderable resources in technical knowledge are constantly growing.”<sup>47</sup> However, the exceedingly simplistic description of the technical assistance programme given by the president raised numerous questions in the State administration about which countries would be considered underdeveloped and consequently were going to benefit from the programme. For the policymakers was quite clear that Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and the most of Far East would inevitably be the beneficiaries of such technology transfer. However, the main problem behind the technical assistance programme was not whether or not a certain country was underdeveloped, but rather whether its government would be willing to accept American cooperative programme.<sup>48</sup> Yet, months after the outline of the ambitious technical assistance plan to the Third World followed by the establishment of an advisory committee, there was a great deal of confusion and misunderstanding about what exactly Point Four meant, a fact admitted by the president himself.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> “Possible Questions and Suggested Answers Concerning the President’s Technical Assistance Proposal,” April 12, 1949, Harry S. Truman Library, <https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/research-files/possible-questions-and-suggested-answers-concerning-presidents-technical?documentid=NA&pagenumber=1>

<sup>49</sup> “Correspondence Between Harry S. Truman and E.E. Cox,” October 19, 1949, Harry S. Truman Library, <https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/research-files/correspondence-between-harry-s-truman-and-ee-cox>

Even if the Truman announced “bold and new” programme for the developing world, it was not a complete novelty. The previous Roosevelt administration had set a series of precedents for the US policy towards the wider world. The most important of them was the foundation of the Institute of Inter-American Affairs (IIAA) in 1939 whose main function was to collaborate with Latin American governments to control the extraction of raw materials, increase domestic production and contrast Nazi inroads into the New World.<sup>50</sup> German policy in the area was perceived as a threat alienating Central and South America from the United States through economic, cultural, psychological and subversive means.<sup>51</sup> Thus, apart from economic activities, the IIAA was interested in spreading the ideology of Pan-Americanism. The IIAA “cultural” activities were intended for foreign consumption and were sponsored by public and private American organizations “interested in promoting Pan-Americanism.”<sup>52</sup> The curious detail is that the IIAA was the brainchild of Nelson Rockefeller, one of the most influential American businessmen who in 1941 became the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (CIAA). According to US Secretary of State in the Truman administration, Dean Acheson, the IIAA was the “inspiration and proving ground” for the Point Four.<sup>53</sup> Thus, it is not surprising that after the announcement of the Point Four, Truman’s advisors had misgivings about the programme’s approach and design because at first glance the new strategy for the third world and the former one targeting Latin America looked essentially alike.<sup>54</sup> The direct filiation of the Point Four Programme from the IIAA was substantiated from the strong support of Rockefeller to the new programme.<sup>55</sup>

The practical implementation of the Point Four had to wait until 1950. The first country to engage with American technical assistance programme was Iran through a bilateral agreement signed on October 19, 1950. The technical assistance pointed especially at “the

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<sup>50</sup> Stephen Macekura, “The Point Four Program and U.S. International Development Policy,” *Political Science Quarterly* 128, No. 1 (Spring 2013), 128.

<sup>51</sup> “Records of the Office of Inter-American Affairs,” National Archives and Records Service, 1973, <https://www.archives.gov/files/research/foreign-policy/related-records/rg-229-inter-american-affairs.pdf#page=9>, 1.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>53</sup> Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1987), 331.

<sup>54</sup> Possible Questions and Suggested Answers,” <https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/research-files/possible-questions-and-suggested-answers-concerning-presidents-technical?documentid=NA&pagenumber=1>

<sup>55</sup> United States Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, International Technical Cooperation Act of 1949, 81st Congress, 1st Session, 79–97.

<https://congressional.proquest.com/congressional>

development of rural areas in Persia” and the funds were to be “spent mainly on improving existing facilities for rural hygiene and rural education, with training and demonstration centres, and on the development of agriculture by scientific methods.”<sup>56</sup> Iran was also granted a loan of \$25m. Loan and the funds of Point Four worked according in the general scheme of the seven-year plan, designated to make “a prosperous economic foundation for political stability in the country.”<sup>57</sup> As the decolonization processes were gaining momentum, the Point Four, though modelled after existing precedence of the IIAA, assumed a somewhat different form. First, the programme’s geography was not limited to Americas, but included the entire underdeveloped world. Most importantly, the Point Four linked economic growth of a country to regional defence strategy and the global trade.<sup>58</sup> In conclusion, the small-scale assistance served to a much larger geopolitical strategy.

India was one of the first beneficiaries of the Point Four. On 28 December 1950, the country signed a bilateral agreement that allowed one hundred Indian technical students to study in the US and receive fifty American technical experts, plus the first allocation of 1.2 million dollars. The main sectors of economy that required the most urgent interventions were food industry, communications, multipurpose river-valley projects, education and public health.<sup>59</sup> In 1950-51, the Point Four technicians oversaw the establishment of a penicillin plant, several schools and medical research facilities.<sup>60</sup> The agreement explicitly stated that “individual liberty, free institutions, and independence, on the one hand, and sound economic conditions and stable international economic relationship on the other hand, are mutually interdependent.”<sup>61</sup> It is clear that American strategical goals were twofold: it wished to support young and fragile Indian democracy, but at the same time to distance India from its two Communist neighbours, the Soviet Union and China.<sup>62</sup> In addition, the first Point Four agreement with India established Information and Publicity objectives such as “the Governments of the United States of

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<sup>56</sup> *The Times*, October 24, 1950

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Macekura, “The Point Four Program,” 129.

<sup>59</sup> *The Times*, December 29, 1950.

<sup>60</sup> Macekura, “The Point Four Program,” 149.

<sup>61</sup> “Point Four General Agreement for technical co-operation between India and the United States of America,” December 28, 1950, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, Bilateral/Multilateral Documents,

<https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/6254/Agreement+on+Technical+Cooperation>

<sup>62</sup> M.S. Chary, *The eagle and the peacock: US foreign policy toward India since independence* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1995), 48.

America and India will endeavour in mutual consultation to give full publicity to the objectives and progress of the technical cooperation program carried on under this Agreement.”<sup>63</sup>

The first and meagre initiatives of the Point Four in India had been preceded by an animated discussion about Indian subcontinent inside the US Government. Hardly gained Indian independence in 1947 came along with the creation of a Muslim-majority counterpart, Pakistan.<sup>64</sup> Many observers in the USA viewed Pakistan as an anomalous, even accidental, state whose nation was bound solely by religious identity. Since after gained independence, India and Pakistan, once the part of the same territorial entity, had a troubled relationship to say the least. The timing of these bittersweet events in the subcontinent, independence and partition, coincided with the heightening Cold War tensions because political instability and socioeconomic distress were plaguing the Western Europe and Eastern Mediterranean, the very regions Americans considered the safekeepers of their own security. The Soviet Union clearly moved away from the wartime alliance that had defeated Nazi Germany and assumed an aggressive stance towards the USA who feared that the former could use this unhappy situation to seize chunks of Europe that was the world’s richest strategic prize, from American control.<sup>65</sup> When India and Pakistan took shape on the world map as two distinct sovereign states, they seemed far removed from the major arena of Cold War struggles.

Before independence in India, there was a degree of sympathy shared by some Indian leaders towards the capitalist country and this sentiment was reciprocated by some Americans too. Jawaharlal Nehru for one looked with high expectations to Roosevelt’s America and in the war years openly declared that, the USA was the only great democratic country left “to keep the torch of democratic freedom alight.”<sup>66</sup> As many colonial freedom fighters in the first half of XX century, Nehru admired the USA because it had managed to liberate itself from the clutches of the British and thus was the country that embodied the success of anti-colonial struggle. During the WWII, facing the weakened British

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<sup>63</sup> Point Four General Agreement for technical co-operation between India and the United States of America, December 28, 1950.

<sup>64</sup> The partition of the subcontinent that followed saw the massive communal violence leaving around half a million dead and set in motion one of the greatest population movements in history – eleven and a half million people left their homes in search of safety and security.

<sup>65</sup> Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War On The Periphery: the United States, India and Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 4.

<sup>66</sup> Gopal Sarvepalli, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, Volume One (1889-1947)* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1975), 260.

Empire India seized the moment to push its demands for independence, which British were unwilling to accept. Roosevelt tried to pressure Winston Churchill into making some concessions but the latter was intransigent to grant any liberties to Indians.<sup>67</sup> In order not to antagonize further American ally, US president fell silent on the subject. However, fifty-seven prominent Americans signed a petition published in *The New York Times* on 28 September 1942 urging the president to engage in the Indian question.<sup>68</sup> Precisely this American reluctance to deal with the British prerogatives in India was the first important Indo-US divergence that was at the root of future rocky relations between the two countries.<sup>69</sup> Overall, the USA was allied with the very western powers that had colonies and the rise of nationalist movements in the colonial world posed complicated and tough questions to Americans. As a former colony itself, the USA was sensible to Indian sentiments, but as it emerged, the wartime alliance that could have helped secure the victory proved to be a decisive factor in the US attitude towards India.

The arrival of the “American Century” uttered by Henry Luce in 1942 attracted some sections of the Indian elite who looked in awe at American power and potential manifested in US technology, military and economy. However, the country that was freeing out of British economic exploitation was cautious regarding American economic either might or system. The biggest English daily in India at the time *Amrita Bazar Patrika* dedicated one of its editorials to the USA in which it extolled the possibility of American aid to the world. However, the editorial further stated that unless the US government and officials could clear their position towards the exploitative nature of the private capital, then only the USA could really qualify for the moral leadership of the peoples of the world which it was seeking to gain.<sup>70</sup> During Roosevelt’s tenure, there was a great deal of interest and idealism in India regarding the United States. The same period also saw the American companies’ efforts to gain a foothold in the Indian market, much to the frustration of European firms. In turn, Indian capitalists anticipated for the

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<sup>67</sup> Francine R. Frankel, *When Nehru Looked East: Origins of India-US Suspicion and India-China Rivalry*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 5–9.

<sup>68</sup> Atul Bhardwaj, *India-America Relations (1942-1962): Rooted in the Liberal International Order* (New York: Routledge, 2021), 7.

<sup>69</sup> Max J. Zins and Gilles Bouqérat, *India in the Mirror of Foreign Diplomatic Archives* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2004), 116.

<sup>70</sup> *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, December 5, 1943.

<https://eap.bl.uk/collection/EAP262-1->

[1/search?f%5B0%5D=c\\_archive\\_type%3AFile&f%5B1%5D=c\\_languages%3AEnglish&page=1](https://eap.bl.uk/collection/EAP262-1-1/search?f%5B0%5D=c_archive_type%3AFile&f%5B1%5D=c_languages%3AEnglish&page=1)

American lead in the post-war economic recovery.<sup>71</sup> Overall, the expectations for the future Indo-American relations were high as there were more points of possible convergence than discord in the interests of the both countries but once independence arrived to India, the prospect of thriving Indo-American relations was compromised by much broader Cold War calculations.

Before the WWII, American interest in India had been quite restricted. Generally, on the official level, the question of Indian independence was often regarded as a concern of the British alone. In addition, the cultural contacts between India and the USA were very limited as well as American knowledge of the Asian country. At any rate, American policymakers were not completely indifferent to the region, but India simply did not figure high in the US foreign policy priorities dictated by the Cold War rules. One of the reasons for this lack of interest was that the USA was not afraid of the Communist infiltration in India.<sup>72</sup> In order to deal with Indian subcontinent American officials coined a regional approach based on quite dubious premises. In the first years of its diplomatic interaction with both India and Pakistan, the USA formally sought to establish the most constructive possible bilateral relationships with both countries. This American evenhanded approach was formulated on the advice offered by the Great Britain, former colonial master in the region, and implied one crucial assumption: both countries, for all hatred and conflicts caused by partition, were still interdependent entities. For this reason, economic, political and security problems that plagued the two countries should be resolved in the spirit of mutual cooperation and in no other way.<sup>73</sup> Besides, as the Cold War imposed its rules based on the strategic geopolitical calculus, American government mandarins believed that the two countries would adhere to the goals of US foreign policy, formally or informally aligning with the West and rejecting the Soviet Union's overtures.

Quite soon, it became clear that regional, equitable approach could not hold. The Truman administration showed more interest towards India as at first, Pakistan was seen as a geopolitical anomaly. India was considered superior in its manpower, resources, possible international prestige and leadership. However, at the dawn of independence, India was rather overwhelmed by a myriad of ineradicable socioeconomic problems but the US policymakers believed that endorsing the American side in the Cold War the country

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<sup>71</sup> Bhardwaj, *India-America Relations*, 8.

<sup>72</sup> Zins and Bouq erat, *India in the Mirror*, 116.

<sup>73</sup> McMahon, *The Cold War On The Periphery*, 12.

could improve and grow. Most importantly, India's alignment with the West would have been a real diplomatic success for the USA enhancing latter's prestige and stature all over the developing world.<sup>74</sup> However, the initial tilt towards India was checked by two factors. First, already before the independence of the country, leader of the Indian nationalist movement and first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had made clear that India would resist all efforts to draw it into the Western and Soviet camps alike. Second, significant sections of the U.S. intelligence and defence insisted that Pakistan's strategic location, separated only by the narrow Wakhan Corridor from the Soviet republic of Tajikistan and jutting out the oil fields of the Middle East, made it a valuable strategic asset that the USA could not afford to alienate. Moreover, India itself did show particular eagerness to adhere to the Western block while its Muslim neighbour, though inferior to India in its resources, manpower and leadership, occupied a strategic place in the US geopolitical calculations.

For the American policymakers, as well as for their Soviet counterparts, India's non-alignment was the pebble in the shoe. As both Cold War rivals saw the world as a strategic chessboard and various countries as the pieces on it, India's resistance to join either camp created a deal of irritation and suspicion for both Great Powers. The conviction that economic and social stability oriented nations towards the West and made them resistant to communist pressures was deeply entrenched in the American Cold War rationale. India was neither socially nor economically very solid, plus it refused a pure capitalist economic system which could have assured that stability. As the eruption of the Kashmir conflict right after Indian independence threatened to compromise prospects for stability in the whole Indian subcontinent, so too Nehru's unpredictable acting in foreign affairs would have endangered American designs in the region (though they had not yet been defined very clearly at the time) as well as those of the former rulers, the British. The conflict that started in 1947 between India and Pakistan over the accession of Muslim majority Jammu and Kashmir kingdom to India threatened Britain's military strategy for Commonwealth defence.<sup>75</sup> The likelihood of a war between India and Pakistan raised fears about the latter's collapse that would provide an easier access to the subcontinent for the USSR. The British had to appear neutral and not alienate India which was the most important Asian nation in the Commonwealth. Thus, London asked for an American

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>75</sup> Frankel, *When Nehru Looked East*, 54.

intermediary in the conflict; the request was declined stressing present US reluctance to interfere in the region and Britain's responsibility in the matter owing its colonial past in the subcontinent. Great Britain played a crucial role in shaping American perception of the Kashmir conflict. They tried to draw the USA to support a series of UN Security Council resolutions that would have smoothed the way for the accession of Kashmir to Pakistan.<sup>76</sup> The nebulous character of UN negotiations led Indian side to believe that the US showed a strong bias towards Pakistan, the very outcome the US policy was meant to avoid.<sup>77</sup> While the Cold War gained momentum and the rhetoric between both sides became more aggressive, India realized to be caught in the middle of an unmanageable superpower rivalry and became more aware of the strategic position of northwest Pakistan that could have offered the USA a strong bastion against the Soviet Union: a view that also numerous US intelligence and military officers behold. The inference of India about the partiality of the USA for Pakistan was quite premature and based on incorrect premises of the time, but later events revealed growing American tilt towards Pakistan. Besides, the Kashmir events and the international situation of the time convinced the leaders of the world's youngest and biggest democracy of the relevance of its non-alignment.

### *Non-alignment*

The following section aims to outline the circumstances in which Nehru's non-alignment concept, the central element of India's foreign policy in the Nehru years, evolved. Precisely in these years, US-India relations were launched, but they were constantly afflicted with misgivings, mistrust and often sheer indifference. Furthermore, in the late 1940s and the early 1950s, India was staunchly looking towards China, a crucial actor in the Nehru's world vision inspired by non-alignment and pan-Asianism.

The core of non-alignment was to maintain neutral position towards and avoid any entanglement with the two Great Powers. A staunch nationalist as Nehru once plainly explained the inseparable link between neutrality and independence, and the pernicious effects of a loss of the former, by proclaiming "once foreign relations go out of hand into the charge of somebody else, to that extent and in that measure you are not

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 55.

independent.”<sup>78</sup> He thought that hardly gained Indian independence after two hundred years of foreign domination was not to be given away easily by joining either of two power blocks. India’s choice to become a “third force” in international affairs was also a pragmatic one. In this way, the country could have enhanced its international stature and influence.<sup>79</sup> Nehru more than any other was aware that his country given its massive socioeconomic and political challenges would require an economic development strategy that could bear fruits quickly. Massive external infusions of capital in the form of foreign aid would be needed to achieve that goal. “Even in accepting economic help,” stressed Nehru, “it is not a wise policy to put all our eggs in one basket.”<sup>80</sup> Nehru’s foreign policy choice was also dictated by the fact that even though his party, Indian National Congress, gained prestige during the freedom struggle and dominated Indian political scene after independence, nonetheless it was an umbrella organization that accommodated radically different shades of opinion in an ethnically, religiously and linguistically different country ridden with casteism. In a sense, non-alignment was another tool for the young nation to transcend those differences, stimulate societal cohesion and instil a sense of national pride by adopting a dynamic approach to the world affairs.

To explain fully Nehru’s non-alignment in the early 1950s that soon was destined to become the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), it is crucial to go back shortly to its early origins. The genesis of the Non-Aligned Movement could be traced to the principle of self-determination now enshrined in the modern international law and in the United Nations Charter ratified after the end of the World War II. Essentially, according to this proposition peoples had the right to freely choose and control their government and the country’s international political status with no interference. First, the concept was expressed clearly in the nineteenth century with the emergence of nationalist movements in various parts of the world. It reinvigorated in the twentieth century and especially in the succeeding years after the World War I, which saw a massive redrawing of the map of Europe due to the emergence of new nation-states. Two world leaders of the day, the head of Soviet government Vladimir Lenin and the US president Woodrow Wilson, utilized and vulgarized the concept further. Lenin’s postulated self-determination as an indisputable right of all nations, colonies included, to choose their sovereignty, while

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<sup>78</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *Nehru: an Anthology* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1980), 367.

<sup>79</sup> McMahon, *The Cold War On The Periphery*, 38.

<sup>80</sup> Quoted in B.R. Nanda, *Indian foreign Policy: The Nehru Years* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1976), 173.

Wilson in his famous “Fourteen points” speech called openly for the support of colonial claims.<sup>81</sup> The idea of self-determination penetrated especially communist circles creating vivid discussions about the chances to overthrow definitely imperialism. In these arguments, two options emerged: a worldwide insurgence led by workers' movements on one side and a second less radical alternative, an alliance with nationalist elites of the colonized countries, backed by Lenin himself.<sup>82</sup> Even though, nationalist elites and the diverse anti-imperialists factions at first had not considered an alliance with the communists, as Paris Peace Conference made no concessions to the Asian and African nationalist movements and newly-created League of Nations proved ineffective to defend the interests of colonial people, many of them turned to the Soviet Union’s guidance.

The League against Imperialism and Colonial Oppression was established in Brussels, Belgium on February 10, 1927. The conference gathered the representatives of the whole communist world and anti-colonial organizations, whose majority of attendees came from 37 countries under colonial rule. Former Workers International Relief (WIR) director, German communist and propagandist Willi Münzenberg was one of the organizers of the League. The declared aim of the organization was to “establish mass anti-imperialist movement.” The conference of Brussels was attended by many prominent personalities, such as the widow of Kuomintang’s founder Soong Ching-Ling, Ahmed Sukarno, Messali Hadj and others. Among them there was also a young Jawaharlal Nehru who met activists from anti-colonial, pacifist and Marxist movements and eventually was invited to the tenth anniversary of October Revolution celebrated in Moscow where he went accompanied by his father Motilal Nehru.

Both the participation in the Brussels Conference and the first trip to the Soviet Union of young Jawaharlal Nehru had an impact either on his internationalist outlook and the formation of his future global leadership as one the “founding fathers” of the Non-Aligned Movement. Nehru’s biographers usually downplayed the influence of the Congress against Imperialism and the first-hand experience of the Soviet Russia to the future political formation of Indian leader. However, once back home, Nehru published his

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<sup>81</sup> V.I. Lenin, “The Right of Nations to Self-Determination,” Marxist Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1914/self-det/ch01.htm>

“President Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points,” The Avalon Project, [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/wilson14.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/wilson14.asp)

<sup>82</sup> Michelle L. Louro, *Comrades Against Imperialism: Nehru, India, and Interwar Internationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 22.

travelogue *Soviet Russia: some random sketches and impressions*.<sup>83</sup> Some of the sketches as where Nehru lauded the Soviet penal system for its supposed humanity, now probably would squeeze a smile on the face of the reader but at the time, he, like many other political pilgrims, painted a rosy picture of the communist country. At any rate, Nehru never expressed himself in favour of neither the revolutionary invocations of Soviet leaders nor one party system.<sup>84</sup> Yet he remained deeply impressed by the Soviet economic planning system that he believed had solved the country's socio-economic backwardness and inequalities. In 1931, Indian National Congress with Jawaharlal Nehru ahead held a session in Karachi in which the organization passed a resolution whose political orientation could not be mistaken. The document contained a set of guidelines for the future India's legal and institutional framework: confirmed the fundamental rights of Indian citizens, guaranteed compulsory primary education for children, safeguarded the rights of industrial workers and recognized the rights of peasants and workers to form unions. Above all, economic and social programme in the resolution foresaw the state control of key industries and services, mineral resources and public transportation.<sup>85</sup> By this time, Nehru started to emerge as the socialist and more assertive face of the Congress.

During all his tenure as the Prime Minister Nehru also held the Foreign Affairs portfolio. Even before Indian independence, he had repeatedly expounded India's future foreign policy and had a clear vision of his country's place in the world as a powerful nation, given its size, geographical location and resources. Surprisingly, his vision did not include building a strong army that could deter aggression. Nehru calculated that the country would have time to build its armed force since the pressing matter was to raise food production and industrial development.<sup>86</sup> It is important to recall that Nehru's pre-independence image of India took for granted the picture of an undivided country. With the Partition, India lost bulk of territory bordering the Soviet Union and direct and comfortable sea lanes to oil rich states of the Middle East. It seems that Nehru did not

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<sup>83</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *Soviet Russia: Some Random Sketches and Impressions* (Allahabad: Allahabad Law journal Press, 1928).

<sup>84</sup> Ramachandra Guha, *India after Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy* (London: Picador, 2008), 162.

<sup>85</sup> "Karachi Resolution," March 1931, 392–394.

[https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/161790/12/12\\_appendix.pdf](https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/161790/12/12_appendix.pdf)

<sup>86</sup> Frankel, *When Nehru Looked East*, ix.

adjust his firm conviction about the factual centrality of India after the creation of Pakistan.<sup>87</sup>

First American Ambassador to India Henry F. Grady landed in New Delhi on June 1947. Truman doctrine had been already announced and the communism's containment throughout the world was number one priority for American policymakers. The Cold Warrior Grady (ironically known as Mr. Foreign Service) faced the task of implementing the doctrine in India, drawing the young country into the Western camp, to help to develop Indian economy and most importantly, to promote American commercial and political interests in India.

In a word, reconstruction has become our foreign policy. We have learned . . . that if steps are not taken to ensure economic stability the likelihood of war will be enhanced and that once war breaks out we will inevitably be drawn in as we were in World Wars I and II. The leadership of the non-communist world has thus been placed upon our shoulders and, consequently, we have assumed great responsibilities in all parts of the world.<sup>88</sup>

Grady took his charge with considerable zeal. He repeatedly reminded Nehru that Washington considered Indian "neutralism" unacceptable, "India should get on the democratic side immediately."<sup>89</sup> However, Nehru was adamant that he would not change his position and often expressed the views intolerable for the Americans. They viewed the tensions with the Soviet Union as a life-and-death struggle between democratic morality and communist immorality, thus it was shocking for the US officials to hear Nehru cursing both countries as if there was a moral equivalence between the two and to acknowledge Nehru's conviction that the Cold War was a merely power struggle.<sup>90</sup> Even inside Indian institutions, Nehru's inflexible position was often a subject to debate. Ms. Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Nehru's sister and the first Indian ambassador to the Soviet Union, assured the American ambassador to the USSR that her brother and most of Indian leaders "had long since made up their minds natural alignment was with west, but that Nehru felt at present in view Indian relative impotence and fact that nation is still in swaddling

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., x.

<sup>88</sup> Quoted in "A Historical Retrospective: Ambassador Henry Grady and Indian Independence," American Diplomacy,

<https://americandiplomacy.web.unc.edu/1998/04/269/>

<sup>89</sup> McMahon, *The Cold War On The Periphery*, 40.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

clothes, it would be ridiculous to talk publicly of military participation in event of war.” She guaranteed that her brother believed that “India’s present role in family of nations should be modest and relatively humble one until nation has solved own internal difficulties.”<sup>91</sup> India, though critical of the United States and its foreign policies, did not wish to alienate it for a time to come. On March 20 1948, American ambassador Grady met with H.V. R. Iengar, India’s Acting Secretary General External Affairs, who acted on behalf of the Prime Minister. Grady wrote: “Prime Minister wished him to discuss with me recent statement on foreign policy which Prime Minister made in Assembly. Prime Minister wanted to be sure US did not misunderstand what he was endeavouring to convey. The speech he said was primarily for home consumption <...>. He said that it was unthinkable that India should be on Russia’s side in event of conflict between Russia and US American principles of democracy and those of India were identical. He wishes to maintain officially for his government a neutral position.”<sup>92</sup> Grady did not express objections to this apparently neutral policy of India; however, he made clear that US diplomats were aware of Nehru’s negative attitude towards the USA and its foreign policy. Iengar replied that “as one who had been intimately associated with the Prime Minister for long time he found it hard to believe this as Prime Minister never criticized America to him <...> there was no question about his (Prime Minister’s) fundamental friendliness to US.”<sup>93</sup> In order to please even more the Americans Iengar said that “Prime Minister is concerned about spread of Communism in India and said very confidentially measures are being taken to eliminate Communists from government.” By 1948, India found itself in a dire need of American aid, a fact that set at ease American analysts about the clear future of Indo-American relations who believed that it was the most effective channel to keep India under US influence.<sup>94</sup> A pragmatic politician as Nehru whose “real” non-alignment remained still suspended in the air because most of his policies were west-oriented, honestly admitted to his foreign affairs adviser G.S. Bajpai that it is natural for the Soviets to think that India was lining up with the USA and the UK.<sup>95</sup> Nehru, though often expressed his dislike for the USA and its policies of global dominance, was too

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<sup>91</sup> “The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Smith) to the Secretary of State,” March 20, 1948, Office of the Historian,

<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1948v05p1/d401>

<sup>92</sup> “The Ambassador in India (Grady) to the Secretary of State,” March 20, 1948, Office of the Historian, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1948v05p1/d400>

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> McMahon, *The Cold War On The Periphery*, 46.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

shrewd to risk the capitalist country's favour, often irritating and soothing US diplomats at the same time. Meanwhile, the first American ambassador Grady left India and was replaced by Loy W. Henderson.

Henderson, like his predecessor found a general atmosphere quite hostile to the American initiatives. According to the new ambassador, Indian PM harboured a series of ingrained cultural prejudices against the United States.<sup>96</sup> "Nehru had developed a dislike bordering on contempt for American institutions, the American way of life, and Americans in general," he lamented bitterly and insisted that Nehru feared Americanism much more than Communism.<sup>97</sup> Nonetheless, after the rise of Communist China, Indian efforts to gain American favour invigorated because India became the "chief stabilizing influence in Asia" as Bajpai told Henderson.<sup>98</sup> In order to maintain social and economic stability, India had to develop intensively on industrial and agricultural level and American financial injections were crucial to the growth and expansion of national economy. However, some members of the Truman administration, even the majority of US Congressmen opposed the dispatch of significant aid to India. The Marshall Plan launched for strategically more important Europe strained U.S. resources and gather congressional support for India's financial assistance was not the main concern at the end of the 1940s. Some American officials influenced by Henderson backed Indian pleas but the substantial governmental aid was still out of question. American ambassador had to convey his government's official standpoint to the Indian officials: the US Congress, though committed to India's economic development, would never approve any large-scale loans to India and advised the country to turn to the World Bank and Export-Import Bank for financial aid.<sup>99</sup>

On 11 October, 1949 Nehru landed in Washington for his first state visit in the USA, ten days before Mao Zedong formally proclaimed the birth of the People's Republic of China. India, in the evaluations made by the CIA and the US State Department, looked like a possible "Asian bulwark against communism."<sup>100</sup> Some American politicians and especially the press saw Indian leader's trip to the USA as a moment of significance and value. Henderson was carefully preparing the ground for a concrete and generous

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<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 48-49

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

American financial support for India's poor economic performance. However, Washington administration was still undecided whether India's goodwill was worth to cultivate. Furthermore, though Indian leader charmed the American press, Nehru's visit was not a great success because some of his meetings with US officials were far from fruitful as he quite unreservedly criticized American policy, derided American obsession with Communism and refused even to reconsider India's non-aligned position.<sup>101</sup> Before the trip, Nehru had written to his Chief Ministers that Indians are not going as beggars to the U.S. or to any other country and that it was better to starve than to beg and become dependent on others.<sup>102</sup> In fact, while staying in the USA, Nehru rarely touched the topic of economic aid, for he thought that the Americans "tear every shred of respect away from the countries before they give aid."<sup>103</sup> Shortly after Nehru's departure, US ambassador was informed by the State Department that his proposal for 500 million of aid was rejected along with the delivery of one million tons of wheat India had previously requested for.<sup>104</sup> It seemed that Indo-American relations were heading towards a dead-end.

The British who took a sort of intermediary role between India and the USA, tried to explain predicaments, adversity and the complexity affecting Indo-American relations. Sir Archibald Nye, head of the Commonwealth Relations Office, blamed mostly Indian side for the current state of affairs: "

There is a general feeling [in India] that America represents all the coarse, base, materialistic outlook of the West without any of the compensating advantages that go with Western culture and the Western traditions."<sup>105</sup> He stated that Indian lack of sympathy towards the Americans was accompanied by their arrogance and immaturity: "The Indians fail to appreciate that they need America much more than America needs India. <...> Furthermore, any experienced diplomatist must find Indians, from the Prime Minister downwards, irritating because of their unrealistic approach to world problems combined with a capacity for lecturing other people on the highest moral plane."<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Guha, *India after Gandhi*, 157.

<sup>102</sup> Andrew J. Rotter, *Comrades at Odds: The United States and India, 1947-1964* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 269.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Denis Merrill, "Indo-American relations, 1947-50: A Missed Opportunity in Asia," *Diplomatic History* 11, no. 3 (July 1987): 223.

<sup>105</sup> Quoted in McMahon, *The Cold War On The Periphery*, 63.

<sup>106</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 64.

India's reluctance to accommodate Americans in their anti-communist pursuit was due to various factors varying from Nehru's own suspicion of American designs to the pragmatic position of non-alignment. Another trait of independent India's foreign policy was the centrality of Asia and its future role in world affairs. Nehru looked East and believed that the ongoing decolonization process was a sign of the forthcoming "Asian century." Indeed, since India and other Asian countries' independence came into view there were a good few attempts to assert Asian unity and Nehru was one of its main enthusiasts. The idea of an inclusive sort of "Asian federation" emerged for the first time in the very days of the Brussels conference. Nehru wrote in his memoirs that delegates from Asia had manifested their desire to set up an organization which could join together the future of their countries. The delegates had met and lengthy discussed about it but at the moment nothing came out from this rather abstract proposal. However, the desire to do something in that direction remained.<sup>107</sup> The idea took hold of Nehru's mind and not surprisingly, after two decades he was making it real. The Asian Relations Conference held in New Delhi in the last week of March 1947 was a remarkable event in this regard and it is considered the first call to formally assert Asian consciousness.

On the domestic front, after years of accommodative politics, in 1955, during Awadi Session of the Indian National Congress, Nehru proclaimed that the party's goal would be the establishment of the "socialist pattern of society." At the same time, Nehru's international prestige among the developing nations was growing. In 1955, he attended the Bandung Conference.<sup>108</sup> The pivotal element in the delegates' talks and consultations were the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence elaborated in the negotiations between India and China a year before.<sup>109</sup> The Conference alarmed the USA that immediately expressed its concern over a widespread leftward shift in the ideological leanings of most of the newly independent countries in Asia and Africa.<sup>110</sup> Even long before the conference, US officials worked out the whole strategy how to deal with the countries involved in it and how to manage its likely aftereffects: "Although the U.S. should

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<sup>107</sup> Louro, *Comrades Against Imperialism*, 35.

<sup>108</sup> Quoted in Fisher M.W., Bondurant J.V. *Indian Approaches to a Socialist Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956).

<sup>109</sup> Five principles: Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful co-existing.

<sup>110</sup> "Bandung Conference (Asian-African Conference)," 1955, Office of the Historian, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/bandung-conf>

volunteer no public comment on the Bandung Conference, we can counteract the effect of certain issues likely to be raised at Bandung by taking public positions on them without making specific reference to the Conference itself.” It also emerged that so-called neutral countries and their unpredictable position toward the USA raised many questions to the mandarins: “U.S. objectives at the Afro-Asian Conference should be chiefly concerned with impact on uncommitted elements in neutralist countries and in countries aligned with the West. Our objectives should be (1) successful rebuttal of Communist charges, and (2) encouragement of an affirmative attitude by the Conference toward Free World and U.S. achievements and goals.”<sup>111</sup> It became quite clear that the USA was losing ground in some Third World countries, but at the same time, India that was eager to establish cordial relations with China started to have certain doubts about the future of this strategic partnership.

Up until the Sino-Indian war in 1962, Nehru staunchly looked east and had China as main focus, and largely ignored American and Soviet endeavours to draw his country on their own side. Both his rivals and some foreign observers often criticized Nehru of being too idealistic in his position on various foreign policy questions and world affairs. On his vision of the Asian century, he tried to build what he called the “Asian solidarity.” Like China that in Nehru’s mind was destined to play a central role in asserting globally Asia’s rights and responsibilities, India released itself from the colonial yoke after a long and wearing struggle. Indian PM sincerely believed that this miserable and traumatic experience was enough to bind two countries together. He concentrated all his efforts in promoting Sino-Indian relations: up until now the slogan “Hindi Chini bhai bhai” (Indians and Chinese are brothers) recall to Indians the enthusiasm sparked by the media and the huge expectations around this friendship. But Nehru’s hope for good Sino-Indian relations were shattered completely by the 1962 Chinese military attack. The first warning bell sounded earlier in 1949 when China occupied Tibet, a country that over the past centuries had had strong cultural bonds with India. In 1950, Home Minister Vallabhbhai Patel, Nehru’s political antagonist within the Congress party, cautioned his PM that once the Chinese civil war ended, communist ideology would not provide any shields against imperialism. He even predicted that sooner or later China would strike India on the

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<sup>111</sup> “Memorandum From the Acting Chief of the Reports and Operations Staff (Gilman) to the Secretary of State,” Office of the Historian, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v21/d11>

Himalayas and parts of Assam.<sup>112</sup> Nehru's enthusiasm to establish warm Sino-Indian relations in the 1950s later was considered as being naïve and unrealistic, but a cursory examination of American archives may reveal also much more realistic views held by Indian PM.

Indian officials, Nehru in primis, disliked both American ambassadors to India, Grady and Henderson. After them, it was the turn of Chester Bowles (1951-1953), a less formal non-career diplomat than his predecessors had been who was able to gain Indian sympathies gradually. His very ambassadorship marked a short phase of increased dialogue between the two countries. The new ambassador travelled all over India, disposed of many formalities of his office, posed as a trustworthy counterpart and overall, tried to send the message to Indian public that the USA cared about India.<sup>113</sup> At times, he publicly expressed his conviction that India was seriously at risk of becoming a "second China" and succumbing to communism. Thus, in line with deeply-entrenched American view that material comfort alone was capable to bring in and ensure durable political and social stability, he tried his best to supply economic aid to India and eventually managed to secure substantial injections of capital and resources to be invested in the country.<sup>114</sup> Most importantly, Bowles was the first US ambassador to forge cordial relations with Nehru and to endeavour to understand Indian non-aligned position, and in turn to convince the cold warriors in Washington that India's reluctance to join the Western block did not automatically mean that the country was against the USA. In one of the meetings with the US ambassador in 1951, Nehru expressed his opinion that China was "a problematic neighbour." Labelling China "aggressive", Nehru thought "it is quite possible new China would develop into explosive dangerous force and that in this case US would appear to have been right."<sup>115</sup> Although Bowles' endeavours to gain India's amity led to some improvement in Indo-American relations, the relationship still rested on weak foundations and misgivings and suspicion affecting it persisted. Some segments of US Congress were persistently unwilling to allocate significant economic aid to India and generally extend American commitments to the country for several fundamental reasons. First, India offered few tangible economic and strategic benefits according to the US policymakers, and the communist threat did not seem imminent in the country, despite

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<sup>112</sup> Guha, *India after Gandhi*, 169.

<sup>113</sup> McMahon, *The Cold War On The Periphery*, 112.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 114-115.

<sup>115</sup> Zins and Bouqérat, *India in the Mirror*, 120.

Bowles' persistent warnings on the subject. Most importantly, US officials were asking themselves why to invest in a "neutral" country on the margins of the Cold War theatre whose non-aligned position often conflicted with that of the United States. On the other hand, Indian leadership seemed impassive to better the relations with the US or to modify its positions regarding the country's foreign policy. In 1949, after yet another Nehru's burst of critique towards the United States and the defence of non-alignment and pan-Asianism, State-Army-Navy-Air Force Coordinating Committee (SANACC) submitted a report to US government regarding the emergence of a Third World block. SANACC cautioned that this independent block would "provide a medium for the expression of opinions of a type subject to exploitation by Moscow and apt to exacerbate existing differences between the Orient and the Occident."<sup>116</sup> Actually Indian non-alignment seemed incomprehensible for American policymakers who had already understood that the world's second most populous country did not have a lot to offer. In 1954, to India's dismay, Pakistan was drawn into a formal military alliance with the USA opening perspectives for the future US-China rapprochement. Lastly, the second half of the 1950s saw a gradual deterioration of Sino-Indian relations culminating in the Chinese attack on the Indian territory on October, 1962. India had fallen down into a dangerous geopolitical isolation and, as it is popularly said, nature abhors a vacuum and the Soviets, just at the end Stalin's era, rushed to India attempting to gain a foothold in the whole Third World.

### **2.3. Russian and Soviet ideology**

The Soviet state, the successor of Russian Empire, was founded on the principles quite similar to those on which the USA was created. Like its Cold War adversary, the USSR had formally rejected the European-style concepts of national identity and nationhood based on common language, religion or ethnicity, instead relied on the "universal message" inherent in its ideology and socioeconomic structure for the betterment of humanity. Besides, both countries were conceived to be grand experiments, on whose success or failure depended the future of humankind.<sup>117</sup> The two superpowers aspired to

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<sup>116</sup> Quoted in McMahon, *The Cold War On The Periphery*, 45.

<sup>117</sup> Westad, *Global Cold War*, 39.

lead the rest of the world after their respective examples, but here the similarities ended as both represented radically different models of modernity and socio-economic development. The World War II, that united them for the common cause against Nazi Germany and out of which both emerged victorious, however did not alleviate the animosity and suspicion towards each other brewing since the creation of the Soviet state.

Once in power, the Bolshevik party had inherited a multi-ethnic empire where Russian was mother tongue of around only a half of the population and of which two thirds were Slavs. Russian territorial expansion had started in the sixteenth century and reached its peak in the eighteenth.<sup>118</sup> Once the vast territory was consolidated, the following century saw the effort of an extensive Russification campaign aimed at its non-Russian subjects. Few scholars still endorse the rather simplistic view that dominant Russian elite had the intention to uproot all non-Russian languages, cultures and religions, but the Russian empire did not have such purpose and more importantly, means to do so.<sup>119</sup> At any rate, the empire implemented harsh and discriminatory laws that affected the cultural development of certain, especially non-Slav ethnicities. Like the Americans had done around the middle of the eighteenth century, Russian political elites had started questioning themselves which peoples could be integrated into the state, which should be controlled and subdued or at worst, exterminated. Russians as much as Americans felt invested with the special mission and the roots of Russian messianism goes way back to the fifteenth century with emergence of the political and theological concept of “Moscow, third Rome” (after Rome itself and Constantinople) succeeding the fall of Byzantium in 1453.<sup>120</sup> If Americans felt that they represented what is the best in the Western civilization (of course corrected of some European flaws), Russian intellectual elites were anxious to locate Russia’s place between East and West.

The emergence of the Russian World/*Russkiy Mir* concept in post-Soviet, especially Putin’s Russia, the revanchist idea that aims to restore Russian influence back to the borders of the USSR and the Russian Empire, is one of the last doctrines in the row that marks the long development a peculiar ideology centred on the distinctiveness of the Russian civilization. The ninetieth century in particular saw the advent of opposite

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<sup>118</sup> Central Asia was conquered in the nineteenth century and became known as Russian Turkestan.

<sup>119</sup> Theodore R. Weeks, “Russification and the Lithuanians, 1863-1905,” *Slavic Review* 60, No. 1 (Spring, 2001): 96.

<sup>120</sup> Peter J.S. Duncan, *Russian Messianism: Third Rome, revolution, communism and after* (London: Routledge, 2000), 2.

intellectual trends that either advocated the westernization of Russia or promoted a belief in Russia's uniqueness. The sense of superiority was expressed not only over minority groups comprising the Empire, but also over the entire Western civilization. Slavophilia/*Slavyanofiltstvo* emerged during the reign of Nicholas I (1825-1855). The "Iron Tsar" came to power after the Decembrist revolt that had opposed his candidature and mounted a military coup in favour of Constantine, Nicholas' elder brother who was supposed to become the next emperor but eventually renounced the throne. During his tenure, Nicholas I framed and imposed his doctrine called Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality (*Pravoslávie, samoderzhávie, narodnost*), also known as Official Nationality *ofitsial'naia narodnost*. However, *narodnost*' could be translated as "nationality", "nation" as well as "closeness to the people."<sup>121</sup> The Nicholas' I Minister of Peoples' Enlightenment Sergei Uvarov pronounced the doctrine:

Our common obligation consists in this, that the education of the people be conducted, according to the Supreme intention of our August Monarch, in the joint spirit of Orthodoxy, autocracy and nationality. I am convinced that every professor and teacher, being permeated by one and the same feeling of devotion to the throne and fatherland, will use all his resources to become a worthy tool for the government and to earn its complete confidence.<sup>122</sup>

Orthodoxy meant the preservation and strengthening of Russian Orthodox Church, Autocracy – unconditional loyalty to the House of Romanov in return for its paternalist protection and rewards, while Nationality meant the peoples' identification with and the loyalty to the Emperor and the Church, following national (Russian) traditions and rejecting foreign influence. The doctrine of Nicholas I was the first statewide political ideology that was coined in Russia since the sixteenth century.<sup>123</sup> This imperialist ideology promulgated and sought national unity under Orthodox Church and the absolute authority of the emperor. What came naturally of it, the implementation of this ideology could not have tolerated any dissent in order to construct and defend the national unity.

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<sup>121</sup> Duncan, *Russian Messianism*, 18.

For example, in the twentieth century, *narodnost* (closeness to the people) became one of the ideological pillars of Soviet's socialist realism doctrine.

<sup>122</sup> Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia, 1825–1855* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959), 73.

<sup>123</sup> Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: people and empire, 1552-1917* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 146.

Critics of the doctrine saw in it the clear invitation to Russification since the same century witnessed the most extensive Russification campaigns and draconian laws targeting non-Russian peoples.<sup>124</sup> The triad of Orthodoxy, autocracy and *narodnost* could be seen also as a reaction against the Western ideas that had penetrated Russia.

So-called Westernizers/*Zapadnik* were nineteenth century Russian intellectuals who asserted Russia's need to adopt European-style liberal government and acquire western technology in order to address the consequent socioeconomic changes in the society. The Westernism/*západnichestvo* was often juxtaposed with Slavophilia/Slavophilism or *Slavyanofiltsvo* whose adherents supported the triad of Nicholas' I ideology.<sup>125</sup> The most influential among the latter group were Ivan Kireevsky (1806–56), Aleksei Khomiakov (1804–60), and Konstantin Aksakov (1817–60). The common ground between the official ideology of Nicholas I and Slavophilism was their hostility towards any kind of ideas imported from the west and advocacy of the superiority of Slav, but particularly Russian culture over Western European one and strong faith in the unifying and spiritual role of Orthodox Church. On the other hand, as far as the nature of power and subsequent role of the tsar were concerned, some slavophiles idealised the Russian people, particularly peasants, rather than the State. The very reverence of the traditional peasant commune was fundamental element of Slavophilism, paradoxically borrowed from European, primarily German, thinkers.<sup>126</sup> In fact, the Slavophiles often contrasted the spiritual and collectivist Christian East with the materialist, individualist and atheist West.

The first state-led attempt to bring western ideas to Russia happened under the rule of Peter the Great (1682-1725). He implemented a set of reforms that encouraged manufacturing and private enterprises and were aimed at transforming the educational system as well. However, as Peter's westernization of Russian economy and society was carried out forcibly, he remained a deeply controversial figure in the coeval Russian culture so far, by some seen as "the architect of the Great Russia" and by others – as "the destroyer of the national culture." N.V. Riasanovsky, the scholar of Russian history,

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<sup>124</sup> For example, the Lithuanian Press ban put in place in 1865 that ended only in 1904 banned all Lithuanian language publications printed in Latin alphabet (originally used in Lithuania) as well as Lithuanian language schools. The ban provoked a creative resistance – the book smugglers, *knygnešiai*, transported Lithuanian books, printed in Lithuania Minor (Prussian Lithuania) illegally into Lithuanian speaking areas of the Russian Empire. The book smugglers, though risked severe punishments, grew in number and came to symbolise the opposition to Russian rule and culture.

<sup>125</sup> Duncan, *Russian Messianism*, 18

<sup>126</sup> Robert English, *Russia and the Idea of the West: Gorbachev, Intellectuals and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 21.

described this phenomenon of vilifying or deifying the emperor as a “paradoxical dichotomy.”<sup>127</sup> The paradoxical dichotomy lined up westernizers and slavophiles, the former group appreciated Peter’s vision for Westernized Russia, while the latter advocated the very traditions that Peter’s modernization had disrupted, the slavophiles in particular believed that Russia’s traditionalism was the virgin opportunity to create a better, purer civilization. However, not even the reforms of the westernized emperor shook Slavophiles so much as the writings of Pyotr Chaadaev, Russia’s first modern political thinker.

Pyotr Chaadaev was born in Moscow in 1794 whose friend Pushkin considered him one of the most outstanding Russian liberals. His critical stance taken towards his homeland also placed him as the main exponent of Westernism/*západnichestvo* movement. In 1836, the journal *Teleskop* (no. 15) published the first of eight philosophical letters Chaadaev had sent to his woman friend “Madam.” Originally, the letters were written in French, but eventually were translated into Russian. The Russian intellectual Alexander Herzen compared Chaadaev’s letter to “a shot that rang out in the dark night” and which “shook all thinking Russians.”<sup>128</sup> Therefore, its sudden effect also initiated the bitter debate between slavophiles and westernizers that moulded different visions of Russia. The opinions expressed in the letter had long-time consequences on his author and the editor of the journal– the first was declared clinically insane and arrested and the latter was exiled to the Far East.<sup>129</sup> The letter written on 1 December 1829 but was printed (most probably against Chaadaev’s will, though it already circulated widely among the Russian intelligentsia) only seven years later.

Slavophiles defended both the core of Russians traditions cherished by the Slavs and the authority of Orthodox Church, these two in particular received harsh criticisms from Chaadaev. Some scholars like historian Andrzej Walicki consider the whole Slavophile

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<sup>127</sup> Nicholas Riasanovsky, *The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 57, 84.

<sup>128</sup> Chaadaev, Peter Yakovlevich, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/chaadayev-peter-yakovlevich>

<sup>129</sup> As far as the former was concerned, the confinement of the dissenters with an excuse of mental illness was new and by some accounts, Chaadaev’s case was the first recorded incident where psychiatry was used in Russia to suppress dissent. Thomas Gordon, *Journey into madness: medical torture and the mind controllers* (London: Bantam, 1988), 298.

movement as a sort of “reply to Chaadaev.”<sup>130</sup> In fact, the Slavophiles accepted the theoretic background of Chaadaev’s ideas – the fundamental divide between Russia and the West, clear distinction between Catholic and Orthodox Churches, however inverting the roles.<sup>131</sup> For instance, many Slavophiles argued that “virgin and spiritual” Russia would redeem decadent and materialist Europe and put it on the right track.

Chaadaev started to mount his critique on Russia gradually. The recurring motif in the letter was the philosopher’s conviction about the spiritual and material superiority of Europe (though admitting the flaws of it) and the civilizing mission of the Catholic Church. The Russian obstinacy to learn from the good ideas of others came under a direct attack:

<...> It is one of the most deplorable traits of our peculiar civilization that we are still discovering truths which other peoples, even some much less advanced than we, have taken for granted. The reason is that we have never marched with the other peoples. We do not belong to any of the great families of the human race; we are neither of the West nor of the East, and we have not the tradition of either. Placed, as it were, outside of time, we have not been touched by the universal education of the human race. <...> You will understand that I am now speaking not of moral principles or philosophical maxims, but merely a well-ordered existence, of habits and routines which set the mind at ease and give a rhythm to the soul.<sup>132</sup>

Chaadaev’s argued that Russia lacked a substantial native culture. For example, the Russian nobility who was the backbone of tsar’s power chose foreign and at that time considered prestigious, French language, as a vehicle of social intercourse in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. To prove his point Chaadaev chose to write his letters in that language:

Our memories go back no further than yesterday; we are, so to say, strangers to ourselves. <...> That is but a natural consequence of a culture which is wholly imported and imitative. There is no internal development, no natural progress, in our society; new ideas sweep the old, because they are not derived from the old but come from God knows where. Since all our ideas are ready-made, the indelible trace left

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<sup>130</sup> Andzrej Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Marxism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 91.

<sup>131</sup> Neil Cornwell, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Russian Literature* (London: Routledge, 2001), 51.

<sup>132</sup> Petr Chaadaev, “Letters on the Philosophy of History, First Letter” in *Russian Intellectual History*, ed. Marc Raeff (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), 162.

in the mind by progressive movement of ideas, which gives it strength, does not shape our intellect. We grow, but we do not mature; we move, but in a diagonal, that is, a line which does not lead to the desired goal. We are like children who have not been taught to think for themselves; when they become adults, they have nothing to call their own. <...> That is precisely our condition. <...> Peoples, like individuals, are moral beings. It takes centuries for their education, as it takes years for that of persons. We may be said to be an exception among peoples. We are one of those nations which do not appear to be an integral part of human race, but exists only in order to teach some great lesson to the world. Surely the lesson we are destined to teach will not be wasted; but who knows when we shall rejoin the rest of mankind, and how much misery we must suffer before accomplishing our destiny?<sup>133</sup>

The main problem of Russians, according to Chaadayev, was their inability to learn not only from the good examples elsewhere, but also from their own past and mistakes. Russians lived in a sort of permanent present without having their own independent mind. This condition brought to Russia continuous misfortunes and was the main reason why Russia socially and economically lagged behind Catholic Europe. Strikingly, Chaadaev had predicted that worse was yet to come, that Russia, inspired by some ready-made ideas, would teach the world some great lesson.

The second half of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of revolutionary movements that had started to mushroom since the abolition of serfdom. Among these movements of major importance was the populist movement that emphasized the role of the people and differed from previous revolutionary trends by its advocacy of the “hegemony of the masses over the educated elite.”<sup>134</sup> On the other hand, some historians like Robert English argued that the Russian Populism was a direct, though a more radical offshoot of Slavophilia.<sup>135</sup> As the second half of the twentieth century presented to Russian Empire military, diplomatic and social debacles at home and abroad, the “threat from the West” in the form of its economic might embodied by capitalism, for Russian civilization did not seem anymore as merely a spiritual infection plaguing Russian elites, but assumed the real dimensions in the writings of Slavophiles. The great crises of Imperial Russia of the first two decades of the XX century, that is when the Empire lost its wars in 1904-1905 and 1914-1917, brought slavophiles and westernizers closer together renewing their faith

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>134</sup> Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought*, 222.

<sup>135</sup> English, *Russia and the Idea of the West*, 23.

in Russia's unique mission. At the time, the Russian intelligentsia argued that there was the need to create a new Russia that could embody their ideas and called for a more just social system aided by progress and technology.<sup>136</sup> However, the capitalist model of development was rejected as the exploitation that accompanied the Industrial Revolution was a price too high to pay for social and political progress.<sup>137</sup> Another anticapitalist trend put the matter in ethical terms – the capitalist European and American civilizations represented not only the economic might, but also the annihilation of spirituality.<sup>138</sup>

Thus, at the turn of the twentieth century the thought of Russian Westernizers took a more Slavophile outlook. *Vekhi* (Landmarks') group of political philosophers in 1909 published a collection of seven essays which, among other things, criticized common intellectual culture of the Russian intelligentsia detached from the masses.<sup>139</sup> Nikolai Berdiaev analysed dogmatic approach of Russian intellectuals towards capitalism and other Western ideologies: "We have always combined an underlying conservatism and inertia with a penchant for novelties, for the latest European trends, which we have never fully assimilated. <...> What was scientific theory in the West, a hypothesis or in any case a relative truth, partial, making no claim to be universal, became among the Russian intelligentsia a dogma, a sort of religious revelation. Russians are always inclined to take things in a totalitarian sense; the sceptical criticism of Western peoples is alien to them."<sup>140</sup> Others like Bogdan Kistyakovsky put forth the intellectuals' failure to raise a legal consciousness of their own: "The consciousness of the intelligentsia was never completely captured by the ideas of the rights of personality and of the state governed by law."<sup>141</sup> Sergei Bulgakov, Russian Marxist priest who detested radical leftists' abandonment of religion, talked about the Russian intellectual as distinguished by "otherworldliness, his eschatological dream about...a coming kingdom of justice."<sup>142</sup> Other Bulgakov's thoughts echoed also some of the core ideas of Chaadaev:

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<sup>136</sup> Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 44.

<sup>137</sup> Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought*, 406.

<sup>138</sup> Nikolai Berdiaev in English, *Russia and the Idea of the West*, 23.

<sup>139</sup> *Vekhi* group consisted of Nikolai Berdiaev, Sergei Bulgakov, Mikhail Gershenzon, A.S. Izgoev, Bogdan Kistyakovsky, Petr Struve and Semyon Frank.

Marshall S., Shatz, and Judith E. Zimmerman, ed., *Vekhi "Landmarks": A Collection of Articles about the Russian Intelligentsia* (New York: M. A. Sharpe, 1994).

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>141</sup> Nikolai P. Poltoratzky, "The Vekhi Dispute and the Significance of Vekhi," *Canadian Slavonic Papers/Revue Canadienne des Slavistes* 9, No. 1 (Spring, 1967): 86-106.

<sup>142</sup> *Vekhi "Landmarks"*, 33.

Russian society really is still living and viable, if it contains seeds of the future, this must be manifested first and foremost in a readiness and ability to learn from history. For history is not mere chronology, relating the sequence of events; it is life experience, the experience of good and evil which makes spiritual growth possible. Nothing is so dangerous as a deathly immobility of minds and hearts, an inert conservatism in which we content ourselves with repeating clichés or simply brushing aside the lessons of the past, in the secret hope of a new "emotional upsurge," spontaneous, accidental, and irrational.<sup>143</sup>

As the Bolsheviks took power in 1917, some *Vekhi* authors like Berdiaev, Bulgakov and Frank ended up in the so-called Philosophers' ships that transported intellectuals expelled from Soviet Russia in 1922 to the seaport of Stettin (in modern day Poland). For example, Berdaev who detested the totalitarian character of Bolshevik government, before being expelled had been arrested twice and interrogated by Dzerzhinsky himself, the feared head of the Soviet secret police.<sup>144</sup>

At the end of the century a group of younger intellectuals emerged who believed that the dream of a just society could be realized only through Marxism. For those looking more towards the West, Marxism seemed a more radical version of previous liberal thinking, but for those with anti-Western sympathies the new ideology presented a detailed portrayal of the evils of Western capitalism thus reinforcing their conviction about the need of a "Russian path of development." However, Russian Marxism was incredibly heterogeneous phenomena and as *Vekhi* author Bardaev wrote:

It is particularly important for Western minds to understand the national roots of Russian Communism and the fact that it was Russian history which determined its limits and shaped its character. A knowledge of Marxism will not help in this. The Russian people in their spiritual make-up are an Eastern people. Russia is the Christian East, which was for two centuries subject to the powerful influences of the West, and whose cultured classes assimilated every Western idea. The fate of the Russian people in history has been an unhappy one and full of suffering. It has developed at a catastrophic tempo through interruption and change in its type of civilization.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>144</sup> Aleksandr Solzhenitsin in his *Gulag Archipelago* (Chapter 3 The interrogation) narrates the incident.

<sup>145</sup> Nicholas Berdyaev, *The Origin of Russian Communism*, 7.

The debate between Westernizers and Slavophiles affected various trends of Russian Marxism. Lenin, a more “native” Marxist, praised early populists in Russia and pronounced his messianic vision according to which backward Russia by deposing the tsar would become the vanguard of the world proletariat.<sup>146</sup> He even borrowed the title for his famous “What is to be done?” from the novel of the same name written by the main exponent of Russian nihilist and populist movement, Nikolai Chernyshevsky. On the other side, *Vekhi* author Semyon Frank commented that in Bolshevism “all-consuming populist spirit has swallowed up and assimilated Marxist theory,” while Georgi Plekhanov, the father of Russian Marxism, opposed Lenin’s leadership and the Soviet State which came to power in the autumn of 1917.

Lenin’s state, the successor of the expansionist empire, projected the world empire of justice, guided of course by the Soviet Union. For instance, Berdaev argued that the Third International (Communist International or Comintern) that was founded in 1919 and advocated world communism headed by the Soviet Union, took many features from the Russian doctrine of the “Third Rome”:

The fact that the Third International is not international but a Russian national idea is very poorly understood in the West. Here we have the transformation of Russian messianism. Western communists, when they join the Third International, play a humiliating part; they do not understand that in joining the Third International they are joining the Russian people and realizing its messianic vocation. I have heard that at a French communist meeting a French communist asserted, 'Marx said that the workmen have no fatherland. This used to be true, but now it is no longer true; they have a fatherland, that is, Russia, Moscow, and the workers should defend their fatherland'. This is absolutely true and ought to be understood by everybody. Something has happened which Marx and the Western Marxists could not have foreseen, and that is a sort of identification of the two messianisms, the messianism of the Russian people and the messianism of the proletariat. The Russian working class and peasantry are a proletariat; and the proletariat of the whole world from France to China is becoming the Russian people—a unique people in the world; and the messianic consciousness of the working class and proletariat is bringing about an almost Slavophil attitude towards the West.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> English, *Russia and the Idea of the West*, 39.

<sup>147</sup> Berdyaev, *The Origin of Russian Communism*, 144

Although there are many ideological and political elements that indicate the likeness of the Soviet Russia with the Imperial Russia, it would be unfair to see the Soviet's policies as merely a direct continuation of Russian imperialism and expansionism.<sup>148</sup> New Russia, despite its social and economic backwardness, proclaimed the countries' right of self-determination, along with proletarian internationalism since Soviet Russia, the first truly socialist state would inspire revolutionaries in other countries. The end of the WWI also saw many former nationalities that made part of the Russian Empire to break up and form their independent governments. However, concerning former territories, Lenin's self-determination opted for the strategic needs of the new Soviet state rather the principles of sovereignty.<sup>149</sup> Stalin's arrival on the Soviet political scene as the new Commissar for Nationalities and later on as the unquestionable and despotic leader of the Soviet Union saw a cracking down on national aspirations of independence all over the former Russian empire:

<...>The Russian tsars did a great deal that was bad. They robbed and enslaved the people. They waged wars and seized territories in the interests of landowners. But they did one thing that was good—they amassed an enormous state, all the way to Kamchatka. We have inherited that state. And for the first time, we, the Bolsheviks, have consolidated and strengthened that state as a united and indivisible state, not in the interests of landowners and capitalists, but for the benefit of the workers, of all the peoples that make up that state. We have united the state in such a way that if any part were isolated from the common socialist state, it would not only inflict harm on the latter but would be unable to exist independently and would inevitably fall under foreign subjugation. Therefore, whoever attempts to destroy that unity of the socialist state, whoever seeks the separation of any of its parts or nationalities - that man is an enemy, a sworn enemy of the state and of the peoples of the USSR. And we will destroy each and every such enemy, even if he was an old Bolshevik; we will destroy all his kin, his family.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 45.

<sup>149</sup> "Manifesto to the Ukrainian People, with an Ultimatum to the Ukrainian Rada," 3 December 1917, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/dec/03.htm>

<sup>150</sup> Ivo Banac, ed., *The Diary of Georgi Dimitrov, 1933-1949* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 65.

The old spirit that had led to Russification did not go away, but now was justified by different rationale and motivations than formerly. The Soviet modernity could only come through the extension of the Russian proletariat and the Soviet State, believed Stalin, himself a Russified Georgian. The Soviet State needed to consolidate quickly its control over such an extensive territory, in order to create the archetypal communist society and avoid possible setbacks, as many nationalities were extremely reluctant, to put it mildly, to give up their sovereignty.

#### **2.4. Origins of Soviet policy towards the Third World and India**

The expansion of communism throughout the Soviet Union and in former imperial territories was only one side of the process. According to Lenin's ideology, communism was a *worldwide* phenomenon and the purpose of his revolution was to prepare the ground for the other revolutions to come. First, in the capitalist countries of Europe and then, in their respective colonies.<sup>151</sup> Bolshevik worldwide ambitions were not simply inspired by the internationalist character of socialism, but as put forth earlier had its deep roots in the Russian history. Berdaev believed that the Third International was not international at all, but profoundly Russian idea. Even though, the debate between slavophiles and westernizers often resulted in the conflicting visions of Russia, both agreed that the country had something special to offer to the world, to put it simply, redeem the decadent West, bring Russian civilization to the far away corners of the Empire itself or teach the world some great lesson as Chaadaev famously exclaimed. The Bolsheviks themselves shared with the Russian elite within the empire a confidence that their homeland would eventually become the centre of a brand new world civilization.<sup>152</sup>

As the revolutions in Europe were far from materializing, Bolsheviks directed closer attention towards the countries that were their subjects: "The East will help us conquer the West. England is our greatest enemy. It is in India that we must strike them hardest."<sup>153</sup> Even before the revolution, Lenin paid a lot of attention to the "semibarbarian societies" that had been described by Marx and he firmly believed that imperial rivalries could help

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<sup>151</sup> Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 49.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>153</sup> Quoted in Peter Hopkirk, *Setting the East Ablaze: On Secret Service in Bolshevik Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 102.

to advance a revolutionary cause in the colonized countries.<sup>154</sup> The years of Allied Intervention in the Russian Civil War and the consequent diplomatic isolation faced by Soviet Russia had showed a concrete need for an anti-imperialist front. Right after the revolution, Lenin started to invite Third World socialist leaders to Moscow. In order to engage with the developing world Soviet communists had to pass through Central Asia. In 1921, the Communist University of the Toilers of the East established its main branch in Tashkent. Several decades later, when Nikita Khrushchev decided to deal actively with the Third World, this central Asian capital became a sort of showcase city that hosted various events attracting flocks of intellectuals, functionaries and politicians from Asia and Africa.<sup>155</sup> The Imperial Russia had had a hard time to conquer these predominantly Muslim regions in the Southern parts of the empire and had to face an active resistance. The conquest of the Central Asia had been justified by the tsar administration much in the same way as all the empires used to legitimize their conquests: there was a world to civilize through a missionary zeal. In 1864, Aleksandr Gorchakov, Alexander II “the Liberator’s” foreign minister put the matter in these words: “The Russian situation in Central Asia is similar to that of all civilized states that come into contact with half-wild, unsettled peoples who lack a stable social organization. In such cases, both security and trade interests always demand that the civilized state exercise a certain authority over those of its neighbours that create disturbances because of their wild and impetuous habits.”<sup>156</sup> The Russian Conquest of Central Asia took place in the second half of the nineteenth century, the land seized became known as Russian Turkestan and comprised the regions to the south of Kazakh Steppe, but not included the protectorates of Khiva and Bukhara (despite previous attempts made by the Russian Empire, both were taken over by Bolsheviks only in 1920).

Officially, Russia became an empire in 1721, during the reign of Peter the Great. The Emperor himself tried to establish diplomatic and mercantile contacts with India via Central Asia, precisely through the very khanates of Khiva and Bukhara. This military campaign was one of the first indications of growing imperial and colonial ambitions of

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<sup>154</sup> Peter Hopkirk, *Setting the East Ablaze: Lenin’s Dream of an Empire in Asia* (London: John Murray Publishers, 2006), 102.

<sup>155</sup> Rossen Djagalov, *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism: Literature and Cinema between the Second and the Third Worlds*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2020), 17.

<sup>156</sup> Quoted in Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 42.

Russia.<sup>157</sup> In 1716-17, Peter the Great dispatched an expedition, headed by Prince Alexander Bekovich Cherkassky, to the eastern coast of the Caspian Sea whose primary goal was to destroy an artificial dam that was blocking the flow of the Amu Darya, the important water passage to the Mughal realms, the governors of the North India at the time.<sup>158</sup> A secondary purpose of the tsar was to subdue the khan of Khiva to loyalty and force him to swear allegiance to Imperial Russia. This ambitious military operation ended disastrously since Russian troops were captured, executed or enslaved and Prince Alexander Bekovich Cherkassky's head was presented as a gift to the ruler of the neighbouring Bukhara. The journey was significant in all means. First, as far as our topic is concerned, it establish Peter the Great as a pioneer in Russian endeavours to initiate contacts with South Asia. Second, in the Russian historiography the event was depicted as a foundational encounter between Russia and Central Asia, which at the same time, supported the image of "barbarous and treacherous" Central Asians for the centuries to come. However, someone from Russia before Cherkassky's expedition actually had managed to reach India and more than five centuries later, his travels became a refrain of the Indo-Soviet propaganda.

It is a quite usual practice that the first impetus for the relations between different lands arrives from the practical need to strengthen bilateral trade. Afanasy Nikitin (died in 1472), was a Russian merchant from Tver who travelled down the Volga River, crossed the Caspian and Arabian Seas and managed to reach the sultanate of Bahmani in the Deccan plateau of south India where he spent three years. He even left a narrative of his trip called *The Journey Beyond Three Seas/Khozhdeniye za tri morya* that provided valuable information about the population of India, its social system, government, religion and natural resources. For a long time the extremely interesting figure of Nikitin had remained in oblivion and only in 1955, he was rediscovered by the Soviets. The same year a statue of Nikitin was erected in his hometown of Tver preceded by a quite comical legend. It was speculated that Khrushchev upon his visit to India was embarrassed when Nehru asked him whether Russia had honoured the first Russian to visit India, Afanasy Nikitin. The Soviet leader lied to Nehru that there was actually a statue in Tver commemorating the traveller (in fact, there was not any memorial yet). In order to avoid any future embarrassment after his visit to India, Khrushchev himself immediately

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<sup>157</sup> Ulfat Abdurasalov, "A passage to India: Rhetoric and Diplomacy between Muscovy and Central Asia in the Seventeenth Century," *Itinerario: Journal of Imperial and Global Interactions* 44, no. 3, (2021): 502.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

ordered to erect the monument for such a prominent Russian friend of India.<sup>159</sup> Merely two years later, the first Indo-Soviet joint cinematic collaboration saw the light of the day and it depicted no other, but Afanasy Nikitin.<sup>160</sup> Nikitin was not an isolated case in the early Indo-Russian interactions. The first Russian to visit British India was Filip Efrimov who was captured the Orenburg Steppes and sold into slavery in Bukhara. He escaped and disguised as a merchant travelled through Kashgar, Korakorum and Ladakh. Efrimov reached India and then proceeded to Delhi, Lucknow and Calcutta. He wrote a short account of his journey *Nine Years of Wandering* where he provided some information about nature, climate and life of common people in India. The few studies written on the subject by Indian authors stressed the fact that unlike the European accounts of the Orient of the time, Efrimov's had not resorted to the classic anecdotes about barbarous East, so frequent in the Western European writings.<sup>161</sup> In reality, his account was more like a tale full of romantic intrigue and the episodes of India received far less attention of the traveller than the scenes of Central Asia.<sup>162</sup>

Colonial India, the brightest jewel of the Crown for the British Empire, often had found itself in the midst of political and diplomatic intrigues of the most important colonial powers like France, Britain and Russia. The most bizarre attempt to conquer India was Napoleon's plan of a joint Franco-Russian invasion in 1801. Russian Emperor Paul I, the son of Catherine the Great, was allied with the British for a while – participated with them in the French Revolutionary Wars and even helped to invade the Netherlands, the battle of Castricum saw the defeat of Anglo-Russian force by French-Dutch troops. Since Paul I was Grand Master of the Knights Hospitaller of Malta, the British invasion of the island convinced the tsar to abandon the alliance with them. Afterwards Paul was approached by Napoleon who proposed an extravagant plan to attack British possessions in India to take a proper revenge.<sup>163</sup> Paul I wrote to Cavalry General of Orenburg (area close to the border of modern-day Kazakhstan) directing him to conquer the Central Asian Khanates,

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<sup>159</sup> "The First Russian in India," Russia Through Lens, <https://rttl.me/2020/06/08/the-first-russian-in-india/>

<sup>160</sup> *Pardesi/Journey Beyond Three Seas* (1957) was the first Indo-Soviet cinematic collaboration that narrated the travels of Nikitin.

<sup>161</sup> Arun Mohanty, *Tracing Indo-Russian Diplomatic History* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2019), 29-30.

<sup>162</sup> Barbara Maggs, "Imprisoned! Two Russian Narratives of Travel and Captivity in Asia in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries: Filipp Efrimov in Central Asia and Vasilii Golovnin in Japan," *Canadian Slavonic Papers/Revue Canadienne des Slavistes* 52, No. 3/4 (2010): 337.

<sup>163</sup> 35,000 French troops, 25,000 Russians, 10,000 Cossacks.

Milan Hauner, *What is Asia to Us? Russia's Asian Heartland Yesterday and Today* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 76.

where he believed the British presence was the weakest, and from there invade India.<sup>164</sup> Paul I was assassinated the same year and thus invasion did not materialize.<sup>165</sup> The halted Franco-Russian invasion was the prelude to the Great Game, a nebulous diplomatic and political confrontation between Russian and British empires over Afghanistan and neighbouring territories in Central Asia whose final prize supposedly once again had been India. It goes without saying, Central Asia was crucial in gaining the access to India and thence to build a stronghold in Asia. In this sense, Nehru was right in assuming crucial importance of his country (though after partition it lost the key Northwestern flank, modern-day Pakistan) given its geographical position and size. The Soviets as well as the Americans understood that too.

The Soviet ideology along with the Russian revolutionary example had a particular edge in the colonial countries – it promised an eventual independence from the oppressors, social justice and technological development even in the conditions of socioeconomic backwardness. Leninism put in practice in the Soviet Russia had showed that the stages of socioeconomic development as theorized by Karl Marx on the path toward communism, could be forcibly shortened. The collective character of communist ideology that stresses the centrality of the *people*, and not the individual seemed to suit fine Russia, the core of the Soviet Union, a country where traditionally collective ideologies, like the nineteenth century Narodniks (*narod*, ‘people’) found supporters as could be expected in a predominantly agrarian society.

Russia’s particular geographic position, stretching from Eastern Europe to Kamchatka near Japan, reinforced the Soviet conviction that the country was in a much better position to work with non-European peoples than the nations of the West would be. Stalin later actively promoted this belief that had been present in the years of Imperialist Russia.<sup>166</sup> The Soviets had important credentials to recommend themselves well to the exploited colonial peoples—a model of rapid socioeconomic development proposed by the peoples living between East and West whose roots were in the agrarian and collective society. It should not be forgotten, that in many traditional colonial societies the *collective* played much important role than the *individual*. It is very probable that American flamboyant

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<sup>164</sup> Martin Ewans, *The Great Game: Britain and Russia in Central Asia* (London: Routledge, 2004), 46.

<sup>165</sup> Napoleon tried to persuade Paul’s son, tsar Alexander I to invade India, but he resisted to the proposal.

Hauer, *What is Asia to Us?*, 76

<sup>166</sup> Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 48.

individualism was quite repellent to some in Asian and African societies as it often emerged in the first-hand accounts of some visitors in the USA. In addition, Asian and African revolutionaries eager to pursue modernization that failed under the colonial rule had a concrete example to look at. Soviet experience in Mongolia was a proof that an essentially traditional society where land and religion played crucial part could be modernized quickly.

The European colonies in the East had to wait in line for the Soviet support. Outside Soviet Russia, Mongolia was the first country in Asia that tasted a communist regime becoming a laboratory of Communist policy in the Third World.<sup>167</sup> In 1911, the Chinese had lost control of the territory and Tibet-born ruler Bogd Khan jumped at the chance and immediately declared the independence. After the October Revolution, the country witnessed tumultuous years. In 1921, the Chinese troops led by the warlord Xu Shuzheng occupied the country only to be defeated by anti-communist warlord Baron Ungern. Both the Mongolian affair and the presence on the battlefield of baron Ungern, charismatic White general and a staunch monarchist who having restored the rule of Bogd Khan posed a serious and growing threat to the Bolsheviks. Mongolian army aligning with Bolsheviks, ended the short-lived occupation of Ungern and proclaimed once again the independence of Mongolia. Three years later, Bogd Khan died and immediately Mongolian's People's Republic was established, making the country the first Soviet Union's political satellite.<sup>168</sup> The Soviet propaganda had portrayed Mongolian situation as an outcome of genuine popular uprising, thus greatly minimizing the role played by Soviet troops and agents.<sup>169</sup> Mongolians, though formally independent, witnessed almost as many communist-implemented social reforms as their Soviet counterparts did: forced collectivization, mass purges, fierce anti-religious propaganda, politicized education and frantic industrialization. The communist state must have been built in Mongolia in ten years, the Comintern representative warned the Mongolian communist cadres.<sup>170</sup> Mongolia, eager to escape the country's traditional nomadic and Buddhist past, remained the Soviet satellite for seven decades.

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>168</sup> George S. Murphy, *Soviet Mongolia: a story of the oldest political satellite* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1966), 1.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 51.

The first concrete steps aimed at firing up communist insurrection in the colonial countries was the First Congress of the Peoples of the East held in Baku, 1920. Nearly 1,900 delegates attended the Congress, around 1300 of them were defined as “Marxist sympathizers.”<sup>171</sup> The rest were anti-colonial fighters coming from Persia, India, China and nearer Kazakhstan and Armenia among others. Lenin, bedridden with ill health, expressed his personal praises and good wishes by phone: “<...> The destiny of all Western civilisation now largely depends on drawing the working masses of the East into political activities.”<sup>172</sup> The same year, 1920, saw the foundation of Communist parties in some of the key states of the Third World like India, China, Indonesia, Turkey and Iran, and once again, Central Asia and Tashkent in particular, emerged as a safe haven for the colonial freedom fighters with Marxist leanings. There in 1920, the émigré Communist Party of India was founded. The leader of the Tashkent group of revolutionary Indians was M.N. Roy who became one of the most important Third World intellectuals inside the Comintern, especially cherished by Lenin. In the late 1920s, he fell from grace of Stalin and was expelled from the Communist International.

The central message of the Congress of the Peoples of the East and of the Soviet leaders to the Third World revolutionaries was that on the path to the creation of a communist society, the gradual and different stages a nation must go through in order to achieve communism as dictated by Marx could be skipped or brief. However, Stalin who after Lenin’s death consolidated his power became increasingly orthodox in his view of the Marxist laws of historical development. He started to disseminate a series of myths about the October Revolution. The most notable of them was that the Revolution was carried by the most advanced groups of the industrial proletariat under the guidance of the Communist Party and it was carried against a bourgeoisie state that came into being since 1905, the First Russian Revolution.<sup>173</sup> The mid-1920s saw the emergence of “Socialism in one country” theory engineered by Stalin and Nikolai Bukharin that signalled the turn toward national communism, juxtaposed to global socialism, and justified the Soviet need to strengthen their power internally.

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<sup>171</sup> “Baku Congress of the Peoples of the East,” Marxist Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/baku/foreword.htm>

<sup>172</sup> V.I. Lenin, “Letter to the Propaganda and Action Council of the Peoples of the East,” Marxist Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1921/dec/17.htm>

<sup>173</sup> Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 54.

After Chiang Kai-shek crushed the Chinese Communist Party in 1927, Stalin explained the Chinese comrade's failure with the claim that it is not possible to skip the stages of historical development established by Marx.<sup>174</sup> The Stalinists were ambiguous, but indicated a model for the developing countries to reach independence and communism at once through land collectivization brought with the help of arrests and mass executions of political dissidents that could create the desired surplus necessary for energizing the industrialization and bringing in the modernity to the countries. Before the Second World War, Stalin did not believe that the developing countries had any revolutionary potential in the short-term perspective. In any case, some efforts were directed towards studying the colonial countries like India. The main institutions dedicated to the studies of Central and South Asia were Institut Vostokovedeniia Akademiia Nauk (IVAN), the Oriental Studies Institutes in the Central Asian Republics, the Institute of World Economics and World Politics, the International Agrarian Institute, and the Scientific Research Association (often named Institute) for the Study of National and Colonial Problems.<sup>175</sup> The latter admitted also some Indian students (no doubt to prepare them for the revolution) who were looked on suspiciously by Stalin's administration. A note written by some Institute's *apparatchik* lamented that Indian students "have a vast acquaintance circle outside the Institute, and, in their every day life go here and there, <...> and a part of them developed openly suspicious connections."<sup>176</sup> Previously, the Institute even petitioned the Comintern for the removal of Indians. One Indian (codenamed Lopez) inside the Institute succumbed to the general paranoia of the purge era and even complained about suspicious activities of other Indians and their wives urging the authorities to "check them out."<sup>177</sup> Perhaps a likely explanation of Stalin's reluctance to deal with the colonial world (in some cases, with the world in general) could be offered by taking into account his mental state and the real and imaginary conspiracies brewing around the Soviet leader desperately seeking to maintain his iron grip on both the party and the vast country.

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Nisha Sahai-Achuthan, "Soviet Indologists and the Institute of Oriental Studies," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 42, No. 2 (1983): 326.

<sup>176</sup> "Undated Note from the Scientific Research Institute for national and colonial problems concerning the suspicious behaviour of Indians (1938)" in *Indo-Russian Relations, Part II, 1917-1947, Select Documents from the Archives of the Russian Federation*, ed. P. Roy, S.D. Gupta, and H. Vasudevan (Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 2000), 297–299.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

Andrei Zhdanov, the fierce Stalin's ideologist and key figure in the Great Purge, in 1938 became the head of the Central Committee Directorate for Propaganda and Agitation which brought all news media, arts and cultural production under centralised party control. On September 22, 1947 speaking at the founding conference of the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) he defined the formation of the two major camps in the post-war world: the Imperialist and Anti-democratic Camp on one side, and the Anti-Imperialist and Democratic one, the Soviet Union and its allies standing for the latter. Zhdanov's pronouncement could be considered as a retaliation for the Truman doctrine and a response to the Marshall Plan.<sup>178</sup> The beginning of the Cold War by then was evident to the both sides and precisely in this divided world's state of affairs Stalin renewed his interest to the developing countries, albeit extremely cautiously.

Little more than a month before Zhdanov's speech India had gained its independence. The Chinese communists were going towards the final victory in the country to Stalin's contentment, but he thought that the next stage for the Soviets "should be India. Now, she gained freedom from England, but such freedom appears to be only a myth. Here is millions of working masses who cannot and do not wish to live in the old way. They understand that the real meaning of the running intrigues of the imperialists is to stir up with new sauce in order to extend their domination in Asia. The anti-imperialist struggle is taking in a wider range of people. We will help them to win and to enjoy equal rights in the family of free peoples."<sup>179</sup> However, everything stood still and there were no signs of the increased Soviet attention to India, but a gesture of goodwill from the Indian side was visible and unequivocal: Nehru appointed his sister Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit as the first ambassador to the Soviet Union. The new ambassador was totally ignored by the top Soviet leadership and did not meet Stalin for once. Besides, already in 1946 Nehru had proclaimed: "To that other great nation of the modern world, the Soviet Union, which also carries a vast responsibility for shaping world events, we send greetings. They are our neighbours in Asia and inevitably we shall have to undertake many common tasks and have much to do with each other."<sup>180</sup> The second ambassador Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan had an opportunity to see Soviet Generalissimo, but only for a half an

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<sup>178</sup> Malcolm Macewen, "The Two Camps," *The New Reasoner* 1, no. 4 (1958): 1.

<sup>179</sup> "Stenographic Record of a Speech by Comrade J. V. Stalin at a Special Session of the Politburo, March 14, 1948," March 14, 1948, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, ROC-MFA 105.11/61.15. Published in CWIHP Working Paper No. 12.

<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117823>

<sup>180</sup> "Jawaharlal Nehru," *India Quarterly*, 41, No. 1 (January-March 1985): 74.

hour in 1950. The conversation seemed quite awkward; Stalin had a hard time to conceal his irritation at the ambassador's reiteration of India's policy of neutrality. Besides, the ambassador had a nerve to speak about "the essential need for big powers to do their utmost to put an end to the cold war and to place an embargo on propaganda against each other, in which Generalissimo Stalin should take a lead [for the] larger interest of humanity. Stalin replied that it did not depend upon him alone."<sup>181</sup> Stalin, like the Soviet experts of India at the time, was critical of India's independence from the British. Open to interpretation was India's decision to join the Commonwealth, an intergovernmental organization whose members shared a common past under the British imperial rule.

The failure of the Soviet Union to live up to its messianic promises of social justice and universal happiness had manifested itself quite early since its foundation. If initially the October revolution and Soviet state had charmed people from all western countries, already in the 1960s, the number of Western intellectuals infatuated with the USSR decreased starkly and some of them still eager to feel a revolutionary thrill turned their attention to Cuba and China. In the first decades of its existence, the Soviet Union had attracted flocks of intellectuals who in their home countries defended not only the ideals for which the Soviet Union stood for, but surprisingly also the interests of the Soviet state itself.<sup>182</sup> The attraction that the Soviet state exercised on the foreigners (particularly from the western countries) has been the subject of numerous and precious in-depth studies.<sup>183</sup> The reasons behind this enchanting and overwhelming attraction towards the Soviet Union were various. The sociologist Paul Hollander thought that the dissatisfaction of Western intellectuals with the societies they lived, their economic models and institutions pushed them to indicate the realization of their ideals in some existing country of the world.<sup>184</sup> The citizens of Western societies became disillusioned with social inequalities, to whose emergence the capitalism also highly contributed. The Great Depression which invested the United States in primis and had repercussions around the globe proved the capitalism critics right. The Soviet Union seemed a natural choice for many disillusioned: the first socialist state in the world whose citizens liberated themselves from ghastly

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<sup>181</sup> "Record of the Conversation between I.V. Stalin and Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan," January 15, 1950, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, N.M.M.L., J.N. (S.4) Vol. No. 34, 286-287. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/119261>

<sup>182</sup> Ludmila Stern, *Western Intellectuals and the Soviet Union: From Red Square to the Left Bank, 1920–1940* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>184</sup> Hollander Paul, *Pellegrini politici: Intellettuali in Unione Sovietica, Cina e Cuba* (Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, 1988), 35.

tsarism. The Soviets offered radically different development model that denied private property and advocated State intervention in the economy that presumably was capable to curb hawks and speculators.

Already in the 1930s, the socialist country had represented a new and superior civilization, as it apparently had been moving in the direction of progress and rapidly overcoming its backwardness. Soviet-style industrialisation, colossal state projects, the social programmes of massive dimensions as the liquidation of illiteracy, full employment and free medicine had no parallels in other coeval societies. Besides, the intellectuals who acted also as opinion leaders in their own countries were particularly pleased with USSR's attention to culture which was declared by the Soviets to be a vital element of life.<sup>185</sup> André Gide, a French writer who later became dissatisfied with the Soviet Union, in the early 1920s had declared that the fate of culture in the world depended on the USSR and all intellectuals had to defend it.<sup>186</sup> In fact, until Stalin had consolidated his power in the early 1930s, the Soviet Union was quite open to different ideas regarding arts, education and society and some sort of discussion on a definition of a brand new aesthetics was also permitted.

In the 1920s, the country produced an avant-garde cinema embodied by the movies of Eisenstein, Russian formalism school made enormous contributions to literary criticism, Vsevolod Meyerhold's experiments with the theatre brought him a wide recognition and the poetry of Mayakovski became a face of the Russian futurist movement. This brewing cultural ferment fascinated the intellectuals, particularly in the West, and through it, the Soviet Union started to exercise global cultural influence. As the state became more and more centralized and totalitarian and started committing brutal repressions, the fascination did not disappear. The information coming from the Soviet Union was scarce and even if some horrible news managed to reach the foreign countries, they were often dismissed as false. Secondly, with the rise of reactionary ideologies the Soviet Union was conceived to be a bulwark against fascism and Nazism, a narrative meticulously exploited by the Soviet internal and external propaganda machine for the decades to come.

The charms that the Soviet Union exercised among the intellectuals of the Third World was of a slightly different kind. If the westerners casted a more idealistic glance on the Soviet Union, Asian and African intellectuals were in search of very concrete models to

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<sup>185</sup> Stern, *Western Intellectuals and the Soviet Union*, 3.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

be adopted in their countries. Indian writers that wandered in the Soviet Union and left detailed accounts of their travels like Sankrityayan and Yashpal, were particularly impressed with the Soviet economic system and its achievements often citing meticulously the words of Soviet planners and technicians met during their stays.<sup>187</sup> The professed morality and honesty of the Soviet people, USSR's commitment to world peace and anti-imperialism also inspired Third World intellectuals as well as universal education, medicine, Soviet illiteracy eradication campaigns like *likbez* (for instance, in India after the end of the British rule the literacy rate stood at merely 12%). Unlike in the West, the Soviet model did not cease to fascinate the cultural and political elites of the Third World, in many countries the admiration for the "scientific" Soviet example even increased. This was due to different factors, but the most important of them was the Non-Aligned Movement's partial failure as the genuine spirit of unity witnessed during the Bandung Conference started to fade away. On the national level, various Asian and African governments realized their models of development chosen previously were ineffective and inadequate to face immense socioeconomic issues present in the postcolonial societies.

After Stalin's death Soviets revitalized their efforts to win the Third World, so neglected in their boss' time and acknowledged that there were different, *national* ways to socialism. Nehru's non-aligned stance gained momentum and grew into the Non-Aligned Movement that tried to avoid sabre-rattling of the Cold War and advocated quite abstract notions of world peace. American analysts had not made a mistake: "a Third World block" as they called it, offered immense possibilities and space of manoeuvre for the Soviet Union. Indian historian and Marxist intellectual Vijay Prashad described the cultural and political processes in the Third World during the Cold War arguing that the Third World was not a place but an immense project.<sup>188</sup> Indeed, it was and it came into life with the help of the Soviet Union that sought to control this "project," albeit not always successfully. The Soviet policies aimed at gaining influence in the Third World had started in India in 1955 with Khrushchev's visit to the country. The next chapter will deal with the geopolitical, ideological and cultural circumstances that bound the two

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<sup>187</sup> Yaśpāl, *Yaśpāl kā yātrā-sāhitya aur kathā nāṭak* (Ilāhābād: Lokbhārtī Prakāśan, 1994) and Rāhul Sāṃkrṭyāyan, *Merī Jīvan yātrā* (Nāī Dillī: Rādhākṣṣṇa Prakāśan Prāiveṭ Limiteḍ, 1994).

<sup>188</sup> Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (New York: The New Press, 2007).

countries together and transformed interstate relations into a widely celebrated friendship in India as well as in the Soviet Union.

The chapter analysed the cultural beliefs that formed the ideologies of both Great Powers during the Cold War years and thus helping the reader to grasp fully the larger context in which Indo-Soviet relations that will be analysed in the third chapter, evolved. The USA, convinced that economic stability oriented nations towards the West, was surprised that India, overwhelmed by socioeconomic problems, was not eager to follow American developmental model and take part in the Western camp. America's belief about its special mission and uniqueness in the world, sharpened by the Cold War tensions, impeded the country to establish constructive relations with India that was careful not to fall down into imperial and exploitative trap again. The Soviet ideology instead, that advocated downtrodden and subjugated was much more digestible for the former colonial countries. However, Stalin's USSR, like its Cold War adversary, believed that other countries had to subscribe faithfully to its vision of the world. Only ideological changes after Stalin's death enabled the Soviet Union to be more elastic in its interactions with the Third World. The chapter examined in detail the origins of Soviet attitude towards India and actual American foreign policy towards the country arguing that failures and misunderstandings in Indo-American relations described, highly contributed to the eventual Indo-Soviet rapprochement but as will be seen in the next chapter was not the sole decisive factor.

### **3. Indo-Soviet relations**

Tens of thousands joined the welcoming crowds, silently and reverentially, in their homes watching the live telecast on the TV of the arrival of their time-tested friend, the representative of the land of the Great October Socialist Revolution, the outstanding Soviet leader who has unswervingly fulfilled and continues fulfilling Lenin's behest of building abiding friendship and cooperation with the people of independent India.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter will examine two distinct periods in the history of Indo-Soviet relations. Firstly, it will analyse the dynamics of Indo-Soviet relations during the years of Jawaharlal Nehru (1947-1964). In this period, India was particularly active internationally as Nehru was a vocal advocate of the newly founded United Nations deeming the organization a "force for peace." His continuously expressed non-aligned position enhanced India's international prestige even if it initially had irritated both superpowers. However, non-alignment was not a merely idealistic stance but also served narrower Indian interests helping the country to diversify its international relationships by allowing it to manoeuvre between two Great Powers for economic and military aid. The following section critically examines and narrates the circumstances and vicissitudes that transformed quite dormant Indo-Soviet relations of the Nehru years into the active and pervasive friendship of Indira Gandhi's time, the topic of the second section of the chapter.

#### **3.1. Beginnings: the Nehru years**

In 1959, T.N. Kaul, an Indian diplomat and a close friend of Jawaharlal Nehru's daughter Indira Gandhi, painted the picture of a bleak future for India and the Indian National Congress when she became the president of the party that year. Firstly, Kaul averted the INC's new leader of the likely dangers arising from heterogeneous and disparate composition of the party itself: "The Congress Organization in India today represents not one political ideology but has, among its members and leadership, people holding

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<sup>1</sup> "L.I. Brezhnev: New Historic Visit to India," *Soviet Land*, December, 1980.

different ideas ranging perhaps from the extreme right to the extreme left. The main factor that is holding together this motley crowd is the leadership of PM Nehru.”<sup>2</sup> In Kaul’s view, the main problem were “elder and more conservative elements in the INC whittling down the progressive programme” of the party. At the moment, in the eyes of many observers in India and abroad, Nehru’s era was going towards the end. The country and its aging leader were facing internal and external debacles: the deepening rift inside the party, stalling economy, social turmoil in different regions of the country and rapidly deteriorating relations with China on whose success Nehru had pinned his hopes. Kaul ended his letter on a rather sombre note: “Lastly we must guard against certain national dangers: 1) the possible splitting up of India 2) domination by a military or other dictatorship 3) aligning India with one or other power blocks in the world.”<sup>3</sup> The years of Nehru's politics, a blend of idealism and pragmatism, was coming to an unavoidable end. During his tenure that lasted seventeen years, he had laid solid foundations for Indo-Soviet relations of which, shortly after his death, his daughter would fashion a strategic partnership that was not only instrumental in the international affairs but also became a factor influencing domestic politics.

If the United States of America before Indian independence had not showed a significant interest in the far away South Asian country, the same could not be said about the Soviet Union and the preceding Russian Empire that had a long history in its attitude towards and its contacts with India. However, until the nineteenth century the contacts between the two countries were sporadic and individual rather than official and institutionalized. The situation started to change at the end of the century when Nikolai II Alexandrovich Romanov, the tsar of Russian Empire from 1894 to 1917, travelled to India in 1890.<sup>4</sup> The first step towards modern diplomatic relations between India and Russia, motivated by the need to expand Russian trade with South Asia, was the inauguration of Russian consulate in Bombay in 1900.<sup>5</sup> However, some Indian nationalists fighting against the colonial rule perceived Russian diplomatic presence also as an opportunity that could

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<sup>2</sup> “Correspondence Indira Gandhi,” February 28, 1959, I instalment, no. 58, The Papers of T.N. Kaul, Nehru Memorial Museum&Library (NMML), New Delhi.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> During his prolonged stay there, the young prince toured all over India visiting cities of Bombay, Delhi, Ahmadabad, Calcutta, Madras, Jaipur and Jodhpur.

Arun Mohanty, *Tracing Indo-Russian Diplomatic History* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers&Distributors, 2019), 67–74.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 74–75.

enhance freedom fighters' spirit and strength.<sup>6</sup> In the following decades, as Leninism and the Bolsheviks were growing in strength and numbers, Marxist ideas inspired various members within the Indian independence movement.

Reports and stories about the socialist experiment started to flood India in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The heavily publicized Soviet successes of economic modernization in creating basic conditions of life based on modern science and technology fascinated some members of a more forward-looking section of Indian intelligentsia. Moreover, the years of independence struggle witnessed various intellectual trends and movements that strove to redefine India's past, Hindu religion and the traditional social institutions based on it. For Indian Marxists, Hindu religion and old social institutions were held accountable for India's backwardness. Thus, for some it was natural to think that Marxist ideology that apparently had proved capable and effective in destroying traditional society in Russia and creating a new one based on socialist principles could also do the same in India.<sup>7</sup> Already in 1920, some Indian emigres headed by M.N. Roy, the prominent Marxist intellectual and revolutionary close to Lenin, in Tashkent founded the Communist Party of India (CPI), while the party headquarters on Indian soil were opened in 1925, in Kanpur, India. As far as the first decades of independent India were concerned, the CPI played an important role in Indian politics and it could be said that both in certain regions and in the central government too, the communist parties had been the most successful of all the non-Congress parties.<sup>8</sup> The role of the CPI in the national politics will be discussed in detail in the next section of the chapter that deals with the years of Indira Gandhi when the party actively cooperated with the central government and ruling party.

By the mid-1930s, Nehru emerged as the principal and more progressive face of Indian independence movement. The Indian leader had encountered socialist ideas for the first time during his college years in Cambridge in the first decade of the twentieth century. Fabianism that sought a democratic form of socialism via gradual reforms rather than a direct revolution by violent means and overthrow was a primary source of inspiration for the young Nehru. However, he admitted that his early contacts with socialist ideas had

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<sup>6</sup> In 1904, Indian nationalist Bal Gangadhar Tilak met Russian Consul General V.O. Klemm. They apparently discussed the opportunity to send Indian youths to Russia for advanced military training. A year later, Tilak himself, a Brahmin who emphasized Hindu religious and cultural revival, publicly expressed his admiration for the Russian Revolution.

Ibid., 93.

<sup>7</sup> V.R. Mehta, *Ideology, Modernization and Politics in India* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1983), 68.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 70.

been superficial and not only in the 1930s, had Nehru started to acquire a serious understanding of the message, the content and the implications of the socialist ideology.<sup>9</sup> By Nehru's own account, his meetings with orthodox Marxists at the Brussels Conference and the practical example of socialism that he had observed during his short tour in the Soviet Union in 1927 remained deeply impressed in his mind.<sup>10</sup> Besides, Lenin's theoretical input of imperialism as the highest stage of exploitative capitalism and active Soviet support for nationalist movements in colonial countries of Asia and Africa favourably predisposed some other Indian nationalists towards the Soviet Union. In a country whose economy was ravaged by the centuries of colonial exploitation, Soviet model of economic planning and its apparent success appealed to Congress modernists. Interestingly, Francine Frankel argued that the attraction of Indian intellectuals towards Marxist ideas developed among Indian intellectuals in the 1930s primarily was due to a deeper emotional affinity between Gandhian thought and Marxism's moral basis.<sup>11</sup> Both Gandhi and Marxists denounced private property and production for profit as being the primary causes of exploitation of the masses deeming the capitalism an immoral system. Gandhi went as far as to compare socialist thought to the teachings of the earliest Hindu texts:

Socialism was not born with the discovery of the misuse of capital by capitalists. As I have contended, socialism, even communism, is explicit in the first verse of Ishopanishad.<sup>12</sup> What is true is that when some reformers lost faith in the method of conversion, the technique of what is known as scientific socialism was born. I am engaged in solving the same problem that faces scientific socialists. <...> Real socialism has been handed down to us by our ancestors who taught: "All land belongs to Gopal; where then is the boundary line? Man is the maker of that line and he can, therefore, unmake it." Gopal literally means shepherd; it also means God. In modern language it means the State, i. e. the people. <...> Land and all property is his who

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Brecher, *Nehru: political biography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 48.

<sup>10</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *An autobiography* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2004), 161–165 .

Francine Frankel, *India's Political Economy 1947-2004: The Gradual Revolution* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 13.

<sup>11</sup> Frankel, *India's Political Economy*, 14.

<sup>12</sup> The Upanishads are the philosophical-religious texts of Hinduism which develop and explain the fundamental tenets of the religion. There are 108 Upanishads and Shri Ishopanishad is one of them.

will work for it. Unfortunately the workers are or have been kept ignorant of this simple fact.<sup>13</sup>

However, Gandhi advocated the peaceful means to achieve “pure” socialist state and did not approve of violence and coercion advocated by some Marxist sections: “<...> Hence the prince and the peasant will not be equalized by cutting off the prince's head, nor can the process of cutting off equalize the employer and the employed. One cannot reach truth by untruthfulness. <...> Therefore, only truthful, non-violent and pure-hearted Socialists will be able to establish a socialistic society in India and the world.”<sup>14</sup> In the end, his non-violence philosophy prevented Gandhi from embracing Bolshevism and its professed use of violence:

I must confess that I have not yet been able to fully understand the meaning of Bolshevism. All that I know is that it aims at the abolition of the institution of private property. This is only an application of the ethical ideal of non-possession in the realm of economics and if the people adopted this ideal of their own accord or could be made to accept it by means of peaceful persuasion, there would be nothing like it.<...> Communism of the Russian type, that is communism which is imposed on a people, would be repugnant to India. If communism came without any violence, it would be welcome.<sup>15</sup>

Although Gandhi repudiated Bolshevik’s despotic methods and preferred small-scale economic activity to Soviet-style mass industrialization, his vision of a just economic and social system was near to the core ideas of communism. Pyarelal Nayyar, personal secretary of Mahatma, elaborated on Gandhi’s perspective:

He has a scientific mind and the knowledge of Communism and Socialism picked up from his talks with friends and casual reading did not satisfy him. He read Das Capital and went through some of the other writings of Marx as also of Engels, Lenin and Stalin. He read some books about the Reds in China too and at the end of it was convinced more than ever that Communism of his conception was the only thing that could bring relief to suffering humanity. In his Ashram and the institutions that are

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<sup>13</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *India of My Dreams*, “5. India and Socialism,” <https://www.mkgandhi.org/indiadreams/chap05.htm>

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *India of My Dreams*, “6. India and Communism,” <https://www.mkgandhi.org/indiadreams/chap06.htm>

being run under his guidance and inspiration, the ruling principle is: "To each according to his need, from each according to his capacity." His Ashrams are thus themselves experiments in Communism based on nonviolence and Indian village conditions.<sup>16</sup>

Gandhian thought on socialism and communism deeply influenced his socialist-hearted disciple Jawaharlal Nehru. Despite Nehru's espoused secularism and pro-democracy stance, and the resulting rejection of Soviet one-party dominant system, in the mind of the young ardent independence activist, state planning and check in economy was the only and most effective mean to relieve Indian masses and bring equality to the Indian society. Already, in the late 1930s, Indian nationalists started to ponder the future of independent India and outline its economic policy. Within the Congress party arena where different outlooks and leanings were present, general consensus was reached that inequalities could not be eradicated abruptly but their removal should be gradual in order not to shock Indian caste-based social frame. Gandhism was crucial in this sense because it brought concord between modern secularist whose primary aim was to get rid of castes and the more conservative and religious-oriented right wing of the congress party. Somehow, Gandhian social equality managed to amalgamate *traditional* Hindu values, as they were handpicked and reinterpreted by Gandhi, and *modern* ethical axioms of Marxism.<sup>17</sup> As a main consequence, in order to achieve universal equality, the upper castes had to renounce their status, privileges and interests. In the 1930s, Nehru was asking himself how to persuade people to "divest the vested interests" and which means would be less divisive and more effective in accomplishing this exacting task: conversion through gradual persuasion or coercion. At the time, Gandhi represented a more spiritual than political dimension of the Indian independence movement and while he strongly believed that class conciliation was possible, Nehru was getting closer to the more radical elements of the party and thought that some degree of coercion was inevitable:

History also shows us that there is no instance of a privileged class or group or nation giving up its special privileges or interests willingly. Always a measure of coercion has been applied, pressure has been brought to bear, or conditions have been created which make it impossible or unprofitable for vested interests to carry on. And then

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<sup>16</sup> "Appendix to Section Eleven, Gandhiji's Communism (by Pyarelal)" in M.K. Gandhi, *Towards Non-violent socialism* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan publishing house, 1951), 160.

<sup>17</sup> Frankel, *India's Political Economy*, 15.

the enforced conversion takes place. The methods of this enforcement may be brutal or civilized.<sup>18</sup>

On the eve of India's independence, it was clear that the country had chosen a democratic framework of the government marked by strong socialist tints with the blessings of Indian capitalist class whose leading members had drafted *A Plan of Economic Development for India* (better known as the Bombay Plan) in 1944.<sup>19</sup> The new government laid an emphasis on public sector, state regulation and control over key sectors of the economy but at the same time, permitted active private sector participation in non-priority industries. This mixed-economy framework reflected the cleavage that had divided the congress party in two distinct opposite stances even on social issues as religion and language since the dawn of nationalist movement. This meant that the secular-socialist/left wing of the party had to face increasing opposition to the implementation of economic and social reforms inspired by the socialist principles from the conservatives that advocated liberal economic policies and incentives to private investment. This intrinsic attrition had manifested itself already in the years of Jawaharlal Nehru, but became extremely stark and conflicting during the premiership of Indira Gandhi.

Already before 1947, Nehru had delineated the contours of independent India's foreign policy and decided to root it in a neutral, fair, impartial and non-belligerent position. Often, Prime Minister reminded his compatriots and the world that India was a "nation of peace" which sought to promote peace in the world at large: "We, in our humble capacity, are still the inheritors of a great tradition and we are still followers of a very great man [Gandhi] who passed away a short time ago."<sup>20</sup> Gandhi had passed by, murdered in 1948 by a militant Hindu nationalist, but independent India, in foreign affairs either, was eager to keep on walking on the track of non-violence and peace trodden so far with him. Besides, the Nehru's declaration paid tribute to an anti-war sentiment that had diffused among some sections of Indian intelligentsia in the 1930s.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, many Indian

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<sup>18</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *Whither India* (Allahabad: Kitabistan, 1933), 34.

<sup>19</sup> Guha, *India after Gandhi*, 205.

<sup>20</sup> "Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru Series 2, Vol. 13, August 1949 - November 1949," 198-199, [https://nehruselectedworks.com/pdfviewer.php?style=UI\\_Zine\\_Material.xml&subfolder=&doc=s2v13.pdf|11|408#page=198](https://nehruselectedworks.com/pdfviewer.php?style=UI_Zine_Material.xml&subfolder=&doc=s2v13.pdf|11|408#page=198)

<sup>21</sup> Some moderate and radical nationalists alike had started to regard wars in Europe as an outcome of conflicting national interests among Western powers that consequentially pushed them to resort to imperialism, the highest expression of it being Nazism and fascism that were taking hold of Europe.

nationalists, also inspired by Gandhi's thoughts, considered the West as a purely materialist civilization that sacrificed the inner being, its moral and spiritual principals to satisfy petty material needs. Precisely this "materialist" nature of Western peoples pushed them to territorial conquest and annexations to seize material resources and exact as much as possible from the populations subjugated.<sup>22</sup> For this reason, capitalism and imperialism was two sides of the same medal. As long as world's nations continued to exploit each other, lasting peace could never be achieved, it was argued in India.<sup>23</sup> In 1929, Nehru had pronounced that peace could never come out of imperialism and capitalism.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, the forthcoming non-alignment position had been ideologically charged even before its elaboration and its employment in the international affairs. In 1973, Planning Minister in the government of Mrs. Gandhi D.P. Dhar wrote to his PM:

Very often the policy of non-alignment as expounded by Panditji [Jawaharlal Nehru] and by the Prime minister [Indira Gandhi] is interpreted by our spokesmen to mean that some sort of equation has to be struck between the two world powers. Therefore, one often finds that where a firm position has to be taken, based upon an understanding of the issues involved, there is a search for mechanistic balancing of sides. I need hardly say that this reflects a very inadequate understanding of the concept of non-alignment. It is clear that Panditji took sides on issues and in the process resisted strong pressures. Many examples can be cited but the Suez crisis and the Hungarian revolt are enough to illustrate the point.<sup>25</sup>

Shortly before independence, the future PM Nehru entrusted V.K. Krishna Menon with the task to explore the opportunities of establishing diplomatic relations with the USSR. Trustworthy Nehru's friend who had been secretary of India League in England, in later years he became one of the most controversial figures in Indian political history. Being one of the architects of non-alignment, he often expressed anti-western feelings and pro-Soviet and communist sympathies to the point that his candidature to the Minister of External Affairs was sharply opposed in the Cabinet and Parliament and eventually, he

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T. A. Keenleyside, "Prelude to Power: The Meaning of Non-Alignment Before Indian Independence," *Pacific Affairs* 53, no. 3 (Autumn 1980): 465.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> "Planning Ministers notes regarding to Prime Minister regarding his discussions with Soviets," III Instalment, no. 269, The papers of P.N. Haksar, NMML.

was offered the post of the Minister for Defence instead. In 1946, Menon received a letter from Nehru and flew to Paris where he met Soviet foreign minister Vyacheslav Molotov. The establishment of Indo-Soviet diplomatic ties was not the sole purpose of Menon. Famine once again ravaged parts of India and the country was looking for food aid elsewhere. Menon had the impression the USSR was “anxious” to help Indian friends but it was still dealing with Soviet people's urgent needs and severe scarcity of subsistence and resources.<sup>26</sup> Besides, the Indians were well aware that at the time, the Soviets deemed Nehru's foreign policy as a mere justification for “collaboration with English capitalism”, calling Indian leaders “reactionaries”, Indian independence merely “nominal” and revered Gandhi – an “apostle of backwardness.”<sup>27</sup> Overall, the proclamation of Indian independence had passed almost unnoticed in the Soviet press. This harsh attitude towards India was a result of a general change in the USSR’s strategy in reply to the US announcements of the Marshall Plan and the Truman doctrine of 1947 that strictly limited Soviet contacts with the world. The same year Zhdanov's speech signalled the end of the temporary wartime collaboration between the USSR and the West, but this did not impede the country to establish formal diplomatic relations with India.

On 14 April 1947, India and the Soviet Union issued a joint communique announcing the exchange of diplomatic representatives, in later years this date will be celebrated as the first milestone in Indo-Soviet relations.<sup>28</sup> Surely, the commencement of the relations on official level was a watershed event, but the concrete deeds towards closer Indo-Soviet cooperation had to wait Stalin’s successor. In 1955, new Soviet leader Khrushchev lavishly received Nehru in Moscow signalling the changed attitudes of Moscow. Often, the mid-1950s are considered the real beginning of Indo-Soviet relations, while the Stalin years are deemed quite fruitless for their evolvment. Nevertheless, already in the early 1950s, the Soviets had started to show a degree of interest in India.

In 1951, the Soviet Union offered to India 50.000 tons of wheat for famine relief. This was the first sign of softening Soviet attitude towards India that had previously entreated in vain Americans for food aid.<sup>29</sup> The same year, the USSR appealed to Asian countries

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<sup>26</sup> Mohanty, *Tracing Indo-Russian Diplomatic History*, 116.

<sup>27</sup> Robert H. Donaldson, *Soviet Policy Toward India: Ideology and Strategy* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1974), 70–71.

<sup>28</sup> The USSR was among the first few countries to recognize India even before the independence declaration.

<sup>29</sup> Donaldson, *Soviet Policy Toward India*, 109.

for expanded trade ties. It was hinted that Soviet foreign trade organizations could supply developing countries even with machinery and equipment.<sup>30</sup> In the case of India, the Soviet Union could provide raw materials as iron, coal and minerals, agricultural and industrial equipment in exchange for such Indian products as spices, tea, jute, rubber and rice. The Soviet motives were not of course entirely benevolent and charitable, as it had become clear that either a socialist economy needed to open market abroad for its products to be sold and it had to rely also on non-communist markets to monetize its surplus. The clear directions dictated from above inspired USSR's economic opening to the world. Significant in all respects was *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*, a Stalin's work on political economy written in 1951. In this study, Stalin had elaborated on the "two camp" approach's ramifications in the economic field: "The economic consequence of the existence of two opposite camps was that the single all-embracing world market disintegrated, so that now we have two parallel world markets, also confronting one another."<sup>31</sup> Besides, the strengthening of the socialist market was the result of main capitalist powers' choices and reaction to the growing socialist world:

It should be observed that the USA, and Great Britain and France, themselves contributed - without themselves desiring it, of course - to the formation and consolidation of the new, parallel world market. They imposed an economic blockade on the U.S.S.R., China and the European people's democracies, which did not join the "Marshall plan" system, thinking thereby to strangle them. The effect, however, was not to strangle, but to strengthen the new world market'.<sup>32</sup>

Stalin also argued that there were strong tensions within the capitalist market that were destined to grow. At the same time, the Soviet leader believed that the divergence and the polarity between capitalism and socialism still existed, but were not as stark as before the WWII since the capitalist countries were aware that the Soviet Union was a peace-centered nation. He clarified:

Theoretically, of course, that is true. It is not only true now, today; it was true before the Second World War. And it was more or less realized by the leaders of the

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<sup>30</sup> "Industrialization of Underdeveloped countries," *New Times*, no. 33, 1953.

<sup>31</sup> "Economic problems of the USSR, Section 5," Marxist Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1951/economic-problems/ch06.htm>

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

capitalist countries. Yet the Second World War began not as a war with the U.S.S.R., but as a war between capitalist countries. Why? Firstly, because war with the U.S.S.R., as a socialist land, is more dangerous to capitalism than war between capitalist countries; for whereas war between capitalist countries puts in question only the supremacy of certain capitalist countries over others, war with the U.S.S.R. must certainly put in question the existence of capitalism itself. Secondly, because the capitalists, although they clamour, for "propaganda" purposes, about the aggressiveness of the Soviet Union, do not themselves believe that it is aggressive, because they are aware of the Soviet Union's peaceful policy and know that it will not itself attack capitalist countries.<sup>33</sup>

Most importantly, Stalin explained the rationale behind the emerging Soviet-led peace movement and its possible ways of evolution:

The object of the present-day peace movement is to rouse the masses of the people to fight for the preservation of peace and for the prevention of another world war. Consequently, the aim of this movement is not to overthrow capitalism and establish socialism - it confines itself to the democratic aim of preserving peace. <...> It is possible that in a definite conjuncture of circumstances the fight for peace will develop here or there into a fight for socialism. But then it will no longer be the present-day peace movement; it will be a movement for the overthrow of capitalism. What is most likely is that the present-day peace movement, as a movement for the preservation of peace, will, if it succeeds, result in preventing a particular war <...>. That, of course, will be good. <...> It will not be enough, because, for all the successes of the peace movement, imperialism will remain, continue in force - and, consequently, the inevitability of wars will also continue in force. To eliminate the inevitability of war, it is necessary to abolish imperialism.<sup>34</sup>

Stalin's theses was the first inspiration for the consequent Soviet turn to the developing countries where anti-imperialist sentiments ran high often accompanied with a more general anti-Western stance. The Soviet anti-racist, anti-imperialist and anti-war rhetoric was catchy also in the West but it tuned much more with the positions already taken by some of the leaders of the postcolonial countries like India.

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<sup>33</sup> "Economic problems of the USSR, Section 6,"

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1951/economic-problems/ch07.htm>

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

Apart from proposals for increased trade, the USSR had tried to reach Nehru and gain Indian sympathies through less formal channels. In the summer of 1953, Indira Gandhi was invited to the USSR to pay unofficial visit to the country, it was her first solo trip as Prime Minister's daughter. During her permanence that lasted more than a month, I. Gandhi visited Moscow, Leningrad, Tashkent, Samarkand and some Georgian towns. At the end of her stay, Indira Gandhi had a long conversation with VOKS Chairperson Kislova who was in charge of all travel arrangements.<sup>35</sup> Kislova's report rather than summing up I. Gandhi's opinions and impressions highlighted a remark made by Indira Gandhi about her father during the trip. However, VOKS head had to admit that I. Gandhi "rarely, and usually only in passing, spoke of her father, Prime Minister Nehru" but once during the conversation on general topics, she fell silent and said "without any connection to the previous conversation" that her father had to face lots of difficulties. I. Gandhi underlined to Kislova that "Nehru does everything to direct the country along a progressive path both in domestic and foreign policy, but that he is alone and that essentially he receives no support."<sup>36</sup> Besides, according to her, Nehru was opposed by "large and influential groups of rich people and conservatives whom he has not been able to overcome on several occasions. Therefore, both in foreign policy and in domestic reforms, he is not always successful in doing all that he considers necessary."<sup>37</sup> I. Gandhi also painted a quite gloomy picture of India's future believing that there was no one in India who could have filled Nehru's shoes after his retirement from politics: "Without Father," noted I. Gandhi, "all that has been done will turn to dust."<sup>38</sup> Overall, Kislova's summary gave a partial account of the Indian domestic issues from Indira Gandhi's viewpoint but not to be neglected, it could be supposed that the mentioned opposition of "large and influential groups" faced by Nehru hindered not only socialist progress in the country but also the prospects of USSR-India's rapprochement. In a few personal letters to her father, Indira Gandhi extolled Russian hospitality, Soviet technology and discipline, the beauty of the Black Sea and even the luxurious rooms that hosted her: "I

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<sup>35</sup> The copy of the conversation was distributed to M.A. Suslov, the second secretary of the CPSU, among others.

<sup>36</sup> "Indira Gandhi's Unofficial Visit to USSR in July 1953," August 01, 1953, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, RGANI f. 5, op. 28, d. 94, l.78, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/119270>

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

feel like everybody's only daughter—I shall be horribly spoiled by the time I leave.”<sup>39</sup> Also, she reassured her father, who had sent her a telegram urging not to make any statements while in the USSR, that her visit was strictly private and though she had been pressed to issue some sort of statement by the Soviet authorities, she had refused to do it.<sup>40</sup> Parting with her Soviet hosts, I. Gandhi promised that she would work in their favour having in mind the reciprocal interest in “peace and friendship.”<sup>41</sup>

India joined the newly founded United Nations (UN) in 1945. The intergovernmental organization became the first real forum where Indian and Soviet views coincided. A study of Indian policy between 1946 and 2015 in the UN general assembly revealed that India's voting pattern at the UN only in 1946, 1948, 1950 and 1962 backed US side instead of USSR's. From the mid-1970s, India started progressively to distance itself from the USA.<sup>42</sup> In 1946, the first Indian delegation at the UN General Assembly which consisted of Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, V.K. Krishna Menon and Justice Chagla (A.M. Dyakov, the foremost Soviet specialist of India, described all of them as “progressive”) brought forth the issue of racial discrimination in South Africa, where also lived a significant Indian diaspora.<sup>43</sup> In line with Soviet official ideology and propaganda, the USSR expressed its support for India's position. In fact, the Soviet Union successfully and repeatedly had used this thorny issue to attack Western countries and to captivate hearts and minds in the colonial world. Yet, the racism was not the sole issue continually raised by the Soviet government on the international scene.

Cominform, the successor of the Third International, started to promote two opposite images of the peace-loving USSR and the warmongering USA in the post war world that had witnessed an immense devastation of the conventional war and for the first time in history, the annihilation of two Japanese cities brought about by the use of nuclear weapons. If the Bolshevik state for at least two decades of its existence had stridently called for the world communist revolution, the Second World War changed the main

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<sup>39</sup> Sonia Gandhi, ed. *Two Alone, Two Together: Letters between Indira Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru 1940-1964* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1992), 592–593.

<sup>40</sup> Katherine Frank, *Indira: The Life of Indira Nehru Gandhi* (London: Harper Perennial, 2002), 116.

<sup>41</sup> “Indira Gandhi's Unofficial Visit to USSR in July 1953,” August 01, 1953, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/119270>

<sup>42</sup> Sanjay K. Pandey and Ankur Yadav, “Contextualizing India Russia relations,” *International Studies* 53, no. 3/4 : 235.

<sup>43</sup> UN General Assembly, official records, 2<sup>nd</sup> part, first session, plenary meetings, 37<sup>th</sup> meeting, 25 October 1946, 76.

object of Soviet rhetoric and propaganda. The war took a heavy toll on the USSR, at least 27 million people died. The Soviet post war propaganda started to depict the policies of the USSR as coinciding with the humankind's aspirations for peace. This narrative became one of the most powerful psychological instruments invented by the Soviet state.<sup>44</sup> In an era marked by wars and revolutions, the ceaseless references to peace struck a responsive chord with peoples' natural longing for a lasting peace in the world. Most importantly, the Soviets widely diffused the thesis, supported by the "scientific" arguments of Marx and Lenin, that capitalism, especially in its modern "imperialist" stage of development, was a social system that fomented conflicts and wars. Thus, the Soviet stress on peace was no more passive slogan than the call for world revolution, because the primary condition to achieve a stable and just peace was the elimination of capitalism, therefore the conflict was inevitable. At the same time, the Soviet internal and especially external propaganda minimized or concealed altogether this ideological element inherent in the Soviet rhetoric of peace that generally limited itself to the references to "friendship" and "solidarity." The recurring motifs of peace, friendship and solidarity became the core of propaganda destined to foreign audiences. For example, the Soviet propaganda movie celebrating Indo-Soviet friendship *From Heart to Heart* (1976) cited Leonid Brezhnev's words that "more than once, the nations of the world have become convinced that friendship and solidarity are more powerful than bayonets."<sup>45</sup> At the same time, though, the Soviet state was ready to "defend" socialism in the "disobedient" Central and Eastern European countries through military intervention and invasion. The white dove shaped tank with the writing below "Pax Sovietica" painted by some talented Polish artist could not illustrate the concept better; the white dove later would become the official emblem of the Soviet-sponsored World Peace Council (WPC), the organization that will be analysed in the last chapter.<sup>46</sup>

Although in the early 1950s, the Soviets still maintained a rigid ideological line regarding India, they closely followed the political dynamics in Indian subcontinent. The Soviet Union, though at the time did not express this evaluation publicly, perceived the Kashmir conflict that erupted right after the independence as an Anglo-American design to keep

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<sup>44</sup> Barghoorn, *Soviet Foreign propaganda*, 80.

<sup>45</sup> "Ot serdtsa k serdtsu (1976)," Net Film, <https://www.net-film.ru/film-7850/>

<sup>46</sup> Pax Sovietica. Ink on paper. Poland, 1982. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, United Kingdom. <https://www.vandaimages.com/2006AU7448-Pax-Sovietica-Poland-1982.html#>

India and Pakistan enemies warring each other in order to convert this highly strategic and volatile region into a stronghold of military bases encircling the Soviet Union.<sup>47</sup> Not a few in India held similar views on the question that eventually led them to conjecture that the USA was trying to gain influence in the strategic north western flank of former India, now in Pakistan and therefore, tilted towards the latter. When India brought the Kashmir issue to the United Nations in 1948, Indian delegation startled when Pakistan was not immediately pronounced the aggressor. In fact, the whole issue was converted into an Indo-Pakistani dispute where both sides were to blame.<sup>48</sup> The USSR had not participated in UN debates on Kashmir. Initially, the Soviet gestures towards independent India were checked due to two main reasons. First, the Soviet government had to secure domestic security and deal with the national resistance fronts that over Eastern Europe were engaging Soviet occupation forces in guerrilla warfare.<sup>49</sup> Second, both India and the Soviet Union looked towards China with different expectations. The former deemed it a natural Asian ally in forming the third block that could withstand pressures from the two Great Powers while the latter wished to have a hand in a likely Chinese communist insurgency. However, both India and the Soviet Union quite soon found their common neighbour more independent and less cooperative than they had anticipated.

In 1952, the Soviets finally sent a clear signal that indicated their changing views on India. That year, the USSR which had kept aside in the debates on the Kashmir issue in the UN, broke silence and attacked the United States of America and Britain by accusing them of an ill-intentioned plan to convert Kashmir into their colony. Nehru was far from pleased, as he did not wish to involve this delicate regional question in the Cold War rivalries. In order to avoid any misunderstanding, he immediately informed London and Washington that India had not asked for Soviet support.<sup>50</sup> The same year Stalin, who had not met a foreign diplomat for two years, conceded a parting interview to Indian Ambassador Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Donaldson, *Soviet Policy Toward India*, 82.

<sup>48</sup> S. Nihal Singh, *The Yogi and the Bear: Story of Indo-Soviet Relations* (London: Mansell Publishing Limited, 1986), 7.

<sup>49</sup> For instance, the Lithuanian partisans waged a guerrilla warfare against the Soviet Union from 1944 to 1953. The Polish "cursed soldiers" continued armed struggle against the communist regime up until the 1950s.

<sup>50</sup> Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, vol. II, 1947-1956* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), 177.

<sup>51</sup> His successor K.P.S. Menon was the last foreign ambassador to see the Soviet leader.

The definite change of the Soviet policy towards India was in the air, but that became clear only after Stalin's death. The above-mentioned unofficial sojourn of Indira Gandhi was followed by the visits of fourteen Indian delegations.<sup>52</sup> On 2 December 1953, India and the USSR signed a trade agreement. The changed tone of Soviet rhetoric was also felt in the bureaucratic language of the document: "Both the Government will <...> develop and strengthen the trade relations between the two countries on the principles of equality and mutual benefit. They will study and with utmost goodwill take decisions <...>."<sup>53</sup> The Article II of the agreement set the basic framework for the Indo-Soviet import-export but article VII referred to some money transfers that revealed there was the will to expand not only commercial but cultural relations as well. The special conditions of payments of the "expenses connected with the tours of a commercial or cultural nature <...>" or "payments for distribution of films" were included.<sup>54</sup> For India, the most relevant part of agreement regarded the statement that "all payments between India and the U.S.S.R. described in Article VII may be made in Indian rupees."<sup>55</sup> The foreign currency reserve held in Indian Central Bank was quite limited and the US aid that had been conceded on the condition that the most of the repayments would be made in dollars was straining the scanty India's foreign exchange reserves. Therefore, the condition of repayments in Rupees was welcomed on the Indian side and from then on, was the base on which future Indo-Soviet trade and aid agreements agreement would be framed.

If Soviet economic policy's shift towards India was tactical and necessary in order to export Soviet raw materials and manufactured goods, larger geopolitical considerations were decisive factors that transformed the budding economic Indo-Soviet relations into a full-fledged and reliable alliance. China, with which both countries shared a border, proved to be a difficult neighbour and ally. China's occupation of Tibet in 1950 raised strong reaction in India. Nehru immediately wrote to Chinese premier Zhou En Lai pleading for Tibetan autonomy and expressing his disapproval of the action. Beijing replied in an angry manner giving Nehru the cold shoulder and reminding him that no interference in Tibet would be tolerated.<sup>56</sup> Notwithstanding, on April 1954, the two

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<sup>52</sup> Singh, *Yogi and the Bear*, 8.

<sup>53</sup> Indo-Soviet Trade Agreement, 2 December 1953, Article I in Appendix of Lubna F. Saeed, *Jawaharlal Nehru: Indo-Soviet Relations* (New Delhi: Icon Publications, 2006).

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, Article VII.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, Article VI.

<sup>56</sup> Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, 107.

countries signed a *Panch Sheel* or Five Principles of Coexistence Agreement.<sup>57</sup> The lesser-known name of the agreement was *Agreement between the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China on Trade and Intercourse between the Tibet region of China and India*. For the first time, Tibet was described as an integral part of China and by signing the agreement, India recognized China's claim of suzerainty over the formerly independent state. The document established the conditions of trade between Tibet and India as well as precise trade and pilgrimage routes.<sup>58</sup> It was agreed that the accord would remain in force for eight years; the extension of it could be negotiated six months prior to the expiry. However, few months after the signing, Indians had found out that some Chinese maps attributed to China around 50,000 square miles of border territory India was supposed to claim. At the time, Chinese authorities dismissed Indian concerns and heartily assured Nehru that China would recognize the McMahon line in the East Himalayas, in the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), the political division inherited from the British Raj and one of the bones of contention in the brewing border dispute.<sup>59</sup> Another disputed area regarded the western sector of Himalayas, Aksai Chin, claimed by China that apparently was ready to accept Indian sovereignty in the NEFA in exchange for India's acceptance of Chinese claims over Aksai Chin. However, India did not seem inclined to barter territories.<sup>60</sup> In late 1961, India adopted a new strategical line in its quickly deteriorating relations with China called Forward Policy. In early 1962, India started to send small number of lightly armed Indian infantry to establish "forward posts" in the disputed border areas. According to official Indian view, the move was not offensive, as the name could suggest, but strictly defensive one, while for the Chinese, the Forward Policy was the proof of Indian expansionism.<sup>61</sup> The celebrated Panchsheel Agreement was not renewed and expired in 1962, and by October of the same year, Sino-Indian border war broke out.

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<sup>57</sup> The official publication of Indian government issued on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the agreement lauded the agreement as a landmark event: "*Panchsheel* was born fifty years ago in response to a world asking for a new set of principles for the conduct of international relations that would reflect the aspirations of all nations to co-exist and prosper together in peace and harmony.

[http://www.mea.gov.in/Uploads/PublicationDocs/191\\_panchsheel.pdf](http://www.mea.gov.in/Uploads/PublicationDocs/191_panchsheel.pdf)

<sup>58</sup> "Agreement between the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China on Trade and Intercourse between the Tibet region of China and India," <https://www.tibetjustice.org/materials/china/china4.html>

<sup>59</sup> Singh, *Yogi and the Bear*, 13.

<sup>60</sup> Johan Skog Jensen, "A Game of Chess and a Battle of Wits: India's Forward Policy Decision in Late 1961," *Journal of Defence Studies* 6, no. 4 (2012): 62.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

By the mid-1950s, the Soviet efforts to draw India into the “peace camp” gathered momentum. Nehru was invited for the second time in his life to the Soviet Union in 1955. He reached Moscow accompanied by his daughter flying directly from the Bandung Conference. Nehru was the first non-communist leader who was given such a warm welcome as the Indian leader was literally immersed in flowers wherever he toured in the country. During his stay in Moscow, he inspected Stalin Motor Car Works, journeyed by Moscow underground, attended Agricultural Exhibition and another one dedicated to Indian Culture and Arts, not to mention a solemn visit to Lenin’s mausoleum. Then he flew to Stalingrad, later visited Black Sea resorts of Yalta and Lavanya passing by *Artek*, a model young pioneer camp hosting primarily the children of the *nomenklatura*. Nehru sojourned in Georgia and Soviet Central Asian Republics where he paid a visit to Tashkent and Samarkand. At last, he was taken to the State Farms of Altai republic and to the flagship of Soviet industrial achievements, the city of Magnitogorsk.<sup>62</sup> If there were some Soviet academicians left who still valued Nehru and India negatively, by the summer of 1955, they changed their opinion or were brought quickly into line. Before Nehru’s visit, his book’s *Discovery of India* Russian translation had been published and was presented at the exhibition of Indian Culture and Arts in Moscow.

A Soviet offer to jointly build a steel mill in Bhilai in Madhya Pradesh had preceded Nehru’s visit. The agreement was finalized by February 1955. The Bhilai Steel Plant was built not only with the aid of Soviet funds and technology, but also with Soviet personnel who supervised the construction and instructed their Indian peers. The steel plant in India was fashioned after the Novolipetsk steel plant (NLSP) in Lipetsk, more than 400 km southeast of Moscow. Then Indian president Rajendra Prasad inaugurated the first blast furnace in 1959. A year before, Nehru with the PM of Burma and the Soviet delegation had visited the works. There he addressed a huge crowd explaining that the metallurgy was at the base of country’s development and stressing India’s need to learn from the countries that were more advanced in this field.<sup>63</sup> Bhilai Steel Plant became a landmark project of a new “socialist” India and the symbol of Indo-Soviet amity for years to come. For instance, in 1982, the special edition of *Soviet Land* magazine dedicated to the 35<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> “Jawaharlal Nehru Prime Minister of the Republic of India in the Soviet Union,” Socialism on Film, [https://www.socialismonfilm.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/SearchDetails/N\\_508214\\_NEHRU\\_IN\\_THE\\_US](https://www.socialismonfilm.amdigital.co.uk/Documents/SearchDetails/N_508214_NEHRU_IN_THE_US) SR#MediaTranscript

<sup>63</sup> “Nehru visits Bhilai metallurgical works,” British Pathé, <https://www.britishpathe.com/video/nehru-visits-bhilai-metallurgical-works>

anniversary of Indo-Soviet diplomatic relations printed a lengthy article on Bhilai. “We are grateful to the management of the Novolipetsk Steel Plant. The valuable experience we have gained will help us benefit our plant and our country”, wrote Madhav Bapurao Bari, Bhilai engineer in the plant’s book of honourable guests.<sup>64</sup> The article recalled that Bokaro Steel Plant, another Soviet project in India was also built with the help of NLSP and emphasized that “Lipetsk metal workers maintain particularly close ties with their Indian colleagues.”<sup>65</sup> The industrial cooperation along with the bombast spent on it became a fertile soil where to sow Indo-Soviet relations to be reaped in other fields.

Before the Bandung Conference and Nehru’s historic visit to the USSR in 1955, Pakistan formally had entered the CENTO, a US-sponsored military alliance aimed at containing the expansionist policies of the Soviet Union. The latter was worried about the anti-communist infiltrations in its southern flanks where lived predominantly Muslim population, while Indian leaders were dismayed at a likely US arms supply to Pakistan fearing that American armoury could be used in the conflict against India. In addition, the Soviet leaders, already in 1956, assessing China’s moves and tactics were almost sure that “in ten years time chief enemy [of the Soviet Union] would be China.”<sup>66</sup> It is clear that both India and the Soviet Union were moving closer towards each other and their national interests were increasingly converging in the face of Chinese threat.

By the end of the 1950s, the future of Sino-Indian relations seemed gloomy. The situation in Chinese-controlled Tibet had been unstable and in 1956, a rebellion fuelled by socialist land reforms had broken out in Tibet’s Kham province, while three years later, the Chinese promptly suppressed the Tibetan Uprising. In the ensuing confusion, Dalai Lama fled the country for India where, to China’s chagrin, he was granted asylum straightaway. The China’s crackdown on Tibetan insurgents reverberated throughout India, and Chinese actual intentions became unclouded as more and more incidents broke out along the Sino-Indian border. For the Soviet Union, the situation was a test of its leadership’s ability to manoeuvre. On the one hand, it could not yet condemn communist China but on the other it could not afford to alienate India, whose support would have been important in the near future, as the doubts about the longevity of “fraternal” Sino-Soviet relations had already insinuated in the minds of Soviet leaders. After the first Sino-Indian

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<sup>64</sup> “Lipetsk Bhilai-Vizag,” *Soviet Land*, April 1982, no. 8.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Kaul, *Diplomacy in peace and war: recollections and reflections* (New Delhi: Gyan, 2016), 132.

border incidents of 1959, the Soviets issued a statement deploring skirmishes and claiming that China and the Soviet Union were fraternal countries linked by unbreakable bonds, while Indo-Soviet relation was of a different nature because it had been developing according to the principles of the peaceful coexistence.<sup>67</sup> Nehru was pleased that the USSR had tried to take quite an impartial stance. The Chinese, however, had deeply resented Soviet lukewarm position towards them and some years later, Khrushchev admitted that “we knew in advance that our statement wouldn’t be well received in Beijing.”<sup>68</sup>

The rift between the two communist countries was quickly deepening. In 1956, Khrushchev famously denounced Stalin’s rule and his cult of personality. The event signalled a distinct turn of Soviet ideological orientation, from Stalin’s confrontation with the West to Khrushchev’s coexistence with it. The same year, the Soviet Union suppressed Hungarian Uprising while Anglo-French troops invaded Egypt following the nationalization of the Suez Canal. Nehru’s government had immediately condemned the latter’s action, but passed the former in silence. Krishna Menon, Indian government’s representative at the UN, had consequentially abstained from voting on a resolution that condemned the Soviet use of force. He was not authorized to do so and although Nehru was cast down at Menon’s actions, he publicly stood by him.<sup>69</sup> However, there were some background initiatives from the Indian side to save a number of Hungarian revolution’s leaders. For instance, M.A. Rahman, Charge d’Affaires of the Indian embassy in Hungary, intervened with the Hungarian Foreign Office demanding the release of some of the figures and helping others to escape to neutral Vienna.<sup>70</sup>

For the Chinese, the Hungarian events presented different dilemma as the Soviet military intervention had showed that without Soviet blessing the legitimacy of the Communist Party to be in government even in a communist state could be at stake. Then the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) denounced the de-Stalinization as revisionism and reaffirmed the Stalinist ideology, policy and practices of its government. Mao’s speech of 1959 could

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<sup>67</sup> Singh, *Yogi and the Bear*, 25.

<sup>68</sup> Quoted in Singh, *Yogi and the Bear*, 256.

<sup>69</sup> Singh, *Yogi and the Bear*, 16.

<sup>70</sup> “M.A. Rahman, Hungary. An Adventure,” Liszt Institute, Hungarian Cultural Centre Delhi, <https://culture.hu/en/delhi/publications/ma-rahman-hungary-an-adventure>

help to briefly sum the Sino-Soviet split that was gathering momentum. First, he described the two enemies of China and their tactics. The first one, the USA and the second, the “fraternal” USSR: “(1) [Waving] the flag of peace, building lots of missiles, establishing lots of [military] bases, preparing to use war to eliminate socialism. This is the first. (2) [Waving] the flag of peace, [through] cultural intercourse and personnel exchange, prepare to use corrosion to eliminate socialism. This is the second.”<sup>71</sup> The corrosion of course was Soviet revisionism but far more strikingly, the Chinese leader clearly identified USSR’s principal mean to gain influence in the world, cultural interaction, the point that will be elaborated in the following chapter. Mao continued: “In 1945, they did not permit [us to make] revolution, but afterwards they consented. From 1949 until 1951, they doubted that [ours was] a real revolution and begin by being unwilling to conclude a mutual-aid alliance treaty, but changed their mind. In the last ten years, they have helped us build many factories.”<sup>72</sup> Indeed, the Soviet Union’s military and economic aid to China had been significant. For example, soon after the revolution, the Asian country became the largest recipient of Soviet crude oil and oil products, the year 1958 being the high point of Soviet oil export to China.<sup>73</sup> Suddenly in 1959, a steep decline of Soviet oil export to the fraternal country began. In aid politics, the year 1957 had showed the Soviet reluctance to provide financial injections to China, while India was granted a significant aid package of 375\$ million for its Third Plan in 1959.<sup>74</sup> Internally, China was facing its own challenges. The Hundred Flowers campaign that encouraged citizens to express their views and opinions on the CCP triggered the purge of rightist elements, Anti-Rightist Campaign, and was followed by the Great Leap Forward that ended in economic and human disaster.<sup>75</sup> All these events signalled a CCP’s step back to Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy and by 1959, it became clear that the rift between the two communist powers

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<sup>71</sup> “Mao Zedong, Outline for a Speech on the International Situation,” December, 1959, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi, ed., *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao* (Mao Zedong’s Manuscripts since the Founding of the People’s Republic of China), vol. 8 (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1993), 599-603.  
<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/118893>

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Arthur J. Klinghoffer, “Sino-Soviet Relations and the Politics of Oil,” *Asian Survey* 16, no. 6 (June 1976): 541.

<sup>74</sup> Singh, *Yogi and the Bear*, 26.

<sup>75</sup> The Great Leap Forward was a five-year plan of forced agricultural collectivization and rural industrialization that was instituted by the Chinese Communist Party in 1958. The policy caused the Great Chinese famine whose death toll ranges from 15 to 55 million.

could not be mended. On the other hand, the Soviet attention to India was constantly growing.

A glance at the meeting between Zhang Weilie and Soviet Deputy Director of the Far Eastern Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs R. Sh. Kudashev could shed light on the keen Soviet interest for India. While talking to Chinese Comrade, Kudashev explained clearly and concisely why his country was lobbying for Nehru: “(1) Nehru is highly influential in Asia. In addition to India’s 400 million people, many Asian countries wish to listen to Nehru. (2) The East-West Summit Conference will be held soon. Winning Nehru’s support for the Soviet Union will put the Soviet Union in a fairly advantageous position. (3) Nehru can become an ally against Eisenhower, Nixon, Herter, and Rockefeller.”<sup>76</sup> To sum up, the Soviets recognized Nehru’s stature in Asia and the importance of his independent foreign policy. Therefore, an ally like Indian PM who could have become a bargaining chip in the Cold War negotiations was worth to cultivate.

The East-West Summit was a big Cold World affair held in Geneva in 1955 since it hosted a meeting of the so-called Big Four: USA, Britain, Soviet Union and France. The above-mentioned meeting of which Comrade Kudashev had been talking to his Chinese colleague was going to take place on 1 May, 1960 in Paris. However, the talks collapsed after the Soviet downing of an American U-2 spy plane.<sup>77</sup> In consequence, Eisenhower scrapped the planned visit to the Soviet Union. Despite this breakdown, the end of the 1950s had witnessed some timid gestures of goodwill between antagonist powers that had eased international tensions. In 1959, Khrushchev visited the USA and met Eisenhower in Camp David. Immediately after Khrushchev’s sojourn in the USA, the Soviet government issued a statement condemning Chinese sporadic attacks on the Indian border and accusing Chinese leaders of “torpedoing the relaxation of international tension that had taken place.”<sup>78</sup> By 1960, the Soviets withdrawn majority of their military and technical experts from China and halted more than 100 projects in the country. A sharp

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<sup>76</sup> “Meeting Minutes between Zhang Weile and Soviet Deputy Director of the Far Eastern Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs R. Sh. Kudashev,” February 23, 1960, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PRC FMA 105-01001-03, 19-20.

<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114760>

<sup>77</sup> Khrushchev left the meeting in a huff after the US president Eisenhower had agreed merely to a temporary suspension of the spy plane flights over the territory of the USSR.

<sup>78</sup> Singh, *Yogi and the Bear*, 26.

decline in Sino-Soviet trade followed. Meanwhile, the situation on the Sino-Indian border was going towards the full-scale confrontation.

In October 1962, the war broke out in the remote and desolated Himalayan areas that divided the two countries, but the event was overshadowed by what seemed the coming of the global doomsday, Cuban Missile Crisis. Thus, the well-coordinated Chinese military invasion into disputed Indian territory passed in the second place. The Chinese People's Liberation Army launched two attacks simultaneously on two distinct sites around 1000 kilometres apart of each other. The western theatre was the barren valleys in Aksai Chin while the eastern one was concentrated in the areas around McMahon line, both banks of Namka Chu River to the south of Thag La Ridge in particular.<sup>79</sup> Swift and accurate attacks found Indian military quite unprepared. For instance, the battle at Gurung Hill lasted little more than two hours leaving Indian forces annihilated.

In the decade between 1952 and 1962, Indian defence spending had never risen beyond two percent of Gross National Product. Both Nehru and his Defence Minister Krishna Menon were reluctant to spend on the modernization of the military at the expense of country's economic development. However, Indian PM worried about the sporadic pre-war incidents occurring along the border in the late 1950s, started to consider an option to secure more Soviet arms for the Indian military that proved as effective and cheaper than the Western armaments. The modest beginning of Indo-Soviet military cooperation was the India's purchase of Soviet helicopters and supply-dropping planes in 1960. In August 1962, the Soviets agreed to set up a plant in India for the production of MIG-21.<sup>80</sup> India's arms shopping in the Soviet Union raised alarm in the USA and the UK to the point where they jointly offered to India their planes at half of market price.<sup>81</sup> Despite these episodic attempts to supply arms to India, after USA-Pakistan rapprochement, Indian government had doubts over western powers' willingness to help it to strengthen its military. Besides, the military collaboration with the Soviet Union, whose one of the staunchest advocates was Krishna Menon, had one significant advantage dear to Indians, self-sufficiency. The Soviets not only shipped armaments made in USSR but also agreed

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<sup>79</sup> The situation along Sino-Indian border had started to heat already in the summer and early autumn when several incidents had flared up and one of the skirmishes had caused the deaths of dozens of Chinese troops.

<sup>80</sup> Singh, *Yogi and the Bear*, 29.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

to set up factories and train local specialist to produce these arms under license elsewhere, in this way helping to build an indigenous military industry. However, when the Sino-Indian war broke out, the Soviet reaction to the conflict left Indians quite disheartened as the USSR simply blamed the former British Raj for creating the confusion in the maps (McMahon Line) and averred that “in the struggle against imperialism, the Soviet side is entirely on the side of fraternal great China.”<sup>82</sup> Not even after a month, the Soviet position turned back to previous when the USSR repudiated the Chinese allegation of Nehru’s being “imperialist stooge” and praised India for its active part in the struggle against colonialism and for peace. The Soviet reversal of the line was influenced by the tensions of the Cuban Missile Crisis during which the Soviets had tried to placate China and secure its support in the crisis which eventually China pledged.

The Sino-Indian war ended abruptly as it had started. China declared unilateral ceasefire on 20 November 1962: “Beginning from 1 December 1962, the Chinese frontier guards will withdraw to positions 20 kilometres (12 miles) behind the line of actual control which existed between China and India on 7 November 1959.”<sup>83</sup> After the statement, the Chinese diplomat Zhang Hanfu met some ambassadors to inform them about China’s decision. Responding to the Vietnamese ambassador’s remark that some people believed that China withdrew because it had lost, Z. Hanfu said: “It is quite obvious which country won and which lost. At parliament yesterday, Nehru was saying they lost Walong and how many people were killed or wounded. But we do not pose as a winner, nor are we doing so because it should be this way.”<sup>84</sup> After the defeat, many in the Indian government clamoured to dismiss Defence Minister Krishna Menon, then made the sole and main responsible for the humiliating defeat. Menon’s eventual dismissal and Nehru’s political views received Chinese comments: “Nehru is of the capitalist class, <...>. Before Indian independence, he was fairly progressive, but the present Nehru is no longer the same. However, among India’s ruling circles, he can still be considered a leftist. Right now the titans of the ruling class are pressuring him, and have forced him to eliminate [Krishna] Menon’s post. Since Menon’s removal from office, Nehru has been even more

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>83</sup> S.K. Shah, *India and China: the Battle between Soft and Hard Power* (New Delhi: Vij Books India, 2015), 109.

<sup>84</sup> “Minutes of Conversation between Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Hanfu and Ambassadors from Socialist Countries on Beijing’s Decision to Unilaterally Withdraw Its Forces,” November 21, 1962, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PRC FMA 109-03798-03, 11-14. Obtained by Dai Chaowu and translated by 7Brands. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114775>

isolated.”<sup>85</sup> The criticism was accurate and fact-based as the defeat strongly undermined already weakened Nehru’s position inside the Indian government and his grip on the Congress party.

The question that was often raised regarding Sino-Indian war was China’s decision to end it unilaterally. Official Chinese version stated the country ended the war because it had achieved its objectives and “taught India a lesson.” In fact, PRC secured borders in its Western sector gaining de facto control of the Aksai Chin. In addition, the Chinese victory over India got approval and praise from admirers abroad. During the conflict, desperate Nehru addressed the western countries for military aid. The US answered the plea by providing non-combat assistance to Indian forces.<sup>86</sup> Indonesia’s Foreign Minister felt betrayed by India’s decision to turn to the Western powers for arms and advises and said that “this battle teaches India a lesson and India must consider the importance of Asian-African solidarity. The Sino-Indian boundary issue must be settled with the help of Asian and African countries, rather than the western imperialist countries. The imperialist countries are still conspiring to sow dissension in Asia and Africa and we should be alert against such activities. Indonesia believes that most Asian and African countries will be grateful to China in some time because China awakened India.”<sup>87</sup> The lesson that India drew from the defeat was of a different kind as it was clearly expressed by Nehru in 1963: “<...> the nation as a whole is growing up. It is learning that in the world today it is not enough to be devoted to peace, or to mind one’s own affairs, but that it is also necessary to have adequate armed strength, to adjust our relations with friendly countries in the light of the changing actualities of the international situation and, above all, to preserve and consolidate national unity.”<sup>88</sup> Moreover, the Sino-Indian war should be framed in the wider Cold War context. For instance, Khrushchev deemed it a Chinese design to draw the USSR into the conflict: “I think Mao created the Sino-Indian conflict precisely in order to draw the Soviet Union into it. He wanted to put us in the position of having to no choice but to support him. <...> But Mao made a mistake in thinking we would agree to

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<sup>85</sup> “Cable from the Chinese Embassy in Vietnam, 'Chairman Ho Discusses the Following Two Situations',” November 24, 1962, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PRC FMA 106- 00729-04, 19-20. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121295>

<sup>86</sup> The US provided air defence cover.

<sup>87</sup> “Cable from Yao Zhongming, 'The Sino-Indian Boundary Issue',” November 27, 1962, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PRC FMA 105-01786-01, 1-4. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114777>

<sup>88</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, “Changing India,” *Foreign Affairs* 41 no. 3 (April 1963): 462–463.

sacrifice our independence in foreign policy.”<sup>89</sup> Some analyses in India partly coincided with the Soviet Union’s as the country perceived Chinese actions as an attempt to push it to abandon its non-alignment and relative independence in foreign affairs:

I am absolutely convinced that the given events are not simply a border conflict, but something more. This is part of a general strategy of Chinese leftist dogmatists <...>. These sectarian elements in the CCP are trying to prove their thesis that India, as a capitalist country, will surely join the bloc of western countries, that it cannot conduct a policy of nonalignment for any length of time. <...> They are trying by their actions to force India to reject the policy of nonalignment, to draw it into the western bloc, to strike a blow at the entire policy of neutrality, nonalignment, peaceful coexistence.<sup>90</sup>

The Indo-Soviet relations up until the war had worked on a quite limited scale: the first and heavily publicized Indo-Soviet public sector projects building, modestly increasing trade and military cooperation, exchange of technicians and artists, and the screening of Indian movies in Soviet cinemas. The Sino-Indian War signalled the end of Nehru’s pan-Asian aspirations so cherished and exalted during the Bandung Conference along with the centrality of China in India’s foreign policy. Sino-Soviet split instead ended the illusions about the Monolithic Communism and started to transform the bipolar cold war into a tripolar one. It is clear that geopolitical circumstances tied India and the Soviet Union together: China and USA supported Pakistan and isolated India, which virtually became encircled by enemy countries. The Soviet Union had lost its communist partner for the time being and like India felt pressure of unfriendly alliances on its Asian borders. These factors revealed to both USSR and India that at least for the moment their foreign policy objectives were virtually the same. Besides, India desired to reach full economic self-sufficiency and the Soviet Union had a lot to offer in this regard, often on the conditions that were acceptable to India. Culturally, India was capable to fill the gaps in Soviet entertainment industry by providing mass market cinema as an alternative to the USSR’s mainstream ideologically charged movies. “Harmless” and amusing Bollywood

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<sup>89</sup> Nikita S. Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974), 311.

<sup>90</sup> “Entry from the Journal of Soviet ambassador to India Benediktov, Conversation with Indian Foreign Ministry General-Secretary R.K. Nehru,” November 02, 1962, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Archive of Foreign Policy, Russian Federation (AVPRF), f. 90, op. 24, d. 5, p. 44, ll. 120-12. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113003>

production offered the Soviet citizens the desired relief from the dullness of their lives and an exotic daydream of a friendly nation. On the other hand, the Soviets who had successfully liquidated illiteracy in their country could have helped India to resolve this problem by sharing their methods and books.

After the Sino-Indian war, Nehru stopped to cherish illusions regarding China and expressed “great satisfaction with the friendly relations which exist between the USSR and India, between the governments of both countries and also between Comrade N.S. Khrushchev and him personally. He expressed also the conviction that these relations will not only be preserved, but also will further develop in the future.”<sup>91</sup> General Secretary of Foreign Ministry R.K. Nehru was even blunter in valuing the dynamics between Chinese and Soviet interpretation of would-be communist global struggle:

"I am convinced that their [Chinese] actions are an extension of the CCP's ideological disputes with the CPSU, and that the Chinese sectarians are directing the main blow against the Soviet Union and its foreign policy principles--against peaceful coexistence, the possibility of avoiding war in our atomic age, the possibility of the victory of communism not through war but through peaceful economic competition with the West. We value highly these principles of Soviet policy. I personally don't have anything against the establishment of communism in the entire world, if communism proves its superiority by means of economic, social, and cultural achievements, but not by bombs."<sup>92</sup>

The Cuban Missile Crisis that was resolved just before the end of the Sino-Indian War averted a thermonuclear war that doubtless would have ended in Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD). In the aftermath of the crisis, Khrushchev agreed to remove missiles from Cuba in exchange for the removal of US nuclear weapons from Turkey. However, the latter's commitment was not made public and emerged only in the 1970s before the

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<sup>91</sup> "Entry from the Journal of Soviet Ambassador to India Benediktov, Conversation with Indian Prime Minister J. Nehru," December 12, 1962, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Archive of Foreign Policy, Russian Federation (AVPRF), f. 090, op. 24, d. 6, p. 80, ll. 197-2. Obtained by James Hershberg and translated by Kathryn Weathersby.

<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110019>

<sup>92</sup> "Entry from the Journal of Soviet ambassador to India Benediktov, Conversation with Indian Foreign Ministry General-Secretary R.K. Nehru," November 02, 1962, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Archive of Foreign Policy, Russian Federation (AVPRF), f. 90, op. 24, d. 5, p. 44, ll. 120-12. Obtained by James Hershberg and translated by Kathryn Weathersby.

<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113003>

death of the Soviet leader. The Cuban events struck a severe blow to the Soviet Union's prestige and weakened the position of its leader Nikita Khrushchev, yet the crisis was not the primary factor that led to his removal from power. Khrushchev, a son of peasants, put significant efforts to improve agricultural production, but his endeavours ended in failure as food shortages continued to affect various regions of country. Besides, the Central Committee of the CPSU was annoyed at growing arbitrary decision-making and lack of collegiality. After his ouster in 1964, Khrushchev notably said to his loyal Armenian colleague Anastas Mikoyan: "I'm old and tired. <...>. I've done the main thing. Could anyone have dreamed of telling Stalin that he didn't suit us anymore and suggesting he retire? Not even a wet spot would have remained where we had been standing. Now everything is different. The fear is gone, and we can talk as equals. That's my contribution."<sup>93</sup> The same year, Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev was appointed General Secretary of the CPSU. Meanwhile, India experienced a shock when on 27 May 1964, Jawaharlal Nehru died leaving after the uncertain prospects for his country's future.

During the tenure of J. Nehru, especially around the mid-1950s when Indian leader's international prestige and visibility reached the peak, the relations with the Soviet Union was certainly not a top priority for the Indian government. At the time, the country was looking towards China and other African and Asian countries that emerged from the colonial subjugation in an attempt to create the third block that could withstand pressures from both superpowers. In the early 1950s, regarding two Cold War antagonists, Indian government manoeuvred diplomatically between them attempting to secure financial aid so crucial for country's development. In the second chapter, I have argued that the alliance between the USA and Pakistan of 1954 was the first significant development that compromised India's search for balance in the international affairs. The second factor examined in this chapter regarded the Sino-Indian War that put an end to any hope of the amicable India-China relations. Yet another development was related to the "fraternal" relations between the Soviet Union and China that, mid-1950s onwards, started to deteriorate rapidly. Clearly, these external factors highly contributed to the eventual Indo-Soviet rapprochement witnessed at the end of Nehru's premiership. However, there were also domestic factors drew two countries together. India was planned economy, eager to develop rapidly its state industries and reach so desired self-sufficiency and thus the Soviet financial injections, credits and experience in the field were not to be disregarded.

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<sup>93</sup> William Taubman, *Khrushchev* (London: The Free Press, 2005), 13.

In fact, since the mid-1950s the economic and industrial collaboration between the two countries had been growing steadily, however it never reached the heights and intensity of Indo-Soviet relations during the premiership of Indira Gandhi. India's decisive turn towards the USSR in this period primarily was due to the combination of internal and external factors that will be analysed in the next section.

### **3.2.Consolidation: the Indira Gandhi years**

The outcome of Sino-Indian war proved to be not only a national disappointment but also Nehru's personal one. Although Indian leader had not disregarded Chinese sabre rattling, he deemed a direct attack on his country's border as the stab in the back. The war put into question not only the military strength of the young democracy but also the beliefs and ideals of Nehru on which India's foreign policy was based. Already in 1962, Nehru's health condition started to deteriorate, a year after he often sojourned in his ancestral Kashmir trying to recover. In the same period, his daughter, besieged by political as well as personal duties and responsibilities towards her father, was devising a plan to leave India and start a new, independent life abroad.<sup>94</sup> To her American friend Dorothy Norman Indira Gandhi wrote:

My need for privacy and anonymity has been growing steadily these last three years until now I feel I cannot ignore it without risking some kind of self-annihilation. Privacy, unfortunately, is not possible for me even in the remotest corner of this subcontinent. I have had people presenting their cards and their problems even at the foot of the Kolahoi glacier (16,000 feet high)! It's not just meeting people but that they come only to get or ask something. And not even a few moments are left for thinking or relaxing or just being oneself.<sup>95</sup>

The father of the nation's likely successor was thinking of buying a small house in London, living in one room herself and renting two others. It seems that the plan to

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<sup>94</sup> Katherine Frank, *Indira: The Life of Indira Nehru Gandhi* (London: Harper Perennial, 2002), 267.

<sup>95</sup> Dorothy Norman, *Indira Gandhi: Letters to an American Friend, 1950-1984* (San Diego: Harcourt, 1985), 96.

Letter October 13, 1963.

become an unknown landlady was very advanced because Indira Gandhi was looking for foreign currency as she did not have enough of it to buy the house. When she learned that the house had been already bought, she wrote that “I was terribly depressed for months. It was as if a door had been slammed in my face.”<sup>96</sup> Feroze Gandhi, no relation to Mahatma Gandhi and the husband of Indira Gandhi with whom she had had an extremely troubled and intense relationship had died in 1960 leaving her shattered. Her elder son Rajiv was already in England, his younger brother Sanjay was to follow him soon. Indira Gandhi felt that her duty to India and her family was done and Nehru’s ailing health seemed to relieve her quite soon from the painful obligations. In India and abroad, natural question arose who would succeed Nehru after he was gone. His daughter was considered among the possible candidates. However, Nehru never entertained the idea of “Indu” (as he affectionately called her) succeeding him as he believed in representative democracy and not dynastic succession. At the time, Indira Gandhi asked by the journalists whether she would like to be the Prime Minister of India used to reply in a simple and clear-cut manner, “I would not.”<sup>97</sup> In the early morning of 27 May 1964, Nehru fell into a coma. His daughter and Krishna Menon were present when Nehru passed away the same afternoon. Nehru remained secular until the last breath and insisted that no religious rites would be performed at his funeral. Contrary to his wishes, his daughter performed a Hindu cremation. Her younger son Sanjay who was still in India lit the funeral pyre with the priests in the background intoning Vedic prayers. It was speculated that religious leaders and some politicians convinced Indira Gandhi that the people of India would not accept a secular funeral of their beloved *chacha* (uncle) Nehru.<sup>98</sup> However, later events in Indira Gandhi’s personal and political life revealed that in some cases, she was less committed to secularism and more willing to appease religious sentiments than her father had been.

In 1963, when it became clear that Nehru’s era was setting in, Indian political life was going through a profound change. The Congress, tormented and weakened by internal struggles, corroded by corruption and lust for personal power, needed an urgent revitalization. The Chief Minister of Madras, K. Kamaraj, came up with a plan: senior Congressmen, cabinet and chief ministers alike, should leave ministerial posts to take up

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid, 97.

<sup>97</sup> Frank, *Indira*, 273.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 276.

organizational work for the party. Thus, everyone was liable to be “Kamarajed” with the exception of the Prime Minister who discussed the plan with Kamaraj and authorized its implementation.<sup>99</sup> Six Union Ministers and six Chief Ministers answered to the plea. A more sophisticated objective of the plan was to prepare the line of succession and remove Morarji Desai, one of the leading candidates to succeed Nehru. Nehru had regarded him as too conservative and too rigid to be a good prime minister. Besides, Desai was on the right wing of the party and thence favourable to big private businesses and industrialists.<sup>100</sup> Another likely successor, old Gandhian Lal Bahadur Shastri was among the ministers who had resigned. However, towards the end of his days Nehru brought him back into the cabinet as Minister without portfolio. This was regarded as a subtle hint about Nehru’s preference in the line of succession. At the same time, Kamaraj’s plan caused a power shift from the Centre to the states and to the old Congressmen like Kamaraj himself who gained disproportionate influence in the Indian political life. This group eventually would be dubbed as “Syndicate.”

After Nehru’s death, there was no big surprise when Lal Bahadur Shastri was unanimously chosen as the Prime Minister of India. He stayed in power merely for one year and eight months. At any rate, Shastri left his mark having initiated the White and Green Revolutions that aimed at increasing the agricultural production. Moreover, his premiership witnessed the eruption of the second Indo-Pakistani War in 1965. Lal Bahadur Shastri died unexpectedly in Tashkent the night after signing the Tashkent Declaration, an Indo-Pakistani peace agreement brokered by the USSR. The frantic search for a new prime minister urged the Syndicate to make an immediate choice without having enough time for preparation and thoughtful consideration. The Congress bosses started to view Indira Gandhi, at the time Shastri’s obscure Minister of Information and Broadcasting, as the most suitable candidate. She was deemed a weak politician who could be guided easily by the collective leadership of the Syndicate. As the Sino-Soviet split was complete, the Soviets were following the power succession in India with great interest.

Before becoming Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi was not a newcomer to politics. For years, she had been Nehru’s secretary and confidante, worked in the Congress

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<sup>99</sup> Frank, *Indira*, 268–269.

<sup>100</sup> Singh, *The Yogi and the Bear*, 42.

women's wing and in 1959, became the president of the Congress. The 1957 elections were marked by the stunning victory of Communist Party of India (CPI) in the state of Kerala. However, after merely two years, the democratically elected government was dismissed and presidential rule was imposed.<sup>101</sup> Although the decision to impose the presidential rule was a prerogative of the government, it was speculated that I. Gandhi herself was the main engineer behind the move. The ideological positions of Indira Gandhi had never been very clear but as the daughter of the most important India's socialist statist, she was considered one herself. Kaul, I. Gandhi's friend and diplomat, congratulating her with the nomination as President of INC wrote: "We look upon you not only as the beloved daughter of a great PM, but as a leader in your own right, as the most distinguished representative of the Youth of India and the true exponent of the progressive and socialistic trends in the country."<sup>102</sup>

Indira Gandhi emerged as the most likely candidate simply because the others were considered less suitable and she represented a family trusted for generations, a symbol of stability in a country tormented by a dramatic reversal in economy and social turmoil. At the time, some observers described the year 1966 as "the beginning of the end of India's fledgling democracy. <...>Circumstances of 1966 were no doubt exceptional on account of unprecedented drought, the resultant economic setback <...>. But the crisis stemmed so much, if not more, from a gradual erosion of the Government's moral authority. The broad consensus on national policies, which gave Mr Nehru his unquestioned power, was visibly breaking down."<sup>103</sup> The main contender of I. Gandhi, Morarji Desai was considered too "rightist" while the public opinion placed I. Gandhi on the left. For instance, Khwaja Ahmat Abbas, the most prominent of Indian screenwriters and one of India's cultural links with the USSR, wrote a biography of her entitled *Return of the Red Rose* (1966).<sup>104</sup> The symbolism was evident: Nehru often wore red roses as buttonhole

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<sup>101</sup> The communists reforms in the state reforms provoked the Vimochan Samaram ('Liberation struggle'), an anticommunist backlash against the first elected state government in Kerala. The government was dismissed in 1959 by the Central Government, which invoked the controversial Article 356 of the Indian Constitution.

<sup>102</sup> "Correspondence Indira Gandhi," Undated, I instalment, subject no. 137, The Papers of T.N. Kaul, NMML.

<sup>103</sup> *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 1967 Yearbook, 191.

<sup>104</sup> In 1945, Abbas made his directorial debut with a film based on the Bengal famine of 1943, *Dharti Ke Lal* (*Children of the Earth*) for the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA). IPTA is the oldest association of theatre-artists in India. IPTA was formed in 1943 and was affiliated to the Communist Party of India.

and traditionally, red rose had been a symbol of socialism.<sup>105</sup> Indira Gandhi, once elected Prime Minister, showed up with a rose pinned to her shawl. A spontaneous chorus of *Lal Gulab Zindabad* (Long Live the Red Rose) erupted and Abbas noticed: “They knew and she knew that in the impending election she represented the values and policies associated with Jawaharlal Nehru.”<sup>106</sup> It must be said that in 2018, Indian PM Narendra Modi ridiculed Nehru’s habit and a year later, the Congress Party issued a statement where it explained that Nehru wore a red rose in memory of his deceased wife.<sup>107</sup> Whatever was the real reason of Nehru wearing a red rose, Indira Gandhi played with the symbol well signalling that she was the legitimate heir of her father's legacy. However, the Kingmaker Kamaraj and other Congress bosses chose her as a test for their actual power and a mean to exercise *their* collective leadership but the future events would reveal that she would not relinquish power and would prove herself to be much more than mere “dumb doll” as she was dubbed by her rivals right after assuming power.

As far as the foreign policy is concerned, the first steps of the new PM were uncertain. For her first state visit, she had chosen the USA. She travelled there at the end of March 1966 deluding her supporters on the left who accused her of being patently pro-American.<sup>108</sup> In June, Mrs. Gandhi decided to devalue the rupee in line with World Bank’s advices. The move was opposed by India’s whole political spectrum, by her own party and the Syndicate, while the Communist Party of India called it “the blackest act of treachery since independence. Carried out at the dictates of US imperialism, acting through the World Bank, by a clique in Delhi.”<sup>109</sup> Behind this decision, there was the promised American aid. For a year, following the visit there was a substantial increase of US nonproject loans to India, but quite soon the aid dried up<sup>110</sup> On the Soviet side, they initially welcomed Mrs. Gandhi’s election. However, after a while the USSR rang

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<sup>105</sup> However, it was unclear whether Nehru himself was aware of the political implications of roses.

<sup>106</sup> Khwaja A. Abbas, *Indira Gandhi: return of the red rose* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1966), 9.

<sup>107</sup> “Jawaharlal Nehru’s red rose to international socialism: Tracing the symbolism of flower,” *The Economic Times*, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/jawaharlal-nehru-red-rose-to-international-socialism-tracing-the-symbolism-of-flower/articleshow/67098766.cms?from=mdr> “The moving reason why Jawaharlal Nehru wore a rose every day,” NDTV, <https://www.ndtv.com/offbeat/why-jawaharlal-nehru-always-wore-a-red-rose-congress-explains-with-rose-day-post-1989898>

<sup>108</sup> Indira Gandhi, *My Truth* (New Delhi: Vision Books, 1981), 120.

<sup>109</sup> CPI, *Party Education Series: Grade I Course* (New Delhi: Communist Party of India, 1972), 32.

<sup>110</sup> Singh, *The Yogi and the Bear*, 57.

US President Lyndon Johnson adopted so-called “short-tether” approach to food aid.

warning bells because of India's increased dependence on American aid suggesting "extremely complex political situation" and fearing that the country's rightists were making determined efforts to change the left course of Indian politics.<sup>111</sup> Despite the Soviet apprehensions about India's new leadership, the Indo-Soviet relations already stood on a quite solid foundation. At the end of 1966, Indian PM headed to the USSR to sign a new trade agreement that foresaw the doubling of trade in five years. That year Leonid Brezhnev proclaimed that Indo-Soviet friendship was "traditional" and withstood the test of time.

Once in power, Indira Gandhi found her country in a much-altered geopolitical context of the late 1960s. The border war and new Chinese policies made Nehru's Pan-Asianism less relevant but as Nehru, she strongly believed that India was destined to assume a global role. In fact, both of them took foreign policy in their hands and consequently, had strong impact on India's international destiny. At first glance, what was remarkably different between father and daughter was the style of conducting foreign policy. Nehru, though leaning towards the Soviet Union, tried to maintain equidistance from the two Great Powers and only in the last years of his premiership, he publicly expressed satisfaction with the reliability and the great results of Indo-Soviet cooperation. Indira Gandhi, on the contrary, did not have many scruples to show partiality and voice her inclination from almost the beginning of her term.

Analyst Andrew B. Kennedy argued that too often Nehru was portrayed as an "idealist ideologue" whose grand visions of pan-Asianism or non-alignment went awry. Kennedy stressed that Nehru's foreign policy was aimed at combining both high moral principles with narrow national interests.<sup>112</sup> For instance, Nehru's promotion of peace and the United Nations was both moral and pragmatic because only a peaceful environment could have secured the continuous growth and development of India. If Nehru was often considered rather idealist, his daughter since the 1970s had a very different image of an expedient and ruthless politician pursuing "realistic" foreign policy. Unlike her father, India's foreign policy at the time eschewed moral dimension of Nehru's time, and concentrated on tangible power and the pursuit of clearly defined national interest. In

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>112</sup> Andrew B. Kennedy, "Nehru's Foreign Policy: Realism and Idealism Conjoined," in *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*, ed. David M. Malone, C. Raja Mohan, Srinath Raghavan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 92–103.

1982, political scientist Surjit Mansingh stated that I. Gandhi's foreign "realistic" foreign policy improved India's regional and international standing, much more than the policy of Nehru era had done.<sup>113</sup> Mansingh pondered whether I. Gandhi's foreign policy could be defined as "hard realism." The political scientist argued that India's foreign could be considered "hard" and "tough" only when compared to Nehru's.<sup>114</sup> I. Gandhi took control of the conduct of foreign policy from the Ministry of External Affairs, but in the process, Indian institutions alongside with India's perception and role abroad were severely weakened as the Prime Minister perceived power in personal and not institutional terms.<sup>115</sup>

### *Communist Party of India (CPI)*

Up until now, the Communist Party of India (CPI) and its role in Indian politics were not discussed. However, here it is necessary to introduce quite briefly the party's support to Congress during the premiership of Indira Gandhi. Precisely in this period, the party managed to gain an important role at the Central government and in due course became the backbone of I. Gandhi's power. The ensuing active collaboration with the ruling Congress Party was based essentially on the so-called Kumaramangalam's Thesis, introduced in 1964 and named after Mohan Kumaramangalam, a communist theorist who later left his party to become the member of the Congress. The thesis offered a party's tactical line that urged its members to "infiltrate" the Indian National Congress, take its slogans and launch mass movements in support of these demands in order to "pressurize" the Congress leadership from within and eventually take control of the party.<sup>116</sup> The strategy presented in the thesis was not so novel to the CPI because before independence similar tactic had proved successful in the short run.

In 1934, the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) saw the light of the day established by some young activists within its parent Indian National Congress. A new caucus drew heavily

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<sup>113</sup> Surjit Mansingh, *India's Search for Power: Indira Gandhi's Foreign Policy 1966-1982* (New Delhi: Sage, 1982), 2.

<sup>114</sup> Surjit Mansingh, "Indira Gandhi's Foreign Policy: Hard Realism?", in *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*, ed. David M. Malone, C. Raja Mohan, Srinath Raghavan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 104–116.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Satindra Singh, *Communists in Congress: Kumaramangalam's Thesis* (New Delhi: D.K. Publishing House, 1973), xx.

upon Marxist ideology to the point where its leadership declared that “Marxism alone can guide the anti-imperialist forces to their ultimate destiny.”<sup>117</sup> The CSP also endorsed class struggle and required party members to “understand the technique of revolution” and the processes “leading to the Socialist society.”<sup>118</sup> In the attempt to unify all socialist groups, the CSP allowed the members of the Communist Party of India to join it. The CPI, founded in 1925, had been already a branch of the Communist International receiving funds from both the Soviet Union and the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB).<sup>119</sup> During the first decade of its existence, the CPI had endorsed the “classical” tactics dictated by the Comintern, which consisted of fomenting demonstrations, revolts, strikes and uprisings with the ultimate goal of total revolution. However, in the mid-1930s, the CPI was told that it did not possess a sufficient mass base to organize a powerful anti-imperialist movement. Therefore, the party needed to join forces with Indian National Congress in order to achieve the liberation of India from the British Empire. Another ambitious goal of the communists was to isolate Gandhi and his “conservative” fellows in order to take over the leadership of the nationalist movement.<sup>120</sup> In merely three years of active collaboration, the communists managed to capture one-third of seats in the CPS executive and the commanding posts in the party’s units in Andhra, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, the future strongholds of the Indian communist party. Moreover, they started to occupy important posts in All-India Congress Committees either but in 1940, the CSP alarmed by such a massive infiltration expelled the communists from the local party units.<sup>121</sup> Later, the CPI denied support to the Congress-led Quit India movement and sided with the International front against Nazism in the World War II, a move that discredited the party since it looked like a tool of a foreign power. The attempt to infiltrate the Congress will be repeated, though in a more covert way but with similar outcomes, during the first mandate of I. Gandhi, when the CPI gained a significant influence inside the Congress through the Congress Forum for Socialist Action.

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<sup>117</sup> Saul Rose, *Socialism in Southern Asia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 17.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Frankel, *India’s Political Economy*, 54.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

The communist strategy rested on three types of initiatives: the establishment of separate "factions" within CSP party units in order to build up a cohesive parallel organization that could get communists elected to positions of power; the infiltration of mass organizations operating outside Congress in support of nationalist goals; the use of strategic positions inside the Congress to bring pressure to bear on the national leadership.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 60

### *Towards the left*

When Indira Gandhi became Prime Minister, her friend “Tikki” T.N. Kaul was India’s ambassador to the Soviet Union. Four years Indira’s senior, Kaul was more experienced in political matters. During the first years of I. Gandhi’s premiership, he became a sort of mentor to her, and eventually was one of those advisors who mostly influenced her decisive turn towards the left and the Soviet Union. Their early correspondence is quite revealing. After few months in office I. Gandhi started to face a mounting opposition of the whole political spectrum as she wrote: “The ‘right’ and the ‘left’ are moving heaven and earth to mar my image in the Indian public. They say that Kamaraj is responsible or at least aiding and abetting the attitude taken by Krishna Menon and his group. It is strongly rumoured that Moscow is behind the sudden change in the Communist attitude. The reason is that Moscow wants an excuse to change its policy toward India and like the US out India on par with Pakistan. <...> I have no doubt that the right is utilizing this campaign for its own ends and will succeed in suppressing the progressive forces.”<sup>122</sup> The CPI that had not pronounced significant opposition to the election of Mrs. Gandhi, after merely four months of her being in office started to attack her bitterly. I. Gandhi suggested that the Kremlin, which now wanted rapprochement with Pakistan, was behind this change.

Indeed, since Nehru’s death the Soviets had advised India to try to improve its relations with Pakistan. It seems that the Soviet Union attempted to repeat a policy in which Americans had failed in the 1950s. They tried to adopt a regional approach discussed in the previous chapter, whose essence was treating both countries as equals and avoiding any distinction between the two. Already in 1966, the Soviets had signed a major aid agreement with Pakistan. Growing USSR-Pakistan collaboration meant also more arms for India’s antagonist. Befriending Pakistan was a step towards a much more ambitious Soviet strategy which became known as “Collective security in Asia.” In 1969, in *Izvestiia* appeared an article written by V.V. Matveyev entitled “A filled vacuum.” The article stated that the British withdrawal in Asia created a vacuum, which USA, Japan, Australia and China wanted to fill in. However, Metveyev optimistically predicted that there would be no vacuum to fill as countries like India, Pakistan and Afghanistan were making efforts to “consolidate their sovereignty and increase their economic autonomy.” According to

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<sup>122</sup> “Correspondence Indira Gandhi,” May 2, 1966, I Instalment, subject no. 88, Papers T.N. Kaul, NMML.

the author, the only way to resist external interferences was to “set foundations of collective security in the region.”<sup>123</sup> Merely a week after, Brezhnev declared that the task of creating a system of collective security in Asia should be put on the Soviet agenda.<sup>124</sup> As American arms that had started to flow into Pakistan in the mid-1950s unsettled and angered Indian government, the Soviet military aid to Pakistan rang warning bells in the country too. In 1968, an anti-Soviet demonstration organized by the Jana Sangh broke out in New Delhi and the intensity of resentment astonished the Soviet leaders. Indian officials made clear to their Soviet counterparts that Indo-Soviet relations could not be as they were if the country would continue to supply Pakistan military. To prove the point, I. Gandhi made some peace overtures to China.<sup>125</sup> In reply, the Soviets assured that India was the most important country in Asia and hinted that India could even move nearer to Moscow, paving the way for the signing of the Indo-Soviet treaty. It was the year 1968, three years before of the official signing of the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation.

At the beginning of her premiership, I. Gandhi was convinced that the Soviets had been already exercising some influence on Indian politics through Soviet Embassy in New Delhi: “Regarding the Soviet influence, it is possible that even though the top people may take a broader view, the local Embassy may be having its own ideas and maybe exerting some influence.”<sup>126</sup> Kaul in his reply to several anxious letters of I. Gandhi tried to prove her wrong:

I was somewhat surprised to read your letter. I agree 100% with your analysis of the Internal situation and the Inner party struggle, but I am 100% convinced that the Soviet leadership is in no way responsible for it. If anything, they have tried to dissuade and discourage some of our so-called Leftists. As for their junior officials in Delhi, they are like such officials elsewhere, they like to make contacts with so-called leftists in order to show their *karguzari*.<sup>127</sup> I know that our so-called Leftists always brag and boast that they have support and confidence of the Soviets. But I also know that this is not so. The Soviets are no fools but realists. They know that the only possible alternative to you is a rightist and not a leftist government; they

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<sup>123</sup> Donaldson, *Soviet policy toward India*, 219.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.

<sup>125</sup> Singh, *The Yogi and the Bear*, 67.

<sup>126</sup> “Correspondence Indira Gandhi,” May 30, 1966, I Instalment, subject no. 92, The Papers of T. N. Kaul, NMML.

<sup>127</sup> In Urdu, ‘efficiency’, ‘good service’

need our friendship as much as we need theirs. It is not true that they want to change their policy towards us and find an excuse for doing so. They want to strengthen your hands. In spite of external and internal difficulties, you are the only one who can mobilise the people and continue your father's policy and strengthen friendly relation with USSR. They do not want equate India and Pakistan. They have a much greater stake in India than in Pakistan. They do want to wean Pakistan away from China and if possible from USA. What the harm it could do to us if they will succeed. They will never do this at the expense of India.<sup>128</sup>

In 1973, D.P. Dhar, Mrs. Gandhi's current Planning Minister sent a note to her: "Amidst all disruptions <...> that have affected the politics of Southeast Asia, India has stood firm as an example of a stable political entity. It is this, that the Soviet Union respects. It is for this reason that they support the leadership of the Prime minister. I am convinced that they would not favour anything that could possibly undermine PM's position in the country or in the Party."<sup>129</sup> Indira Gandhi took advantage of Soviet Union's warm embrace that eventually buttressed *her* position domestically and improved India's regional and international standing. However, that did not happen immediately as initially the PM had had her doubts about the Soviet Union's meddling in Indian politics and its influence on the CPI, for a short while the harshest critic of her. The correspondence between Kaul and I. Gandhi as well as the notes of D.P. Dhar to PM claimed that there was a degree of Soviet presence and influence on Indian politics. Initially, "Moscow's hand" was perceived by the PM herself as a foreign force that roused the opposition against her, by Kaul as the factor that could calm it down and strengthen PM's position and later by D.P. Dhar as the warrant of I. Gandhi's power. It should not be forgotten that I. Gandhi's advisors, united by their leftist sympathies and Kashmiri ancestry, D.P. Dhar, T.N. Kaul, R.N. Kao, P.N. Dhar and P.N. Haksar, together had formed a coterie that was dubbed "Kashmiri mafia". In the first years of I. Gandhi's premiership, these men guided and directed the Prime Minister towards the left and the USSR.

The election of 1967 brought Congress to all time low. The election campaign had been a heated and often bloody affair as in the end more than 100 violent incidents were

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<sup>128</sup> "Correspondence Indira Gandhi," June 1, 1966, I instalment, subject no. 93, The Papers of T.N. Kaul, NMML.

<sup>129</sup> "Planning Ministers notes regarding his discussions with Soviets," November 11, 1973, III instalment, subject no. 169, The Papers of P.N. Haksar NMML.

registered. In Orissa, a stone thrown by someone from the crowd hit Indira Gandhi in the face breaking her nose. “In Raj Bhavan I found out that I looked like a boxer –I was terrible sight in the mirror. <...> You should see me now, with an impressive crepe bandage on my forehead and my nose banded across”, she wrote to Dorothy Norman.<sup>130</sup> However, the election results for Indira Gandhi were far more painful than the campaign itself. The Congress appeal had started to weaken since 1957 onwards, when general elections results had revealed party losses to Jana Sangh on the right and to the Communist Party of India (CPI) on the left. Ten years later, the Congress still emerged as the first party in the country but lost majority in nine of the sixteenth Indian states and a severely slashed majority at the Centre, an unthinkable result in the Nehru years. Food scarcities and material hardships besieging the country combined with unsure and hesitant beginning of Mrs. Gandhi’ premiership was proving a disastrous mix for the leading party. Both the CPI and split away CPI(M) had fiercely attacked I. Gandhi, while her main rival Morarji Desai had charged her with “selecting ex-communists and persons who favoured her” as the party’s candidates.<sup>131</sup> However, some party bosses, “those elder and more conservative elements of the Party” in Kaul’s words, who put her in power in the first place, lost their seats in the States too and naturally, now they were less than enthusiastic in keeping I. Gandhi as Prime Minister who was revealing herself less docile than they had anticipated. The election results did not please the Soviets either. The Soviet press expressed concerns for the potential departure from progressive domestic and foreign policy given the composition of the Cabinet and the parliament.<sup>132</sup> It is clear that the election’s outcome unsettled already unstable and shaky position of the new PM. Within months, Indira Gandhi became a quite unpopular figure in the Indian political scene. Her uncertainties, especially the initial flirt with the US government and consequent devaluation of the rupee placed her under the frenzied attacks of political opponents and her own party. Her advisors at the time known as “kitchen cabinet” and some members of the official cabinet urged her to adopt a leftist line and eschew the friendly tones with the USA.<sup>133</sup> After Mrs. Gandhi received the abovementioned Kaul’s letter which eloquently had explained her role as the face of India’s progressive forces

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<sup>130</sup> Norman, *Letters to an American Friend*, 117–118.  
February 10, 1967.

<sup>131</sup> Singh, *The Yogi and the Bear*, 60–61.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>133</sup> Frank, *Indira*, 299.

and the importance of the Soviet Union to Indian political life, she made some statements deploring American attacks in Vietnam. During the visit in the USA, she had remained silent on the subject and it had seemed that Johnson was sympathetic to Indian leader's pleas for food aid. Now, after hearing the condemnation of his country as "imperialist aggressor", Johnson got infuriated and deliberately delayed food shipments to India. Although after the general elections of 1967 Indira Gandhi declared that "the domestic and foreign policies of the government would continue to be democratic socialism and non-alignment", and emphasised that government would follow policy of democratic socialism, her appeal to the masses was still weak as stronger ideological stance and issue-oriented position were not evident yet.

Apart from the first uncertain steps to adopt socialist rhetoric, Indira Gandhi was embracing another strategy that became her brand in politics. At the end of 1966, while referring to her bitter rivals Kamaraj and Desai she said that "here is a question of whom the party wants and whom the people want. My position among the people is uncontested."<sup>134</sup> She started to stress a direct and personal relationship with the masses not encumbered by the party's rules and norms. At the same time, she strived to adopt a paternal role: "My family is not confined to a few individuals. It consists of crores of people. Your burdens are comparatively light, because your families are limited and viable. But my burden is manifold because crores of my family members are poverty-stricken and I have to look after them."<sup>135</sup> This pronouncement was made during the election campaign of 1967, when she presented herself as mother and father combined into one, the only parent of the nation. The direct relationship with the people defined in these terms meant that it was unconnected to political institutions. Authoritarian overtones could be heard and the likeness to the Soviet-style cult of personality could be drawn but it is quite certain that at that time I. Gandhi thought only of political survival.

P.N. Haksar, the principal force that steered Indira Gandhi towards adopting socialist credentials, was her old Kashmiri friend. In May 1967, he became PM's Principal Private Secretary. He thought that I. Gandhi was "basically <...> not a political person, that she didn't grasp the complexities and problems of political situations." However, he believed

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<sup>134</sup> Indira. Gandhi, *The years of challenge: selected speeches of Indira Gandhi, January 1966-August 1969* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India, 1985), 93.

<sup>135</sup> *The Times of India*, January 20, 1967.

that she possessed an extraordinary ability to connect with the people; the special bond that she had managed to create with the masses was genuine in his eyes.<sup>136</sup> Haksar was not only responsible for Gandhi's turn to the left, but also for the growing power of Prime Minister's Secretariat, a body which had been previously created by Lal Bahadur Shastri in order to provide the PM independent advices on all issues and free him from the clutches of the increasingly powerful Syndicate. One of the characteristic feature of I. Gandhi's era was the process of gradual centralization of power that at first got concentrated in the PM's Secretariat which acquired direct and indirect control of the most governmental organs and became the main centre of power.<sup>137</sup>

In the subsequent two years after the 1967 elections, I. Gandhi was carefully preparing the ground for the split of the oldest India's party in order to get rid of the "rightist" Syndicate with which she had started a fight to the death. The ground was ready in 1969 but the chance was still missing. The opportunity came when the Indian President Zakir Hussain died unexpectedly in May 1969. In defiance of usual party's practice, I. Gandhi decided to support an independent candidate V.V. Giri rather than the official Congress candidate Sanjiva Reddy. In the end, her candidate prevailed while historical Congress party was going towards the decisive split engineered by the Prime Minister.

#### *Congress Forum for Socialist Action*

Haksar and other advisors of prime minister like Kaul were not the only ones who engineered her turn to the left. After all, Mrs. Gandhi was also responsible to her party's sections that in the late 1960s pushed her towards socialist reforms and closer relations with the Soviet Union. The question is about what were the determining forces that contributed to the ruling's party decisive turn towards "socialist" politics. Usually, I. Gandhi's coterie of advisors or the socialist wing of Congress as a whole, are identified as the main responsible. However, underneath it could be found a lesser-known actor, the Congress Forum for Socialist Action (CFSA). This pressure group emerged in 1962 from within the Congress party and was the successor of the Congress Socialist Forum (CSF) founded in 1957.<sup>138</sup> When the Congress party started to rule independent India, among its

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 313.

<sup>137</sup> V.A. Panandiker, *The Indian cabinet: a study in governance* (New Delhi: Konark Publishers, 1996), 230.

<sup>138</sup> Ram S. Awana, *Pressure politics in Congress Party: a study of the Congress Forum for Socialist Action* (New Delhi: Northern Book Centre, 1988), 3.

declared goals there was the establishment of “socialistic pattern of society.” In 1955, it was formalized because some Congressmen, feeling that the party was losing ground among the masses, openly criticized the slow and hesitant government's steps in this direction. As a confirmation, the results of the second general elections in India (1957) revealed the opposition parties like CPI on the left and Jana Sangh on the right making significant gains, while the Congress stagnated. Nehru admitted that there were “certain disruptive tendencies inside the organisation” explaining that “honest and hardworking Congressmen who worked for the Congress as its backbone and strength were not active today.”<sup>139</sup> As the “crusading spirit” of the Congress was fading away, the Congress Socialist Forum was created and instantly adopted a draft thesis entitled “Keep The Flame Alive.” The thesis set three main objectives: (1) to encourage and provide the opportunities for thoughtful research and study on all important subjects affecting the party and the nation (2) to undertake the task of conveying the results of this research <...> to the rest of party members and also to the public at large (3) to entrust the responsibility of devising means and methods for imparting the necessary theoretical education to cadres within the party.<sup>140</sup> The objectives of the new Forum were inspired by the need of “fresh” intellectual input, political education and propagation of socialist programmes of the Congress.<sup>141</sup> Nehru approved of the CSF and its goals as well as Indira Gandhi when she became the President of the Congress, but formally, both of them did not join the group in order not to jeopardize the heterogeneous character of the INC. The Forum members associated themselves with the leadership of Nehru and were eager to be led by him, as his support would have helped to reorganize the party. The CSF declared to be averse to the “capitalism” and “regionalism” of opposition parties as Jana Sangh, Swatantra and DMK as well as to the “leftism” of CPI.<sup>142</sup> However, the Forum was affected with the same problems of its parent Congress, suffering factionalism, organizational weakness and conflicts of ideologies and personalities. In the end, it remained nothing more than a discussion group. The situation was about to change in the late 1960s and especially after I. Gandhi got involved actively with the Forum.

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Awana distinguished several reasons for the formation of pressure groups within the parties: non-implementation of declared goals, emergence of stark ideological differences within and poor level of performance of a ruling party.

<sup>139</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, “General elections and the Congress,” *AICC Economic Review* 9 no. 1 (May 1957): 3.

<sup>140</sup> “Keep the Flame Alive,” no.5, 1-2.

<sup>141</sup> Awana, *Pressure Politics in Congress Party*, 5.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

The results of the general elections of 1962 confirmed the tendency of weakening support for the Congress. The Congress Socialist Forum was reorganized and changed its name to the Congress Forum for Socialist Action (CFSA) stressing the new forum's action-oriented approach. The majority of CFSA was worried about the strengthening of rightist, communist and widespread opportunist tendencies in Indian politics, while the younger and more radical members called for the immediate establishment of a pure socialist state in order to avoid further losses of popular support, especially among younger voters.<sup>143</sup> The new Forum, which was inaugurated by Nehru, welcomed not only INC members, but also the "common people" (the annual membership fee was fixed at Rs 5) provided that they did not belong to any other political party. In many ways, the CFSA was more active and more radical in its critique than its predecessor was. In the first phase of its activities (1962-67), all INC presidents approved of the CFSA's agenda. However, Nehru's death and the manoeuvres of "rightists and conservative Syndicate" were making life difficult for the Forum. Shastri for one did not approve of the Forum and its activities.<sup>144</sup> Inside the organization, there were differences among the senior and younger elements regarding the approach and technique to achieve socialist goals. G.L. Nanda, the founder of the Forum, was a Gandhian socialist and some members considered his leadership quite incompatible with the "radical" goals of the Forum.

The fourth general elections of 1967 brought Congress to all time low. The party was in dire straits as well as the CFSA that was once again proving ineffective and ridden with internal problems as its predecessor was. Former members of Praja Socialist Party (PSP) like Mohan Dharia, Chandra Sekhar and others joined hands with younger, socialist-minded and often ex-CPI Congressmen like Chandrajit Yadav, Arjun Arora, K.V. Raghunatha Reddy in order to seize control of the CFSA from Nanda.<sup>145</sup> In 1967, in order to distinguish themselves, they drafted the 10-point Economic Programme. Soon Indira Gandhi appropriated it and later made it the flagship of her policies as she put considerable effort to persuade the Congress Working Committee to adopt the

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid. 26.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid. 47-52.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 54.

Chandra Sekhar was named the leader of Young Turks, a new generation of Congress radicals. Another group in the Forum, united by its closeness to the Prime Minister, consisted of so-called "backbenchers" like I.K. Gujral, D.P. Dhar and Om Mehta.

Programme.<sup>146</sup> It goes without saying that both the CFSA and Indira Gandhi were united by their resentment against the Syndicate, the latter more for personal reasons of political survival. I. Gandhi shrewdly used the forum's agenda as a sort of "ideological cloak" that could masquerade very prosaic struggle for power that eventually led to the historical 1969's split of the Congress into the Indira Gandhi's Congress (R) and Syndicate's Congress (O).<sup>147</sup> The CFSA was also utilized to refurbish the image of I. Gandhi's Congress, make it more appealing to younger and more radical voters. Some members of the Forum were aware of being used by the PM and observed that "groupings in any political party are never fully ideological and the present situation in the Congress is in no way an exception <...> We must accept the painful reality that many who do not subscribe to the socialist objectives have taken position on our side because of political expediency."<sup>148</sup> However, there were not only politicians prone to expediencies among those who did not subscribe to the socialist agenda. The ex-CPI section within the CFSA started to assert itself. In 1972, Chandra Sekhar, a "committed" Congress socialist observed:

Once the struggle against the Syndicate was over, a section of the so-called Left started having different ideas about their role in the new organization. The members, hailing from the C.P.I. started functioning as a clique. Apparently they turned themselves into a cell. <...> They started having secret meetings to plan their strategy to reach positions of power. Their strategy was solely to achieve personal ends and their tall talk of Leftism was just a cover to camouflage their opportunist role in the party. Their second strategy seems to have been to denigrate and isolate those Congress Socialists who did not have their Communist background. Their third line of operation has been to spread rumors that they alone enjoyed the confidence of the Prime Minister, as they were the only loyal adherents to the Congress ideology...<...> In this sordid game, they used Afro-Asian Solidarity and Peace Council organizations besides a host of other friendship organizations of the Communist countries for their ends. It was so easy to entrap members of Parliament

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<sup>146</sup> The points include: control of banking industry, nationalisation of general insurance, gradual state takeover of import-export trade, state trading in foodgrains, effective steps to curb monopolies, land reforms and removal of privileges of the ex-rulers.

Christophe Jaffrelot, *India's silent revolution: the rise of the lower classes in North India* (London: Hurst, 2003), 116.

<sup>147</sup> Before the split, Indira Gandhi without consulting the Finance Minister Morarji Desai nationalized the banking sector. Eventually, she was expelled from her own party for "indiscipline" and went on to form her own Congress (R).

<sup>148</sup> Quoted in Frankel, *India's political economy*, 429.

and other Congress workers. The dictum was like that in the old British navy: Join these organizations and see the world. Some of them had managed to become Ministers or party bosses.<sup>149</sup>

In pursuing their purposes, the ex-CPI members were emboldened by the earlier mentioned Kumaramangalam's Thesis. Mohan Kumaramangalam was a London-born Tamil politician who joined the CPI in his youth. In the 1960s, he started to distance himself from the Communist party and in 1967, joined the Congress. After the split he remained with Indira Gandhi and in 1971, elected to the parliament, he occupied the crucial post of the Minister of Steel and Mines. Sekhar charged the ex-CPI section of the CFSA of maintaining close links with Moscow through Soviet-sponsored cultural organizations, discreetly suggesting Soviet interference in Indian politics. For instance, Kumaramangalam himself was an early advocate of the friendship with the Soviet Union and one of the founders of Indo-Soviet Cultural Society (ISCUS).<sup>150</sup> Apart from seemingly consulting the leadership in Kremlin on regular basis, the CFSA's ex-CPI section had contacts with the Communist Party of India itself, to the extent of occasionally inviting the party's members to the Forum's organized seminars.<sup>151</sup> Kumaramangalam was not the only one ex-CPI turned-Congressmen member of the CFSA that was quickly promoted to the important posts at the Central government. Others such as Nurul Hasan, Minister for Education and Social Welfare and Culture, K.R. Ganesh, Minister for Revenue and Expenditure, K.V. Raghunatha Reddy, Minister for Labour and Rehabilitation and Chandrajit Yadav, General Secretary of the Indian National Congress would be sufficient to illustrate the point. However, the ex-CPI Congressmen were only one flank of Indira Gandhi's power base, the other being the Communist Party of India.

### *CPI-Congress relations*

In independent India, the fluctuations of Congress-CPI relations often reflected the dynamics of Indo-Soviet relations. In 1948, the new secretary of the party B.T. Ranadive had asked the party members not to have illusion about Nehru who according to him was tied to big capitalists and favourable to Anglo-American imperialist camp.<sup>152</sup> It should

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<sup>149</sup> *The Statesman*, June 7, 1972.

<sup>150</sup> Dandapani Jayakanthan, *A Literary Man's Political Experience* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1976), 24.

<sup>151</sup> Awara, *Pressure Politics in Congress Party*, 84.

<sup>152</sup> Donaldson, *Soviet policy toward India*, 77.

recalled that in the same period, Soviet attitude and evaluation of Indian leadership was harsh and critical. Up until early 1950s, this attitude remained, as well as the militant position of the CPI that was calling for a revolution against imperialists, feudals and big bourgeoisie entrenched in India and represented also by the ruling party. The Soviet reappraisal of India came gradually, first with an offer of food aid and expansion of trade ties, then through a complete change of attitude towards India's leadership. The quickly melting ice between India and the USSR quite disoriented the CPI. P. Ramamurthi, the editor of party's newspaper *New Age*, praised the fact that Nehru started to take critical stance against the US, highlighting the "progressive" aspect of his policies. The article abandoned the clichés of Anglo-American enemy and focused on the positive features existent in the policies of Indian government.<sup>153</sup> This enraged the prominent Malayalam communist E.M.S. Namboodiripad who stated that the Congress could not stand for peace because it was the organization dominated by "landlords and monopolists collaborating with British imperialism" and reaffirmed that there was no question of "abandoning the struggle against the Congress Government."<sup>154</sup> The 1955 was a watershed year for Indo-Soviet relations and quite soon, positive Soviet assessments of India started to pour in. Soviet economists tried to explain the framework of mixed economy existent in India labelling it "state capitalism."<sup>155</sup> Shockingly for Indian communists, one Soviet article stressed that socialist path had been advocated by Nehru and "given friendly ties with the socialist countries and close cooperation among the progressive forces in India itself, India could develop along socialist lines, for as Lenin repeatedly emphasized [that] state capitalism is a step toward socialism."<sup>156</sup> In fact, the CPI began to echo with great hesitation changing Moscow's views on Indian internal situation. Major CPI's reassessment of the Congress arrived with the Sixth Party Congress held in Vijayawada in 1961, the last undivided congress of the Communist Party of India which was about to split into CPI and CPI(M)-Marxist. The party's secretary Ajoy Ghosh raised the question whether the CPI could defend the public sector, parliamentary system and India's foreign policy without forming a full-fledged alliance with the Congress. The answer was clear-cut "no."<sup>157</sup> He even reasserted that "we [communists] must look upon democrats inside

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<sup>153</sup> *New Age*, July 12, 1954.

<sup>154</sup> *New Age*, September 19, 1954.

<sup>155</sup> Donaldson, *Soviet policy toward India*, 138.

<sup>156</sup> Modeste Rubinstein, "A non-capitalist path for underdeveloped countries," *New Times*, no 28, 1956.

<sup>157</sup> Singh, *Communists in Congress*, 62–63.

the Congress and the mass of Congressmen as our friends and potential allies <...>. Ours must be fraternal attitude. <...> when progressive declarations are made by the Congress, we have not just to expose them but use them for forging unity.”<sup>158</sup> Furthermore, he told his comrades that “such tactical line would unite the democratic forces, isolate and defeat the forces of right reaction <...>. It would help the communists to directly relate to their immediate demands, nationalisation of banks and foreign companies, agrarian reforms.”<sup>159</sup> The Seventh Congress of the CPI (1964) consolidated more favourable views on the Congress (INC). In the proceedings of the Seventh Congress was stressed that although the Congress was the party of the bourgeoisie, it had a “big mass base, which extends to all classes, including big sections of the working class, peasantry, artisans, intellectuals, and others.” The CPI should make “ceaseless efforts to forge unity with the progressive forces within the Congress.”<sup>160</sup> In 1963, S.A. Dange, one of the founders of the CPI, chairman of the party for 19 years (1962-81) and in the near future one of the staunchest allies of Indira Gandhi, defended the thesis that CPI’s “joining in a united front with its national bourgeoisie [Congress]’ was compatible with proletarian internationalism.”<sup>161</sup> However, when I. Gandhi arrived to power, Dange’s transformation was not final yet. In 1966, T. N. Kaul notified I. Gandhi of Dange’s subversive dictates to his comrades: “I should like to invite your attention in particular to the following points: <...> His references to revolutionary discipline and revolutionary indiscipline (violent activities which may paralyse the Government, probably), Dange’s assessment of the Central Government and your role: ‘the situation is serious and full of revolutionary possibilities but for this all anti-congress forces have to unite but without communal parties’.” Kaul also offered a thoughtful advice to his PM: “I would suggest that you may like to send for Dange on his return to India for a frank talk with him and warn him that if his party indulges in violence Government will be compelled to put him in prison.”<sup>162</sup> The Indira Gandhi-made split of the Congress Party of 1969 was a historical opportunity for the CPI. The CPI publicly viewed the results of the elections of 1967 as a factor that sharpened and uncovered the inherent contradictions of heterogeneous Congress Party.

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., xix.

<sup>160</sup> “Proceedings of the Seventh Congress of the Communist Party of India,” 1965.

<sup>161</sup> Donaldson, *Soviet policy toward India*, 198.

S.A. Dange, *Neither Revisionism nor Dogmatism is Our Guide: reply to the Chinese “Mirror”* (New Delhi: Communist Party of India, 1963)

<sup>162</sup> “Correspondence Indira Gandhi,” April 22, 1966, I instalment, subject no. 83, The Papers of T.N. Kaul, NMML.

Inside the ruling party, there were those “closely linked with imperialism, feudalism and monopoly” and those who wanted to check these forces. Therefore, the split was natural outcome of this polarization and the Communist Party of India (CPI) guaranteed full support to the Congress (R). Shortly before the split, I. Gandhi nationalized the banking sector and took other socialist-oriented economic measures which delighted the CPI and drew it closer to her. At the time, the CPI failed to discern the instrumental use of socialist policies and rhetoric, which covered political rather than ideological motivations of the split. Thus, the CPI was drawn into the alliance which in the following years would prove disastrous for the party, reducing it to the mere appendage of the Congress at the national level.

It is unlikely though that the whole party was simply tricked into alliance because among some of its members there were opportunists who were ready to accept any kind of alliance and affiliation in order to accomplish their goals. For instance, Mohit Sen, Marxist intellectual and member of the CPI, in his autobiography *A Traveller and the Road* (2003) some decades after the events wrote: “<...> though she [Indira Gandhi] was not progressive, the Syndicate was definitely reactionary. Hence, it was quite Marxist-Leninist to defeat the reactionaries even in the company of those who were not progressive! I took part, of course, in this campaign, but from the periphery.”<sup>163</sup> The Party would admit errors of its judgement of the Congress and the analysis of the split of 1969 only in 1978, during the 11<sup>th</sup> Congress of the CPI held in Bhatinda. The Political Review Report acknowledged that CPI’s view of the split in the Congress party between “anti-imperialist, progressive sections of the bourgeoisie and anti-communist, pro-imperialist section” was wrong. Indira Gandhi did not represent the former section, but was merely trying to preserve Congress power and her own position.<sup>164</sup> Precisely in this very moment, Mohit Sen distanced from the CPI following its anti-Congress stand. The issue whether or not to support I. Gandhi’s Congress was so contentious that it would manage to split the CPI once again in the 1980s. In fact, the last mandate of I. Gandhi (1980-84) was profoundly marked by the contention with the former ally as well as by more problematic relations with the Soviet Union. Mrs. Gandhi took quite unusual measures to resolve these

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<sup>163</sup> Mohit Sen, *A traveller and the road: the journey of an Indian communist* (New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 2003), 291.

<sup>164</sup> David Lockwood, *The Communist Party of India and the Indian Emergency*, (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2016), 174.

problems. Unable to mount a direct attack on the former allies, she acted through the cultural organizations in order to resolve political problems.

#### *Indo-Soviet Treaty and Bangladesh war*

After the Congress split of 1969, the radical reforms initiated by I. Gandhi started to seal her position, and the CPI with various “progressive” sections rallied behind her. The Soviet Union was overtly behind India, even if they still pursued the policy of arming Pakistan. The premier of the Soviet Union Kosygin visited India in 1969. To Indian criticism regarding Soviet military aid to Pakistan, he replied that Pakistan was receiving a microscopic proportion of arms in comparison to what India obtained and repeated that the main aim of the Soviet policy was to wean Pakistan away from China.<sup>165</sup> In order to placate Indian irritation and prove their sympathy for India, the Soviets proposed an Indo-Soviet treaty as early as 1968 but at the time, Indian diplomats did not seriously consider the proposal. However, in 1969 the Indian internal situation was different. Mrs. Gandhi was facing the prospect of the split and the CPI’s support for her became crucial. The CPI that had contacts with Moscow would have been pleased to know that Indian PM was considering a formal alliance with their Soviet mentors. The same year, Prime Minister’s “men” Dhar, Kaul and Haksar started to held discussions on the treaty in Moscow. However, I. Gandhi was hesitant to conclude an agreement on whose signing the Soviet and even her advisors’ pressure was mounting. She instructed her ambassador in Moscow Dhar not to respond to any Soviet entreaties.<sup>166</sup> However, it is possible that the text of the treaty was finalized already in 1969, but the reservations, especially on the Indian side, to sign it persisted.<sup>167</sup> The Congress split was finalized only towards the end of 1969. The signing of an official treaty with the USSR in a country that still professed non-alignment surely would have caused commotion and would have compromised still fragile Indian PM’s position. Even without a treaty, following the split in Congress, Indira Gandhi became the target of the accusations of the rival Congress(O), according to which the prime minister had the “intention to sell India to the USSR using her secretary Parmeshwar Narain Haksar as a direct link to Moscow and plotting with the Soviet

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<sup>165</sup> Singh, *The Yogi and the Bear*, 71.

<sup>166</sup> David C. Engerman, *The Price of Aid: The Economic Cold War in India* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2018), 310.

<sup>167</sup> Singh, *The Yogi and the Bear*, 72–73.

embassy in New Delhi.”<sup>168</sup> The opportunity to sign a treaty with the USSR came unexpectedly with the crisis that had been brewing in East Pakistan since the late 1960s. In East wing of Pakistan (modern day Bangladesh), separated by the vast portion of Indian territory from its Western wing (Pakistan), ethnically and linguistically different from it, the movement for the independence was gaining momentum.

Domestically, Indira Gandhi managed to get rid of the Syndicate, but was facing quite unpleasant situation. Although, her Congress managed to secure the parliamentary majority, it was quite thin and unstable even with the support of the CPI and the regional parties like DMK. She took then an unprecedented action in the history of India’s democracy. The Council of Ministers promptly advised the President to dissolve the parliament, which he did accordingly. Indira Gandhi was seeking, 14 months ahead of the scheduled elections, a fresh mass mandate to enhance her position. In a radio broadcast, she explained that “it is because we are concerned not merely with remaining in power, but with using that power to ensure a better life to the vast majority of our people and to satisfy their aspirations for a just social order. In the present situation, we feel we cannot go ahead with our proclaimed programme and keep our pledges to our people. <...> Justice—social, economic and political—which is the basis of our Constitution, is yet a goal to be fought for and attained.”<sup>169</sup> The opposition parties rallied with the slogan “*Indira Hatao*” (Remove Indira). I. Gandhi instead, retorted “*Garibi Hatao*” (Remove poverty) coming along with the programme aimed at the reduction of poverty. “We did expect a big majority. What was exhilarating was the manner in which many people and especially the younger generation of all sections made our election campaign their own,” wrote Indira Gandhi to D. Norman.<sup>170</sup> The strategy paid out and the Congress (R) obtained a landslide victory, unseen neither in Nehru’s tenure. While the results of 1971 elections brought at the centre many ex-CPI members supporting her, at the same time the need for the CPI’s support to her government was greatly obviated.

Meanwhile, in 1971, the situation in East Pakistan was heating up. In March, the Pakistani Army launched a brutal crackdown on both the opposition and its supporters and the civilians. Refugees started to cross Indian border and by the end of May, there were 3.5

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<sup>168</sup> Frank, *Indira*, 317.

<sup>169</sup> “Broadcast on the dissolution of Lok Sabha, December 27,” 1970 in Indira Gandhi, *The years of endeavour: selected speeches of Indira Gandhi, August 1969-August 1972* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India, 1995), 75.

<sup>170</sup> Norman, *Letters to an American Friend*, 129–130.  
April 23, 1971

million of them in India. Initially, Indian position was cautious as the government was warned by the Indian military chiefs that it would be foolish to get involved militarily in East Pakistan crisis until the rainy season had ended. Besides, the fear that China could possibly get involved in the conflict on the side of Pakistan haunted Indian policymakers and military commanders.<sup>171</sup> Therefore, the thought of military intervention was put aside for the time being but I. Gandhi permitted the establishment of a Bangladesh government in India and agreed to set up camps for training Bangladeshi guerrilla fighters.<sup>172</sup> Although the Soviets urged Karachi to “stop bloodshed and repression” in East Pakistan, publicly they tried to maintain a balanced posture. In the summer, the Indian Army started to prepare a plan for a full-fledged war with Pakistan, even if I. Gandhi hoped to resolve the crisis without military intervention.<sup>173</sup> The possibility that China would enter in the conflict in East Pakistan was looming in the minds of many in the Indian government, but Nixon’s closest aide Henry Kissinger had promised that the United States would react seriously to any Chinese move against India. However, in July, Kissinger visited India warned that if India went to war with Pakistan, the United States would not be prepared to help it.<sup>174</sup> After Indian visit, Kissinger secretly rushed to Beijing in order to prepare the ground for Nixon’s historic *détente* with China. Ten days later Kissinger called in the Indian ambassador and warned him that USA would not assist India in the case of Chinese aggression. Indian officials favouring Soviet Union took these developments as a clear sign to seize an opportunity and sign the treaty.<sup>175</sup> The moment for Indo-Soviet treaty was ripe.

On 9 August 1971, India and the Soviet Union at last signed the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. The document was filled with currently usual rhetoric about peace and friendship: “The High Contracting Parties solemnly declare that enduring peace and friendship shall prevail between the two countries and their peoples. <...> Guided by the desire to contribute in every possible way to ensure enduring peace and security of their people, the High Contracting Parties declare their determination to continue their efforts to preserve and to strengthen peace in Asia and throughout the

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<sup>171</sup> Frank, *Indira*, 333.

<sup>172</sup> Singh, *The Yogi and the Bear*, 84-85.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>174</sup> Frank, *Indira*, 334.

<sup>175</sup> Engerman, *The Price of Aid*, 309–331.

world, to hard the arms race and to achieve general and complete disarmament.”<sup>176</sup> The Treaty went on condemning colonialism, affirming India’s respect for “the peace loving” policy of the USSR and latter’s respect for India’s non-alignment, stating the goals to enhance even more the direct contacts between Soviet and Indian leaderships and to increase Indo-Soviet cooperation in all fields from economy through culture. However, the most relevant article of the treaty was number IX: “Each High Contracting Party undertakes to abstain from providing any assistance to any third party that engages in armed conflict with the other Party. In the event of either Party being subjected to and attack or a threat thereof, the High Contracting Parties shall immediately enter into mutual consultations in order to remove such threat and to take appropriate effective measures to ensure peace and the security of their countries.”<sup>177</sup> The day after signing the treaty, the External Affairs Minister Swaran Singh explained at the parliament that the treaty “does not restrain India from taking any action in regard to Bangladesh” and hastened to add that it “also did not mean any compromise on the part of India in following the non-alignment.”<sup>178</sup> Indo-Soviet treaty of Friendship and Cooperation was widely welcomed by the whole Indian political spectrum. Even though there were some who lamented over the presumably lost Indian non-alignment, those voices gone astray in a wave of enthusiastic statements celebrating Indo-Soviet friendship and its importance for India. Even the chief minister of troubled Kashmir, whose borders were not far away from the Central Asian borders of the Soviet Union, hailed Indo-Soviet treaty as “of great significance for the cause of world peace. <...> the treaty signed is the logical culmination of the mutual friendship and close cooperation between the two countries.” Braj Narayan Brajesh, the president of right nationalist party All-Hindu Mahasabha, said that “with the signing of treaty the possibility of a war between Pakistan and India over Bangladesh issue had been averted. Now Pakistan, China or America has to think twice before doing anything against India.”<sup>179</sup> However, it seems that euphoria did not last long. In September 1971, Indo-Soviet Cultural Society organized a meeting to celebrate the treaty. Rajni Patel who presided the meeting said that “Mrs. Gandhi had restored the Nehru

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<sup>176</sup> “Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation Between the Government of India and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics,” Bilateral/Multilateral Documents, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India,

<https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/5139/Treaty+of>

<sup>177</sup> Article IX

<https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/5139/Treaty+of>

<sup>178</sup> *The Hindu*, August 11, 1971.

<sup>179</sup> *The Times of India*, August 11, 1971.

heritage by signing the treaty” while the Minister for Finance K. R. Ganesh emphasized that the treaty “took note of the new power patterns emerging in the world” but expressed his surprise that some sections, who “had earlier welcomed the treaty, were now attacking it. It appeared that a new ‘grand alliance’ of reactionaries was being formed.”<sup>180</sup>

In September, Indira Gandhi accompanied by her key strategist P.N. Haksar headed to the Soviet Union. They did not leave empty-handed as Brezhnev and Kosygin promised to aid India military in case India went to war with Pakistan. After a month, Gandhi, Haksar and Kaul embarked on a tour of Europe and America to garner support for India’s cause and galvanize world opinion, accentuating the humanitarian tragedy as the flow of refugees escaping the violence perpetuated by West Pakistan military continued to stream uninterruptedly into Indian territory. In Europe, Indira Gandhi found a degree of sympathy for Indian cause. To the fears of some European officials of impending Indo-Pakistani war, Indira Gandhi used to respond laconically that it would not be India to start it.<sup>181</sup> The US visit was unsuccessful instead. I. Gandhi and Nixon were not “personally congenial” as Kissinger diplomatically put in, describing two leaders’ meetings as “classic dialogue of the deaf.” Nixon was already quite notorious for his colourful language, but after the talks with I. Gandhi, Kissinger commented that President’s remarks on the Indian leader “were not always printable.”<sup>182</sup> India’s plight of refugees and the consequential financial burden faced by the country, left US government unmoved and its support for West Pakistan unchanged as well. The unsuccessful negotiations with the US fuelled pro-Bangladesh, anti-American and anti-Pakistan sentiments in India. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December, when I. Gandhi was addressing a huge rally in Calcutta, Pakistan jetfighters carried out a series of the pre-emptive strikes on Indian Air Force bases in North Western India codenamed Operation Chengiz Khan. When the news broke out to I. Gandhi, she privately said to those with her, “Thank God, they’ve attacked us,” and authorised the execution of Indian military response the next day.<sup>183</sup> The tensions that were escalating for months were resolved in the matter of days. Already on 16 December, Pakistan surrendered and Bangladesh was on its way to independence. In the end neither China nor the USA got involved directly into the war, however the

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<sup>180</sup> *The Times of India*, September 17, 1971.

<sup>181</sup> Inder Malhotra, *Indira Gandhi: A Personal and Political Biography* (London: Coronet Books, 1991), 136.

<sup>182</sup> Frank, *Indira*, 336.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 338.

latter deployed a task force of the US Navy to the Bay of Bengal. The Soviet Union maintained its promises and supported India publicly and militarily.

India was delirious with joy over the outcome of the war. The country killed few birds with one shot: liberated Bangladesh, reduced Pakistan in size, enhanced India's stature in the region and left behind the extremely bitter experience of Sino-Indian war. The credit for the victory was given Indira Gandhi alone. If her victory over the Syndicate in 1969 was admired only by some progressive sections of Indian society, the war against the sworn Muslim enemy made kneel in adoration of the PM even Hindu anti-Muslim communalist groups such as Sangh Parivar. She was called "Durga" after Hindu war goddess while thousands of female babies born in the following days and weeks were named Indira.<sup>184</sup> Some even started to call her "Empress of India." I. Gandhi reached the peak of her political career enjoying power, fame and admiration unseen by any Indian leader before, but from this pinnacle of glory the only road available was going downwards.

The war, glorious as it was for India, for the Soviet Union presented quite a disturbing picture. The USSR shared the victory with India, but it realized that it came at a price. The Soviets merely showed their loyalty and reliability to help a friendly state. On the whole, the main Soviet achievement in the situation was the Treaty that was valid for twenty years. However, the treaty and Bangladesh events undermined the Soviet balanced approach towards India and Pakistan that they had been trying to keep. Soviet arms shipments to Pakistan at the end of the 1960s was a contentious issue swallowed with difficulty by India which at the time did not have another choice but to put up with it as the support of the USSR was too precious to lose. However, the Bangladesh war upset the delicate balance the USSR was looking for as it was forced to rally behind India. Another significant outcome of the war was that India found itself less dependent on the USSR while Kremlin's strategical need for India did not diminished but eventually increased as China and USA seemed to have resolved their past animosities. Unpleasantly for the Soviets, the axis of Pakistan-USA-China was emerging in Asia at the very moment when India was strengthening even more its position and prestige in Asia. Besides, there were some timid signals of warming Sino-Indian relations, icy-cold since the border war: T.N. Kaul attended China's National Day reception in New Delhi and Indian greetings were broadcasted in China on its National Day while Indian table tennis national team

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 343.

was invited to participate in a tournament in Beijing.<sup>185</sup> The Soviet Union had no choice but to throw its support for India and to make certain concessions to the country. In post-1971 period Indo-Soviet economic and trade relations reached unseen heights.

### *Indo-Soviet economic relations*

In 1970s, the trade, original impetus for enhancing Indo-Soviet relations, was thriving. The bilateral trade between India and the Soviet Union based on multiyear (usually, five-year) agreements rose constantly year by year. On the Indian side, trade turn eastwards was based on the hope, which many Indian officials cherished, to reduce India's dependence on the West. A bigger goal of the Soviets, to integrate India into a world socialist economy, was not always acceptable to those Indian officials who still harboured ideals of *swadeshi* or self-sufficiency. Indian exports to the Soviet Union primarily consisted of commodities and agriculture products like tea, iron ore, raw hides and jute and in some years outnumbered those of Soviet Union to India which consisted of machinery, iron, steel or oil.<sup>186</sup> Large public sectors projects continued to be built in India. By the 1981, Soviet-assisted projects were scattered all over the country ranging from oil refining to machine building facilities.<sup>187</sup> However, the trade and public sector projects were not sole Indo-Soviet economic development initiatives.

D.P. Dhar was one of the closest advisors of I. Gandhi, former Ambassador to the Soviet Union (1969-1971) and negotiated in person the 1971 Indo-Soviet Treaty. He described himself as “partisan, even an ardent partisan, of Indo-Soviet friendship” with the ambition to contribute to “the development of Indo-Soviet relations.”<sup>188</sup> In the early 1970s, D.P. Dhar tirelessly worked to strengthen economic relations with the USSR. Before Brezhnev's visit to India in 1973, he wrote to his PM: “We must recognise that the Soviet Union has given us economic assistance in some of the crucial sectors of our economy. The range is so wide that it is surprising that some strong hesitations are still evident

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<sup>185</sup> *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 1972 Yearbook, 182–183.

<sup>186</sup> Engerman, *The Price of Aid*, 297.

<sup>187</sup> “Peace aim of Indo-Soviet treaty, says Gromyko,” *The Times of India*, August 8, 1981.

<sup>188</sup> Letters received by P.N. Haksar as a Principal Secretary to Prime Minister on various issues from Indian ambassador such as D.P. Dhar, Dr S. Shelvankar, B. Pant. Includes record of conversation between Chairman Kosygin and Ambassador D.P. Dhar on 23 March 1971, III instalment, subject no. 259, The Papers of P.N. Haksar NMML.

whenever there is a question of entering into an agreement with them.”<sup>189</sup>

On 19 September 1972, an extraordinary agreement was reached to set up a joint Indo-Soviet commission (Intergovernmental Indian-Soviet commission on Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation) with the purpose to dovetail and merge the two countries’ economic plans. The cooperation regarded the Gosplan, a Soviet planning body, and Indian Planning Commission. The Soviet side called the Commission “the most fruitful product of the Treaty.”<sup>190</sup> The first meeting of the joint Commission was held on 17 February 1973. In 1974, D.P. Dhar’s note marked that “Kosygin [Soviet premier] was extremely happy about the cooperation being developed between the Gosplan and the Indian Planning Commission. He said, “There will come a time when you will have a joint plan with us. We will not live to see it, but those who come after us will see it.”<sup>191</sup> K.B. Lall, a principal Indian negotiator with the Soviets in the trade and arms fields, had suggested that the need for a joint commission arose because Indo-Soviet trade had gone beyond the charges of the commerce and industries ministries.<sup>192</sup> Therefore, it was necessary to interlock economic activities of the countries, restructure trade and in the process, bring together the two planning bodies.

The same year further step was taken when Indian officials started to explore the likelihood to establish an informal contact with Soviet COMECON and its investment banks. COMECON, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, was the Soviet economic organization, created in response to the Marshall Plan in 1949, that comprised the USSR, the European countries of the Eastern Block and the socialist countries elsewhere in the world like Vietnam and Mongolia. D.P. Dhar explained: “About COMECON Baibakov [Chairman of the Gosplan] was perfectly willing to explore the idea of India establishing an informal contact. Concretely it might mean that we could deal with the Investment Bank and other credit agencies of COMECON without becoming a member of that organization.”<sup>193</sup> The rationale behind this move could be found in a document of 1972: “I suggested that there should be a closer interrelation between India and the USSR in the

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<sup>189</sup> “Planning Minister’s notes to Prime Minister regarding his discussions with the Soviets,” 3 November 1973, III Instalment, Papers of P.N. Haksar, NMML.

<sup>190</sup> *Record of talks between D.P. Dhar, N.P. Firyubin on September 21, 1972 in Moscow. N.I. Pegov, N.I. Smirnov (deputy chief of south Asia division), A.K. Damodaran (charge d’affaires and Mr. S.V. Purushottam)*

<sup>191</sup> “Planning Minister’s notes to Prime Minister regarding his discussions with the Soviets,” 9 October 1974, III Instalment, Papers of P.N. Haksar, NMML.

<sup>192</sup> Singh, *The Yogi and the Bear*, 101.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

matter of planning so that in certain identified areas production and supplies could be planned for mutual benefit of the two countries. There would be advantage in India having some kind of contact with the socialist economic community. <...> He [Kosygin] was sure that socialist countries would support the idea of India having some contact with COMECON.”<sup>194</sup> D.P. Dhar, “the partisan of Indo-Soviet relations,” in the years following the treaty worked to encourage closer Indo-Soviet economic cooperation but his premature death in 1975 halted ambitions plans to merge the economies of the two countries.

### *Crises*

After the landslide victory in 1971 and the Bangladesh War, Indira Gandhi consolidated her hegemony over Indian politics. The Communist Party of India that immediately after the split of the Congress had been crucial for Prime Minister to strengthen her position, after the events of 1971 became somewhat less relevant, but the party met the same fate as another important actor of the Indian political stage. The CFSA inside the Congress, whose 10-Point Economic programme and “radical” slogans were successfully dispossessed by Indira Gandhi in her bid for power in 1969, was facing some serious hardships. Certain sections of the Congress, especially elder Congressmen like Bibhuti Mishra, Panchanan Misra and P. Parthasarty were concerned about growing infiltration of ex-CPI into the party using above-mentioned Forum as a principal channel.<sup>195</sup> In May 1972, these Congressmen created little known and short-lived Nehru Study Forum (NSF), whose goal was to “study and explain the meaning of Nehru’s philosophy” and program of “democracy, democratic socialism meaning thereby Planned development of the Indian society within the framework of the Indian Constitution, Secularism and Non-Violence.”<sup>196</sup> In order not to avoid any comparison with the ill-famed Syndicate, the NSF immediately proclaimed that it was against monopolists, right reactionaries and pseudo socialists.<sup>197</sup> Nehru Forum’s Congressmen suspected ex-CPI members inside the party of

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<sup>194</sup> “Record of the conversation with Kosygin, General Kulikov, Chief of the General Staff and 1<sup>st</sup> Deputy Defence Minister of USSR and Mr. N.P. Firyubin, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs,” October 22, 1972, III instalment, subject no. 268, The Papers of P.N. Haksar, NMML.

<sup>195</sup> Awana, *Pressure Politics in Congress Party*, 302–303.

<sup>196</sup> Quoted. in Frankel, *India’s Political Economy*, 480.

<sup>197</sup> Awana, *Pressure Politics in Congress Party*, 305.

maintaining close links with those committed to a “foreign type of scientific socialism.” Another fear was that the CFSA activities could have fomented popular discontent leading to chaos, which likely could have been resolved only by resorting to “Marxist methods.” According to some Congressmen, India was deviating from the path of “democratic socialism” and slowly turning into a dictatorship with “a Marxist left orientation of the kind seen in other countries.”<sup>198</sup> In the end, the CFSA was accused of being a party within a party. The quibbles between the two groups were often turning into heated spats as Nehru Forum expressed that “those not belonging to the CFSA were in no way less progressive but their only fault was that they did not want the Congress to function according to the demands of the CPI that was mainly pushing India into the Soviet orbit.”<sup>199</sup> Earlier the CFSA had given the opponent to understand that “another purge in the Congress would be necessary to weed out reactionary and communal elements.”<sup>200</sup> Publicly, I. Gandhi maintained distance from both pressure groups, but privately, she told the prominent members of the CFSA that it was unnecessary to have a separate “socialist” forum, since the Congress split had already allowed the party to get rid of all uncommitted “socialists.”<sup>201</sup> The verbal fights between the forums threatened to cause a confrontation that could have turned into another dramatic split for the Congress. In April 1973, the issue of the legitimate existence of both forums was raised in the Executive Committee of the Congress Party in Parliament.<sup>202</sup> In the end, the CFSA was disbanded, while the Nehru Forum, its main purpose achieved, was dissolved too.<sup>203</sup> However, the divisions and the ideological cleavages remained for a long time since both groups started to function as informal caucuses paralyzing the party organization and inevitably favouring the growing authoritarian tendencies of Mrs. Gandhi’s leadership.

In the aftermath of the Bangladesh War Indira Gandhi started to face a growing internal opposition to her rule. Post 1971 witnessed what political scientist Frankel called the “double crisis” of economic stagnation and political instability. Although the opposition had cheered the Indian victory in the Bangladesh Liberation war, the dissatisfaction with the ruling party and its leader started to grow. After the split of the Congress Party in

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<sup>198</sup> Interview of F. Frankel with a founding member of the Nehru Study Forum in Frankel, *India’s Political Economy*, 480.

<sup>199</sup> *Indian Express*, March 28, 1973.

<sup>200</sup> Awana, *Pressure Politics in Congress Party*, 309.

<sup>201</sup> Frankel, *India’s Political Economy*, 481.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> Awana, *Pressure Politics in Congress Party*, 316–317.

1969, Indira Gandhi had started to pick loyal candidates for key positions in state administration and institutions. Moreover, the Congress continued to be eroded by rampant corruption. Unlike her father who had not favoured dynastic succession pattern in politics, I. Gandhi seemed not to possess any scruples in this regard. Her younger son Sanjay was quickly climbing to power supported by his mother. Even P.N. Haksar had advised the PM to keep away from her son's doings, an advice that costed him a privileged place he had at the Prime Minister's Secretariat. Other disturbing tendencies were present as the central government's desire to control the judiciary by appointing a new chief justice of the Supreme Court, not regarding the well-established tradition to appoint the most senior member of the bench. Previously, the Supreme Court had challenged a Parliament's attempt to amend the constitution. Mohan Kumaramangalam, who coined the "Kumanramangalam's thesis" and after the 1971 elections became the Minister of Steel and Heavy Engineering, defended I. Gandhi's decision by stating that the government in order to ensure stability had to take into account judge's political orientation and attitude to life.<sup>204</sup> The fact that an ex-CPI turned Congressman and not the Minister of Law had to defend the Prime Minister caused a lot of public outcry.

At first glance at least, it seemed that India was making a steady progress in the economy that was growing by 3-4 percent per year; the output of the industrial sector increased by some 250 percent, pushed by heavy industry rather than consumer goods thanks to augmented infrastructures and facilities. The Green Revolution, initiated by Shastri and continued by Mrs. Gandhi, started to bore its fruits. In some areas, agricultural production increased significantly supplied by new irrigation systems, reservoirs and channels.<sup>205</sup> However, the Green Revolution touched only one tenth of the districts of rural India and in the most regions, agriculture was still rain-fed and susceptible to severe droughts and flooding so frequent in the country. On the whole, despite the growth of industries and agricultural production, the majority of Indian countryside remained destitute. The situation in urban centres was at least as bad as in the countryside and almost a half of urban population lived in absolute poverty.<sup>206</sup> Therefore, the conditions for perfect storm were present. The divided opposition expressed louder its frustrations and doubts about

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<sup>204</sup> Frank, *Indira*, 354.

<sup>205</sup> Guha, *India after Gandhi*, 467.

<sup>206</sup> "Poverty in India: Measurement and Amelioration." in Vadilal Dagli, ed., *Twenty-Five Years of Independence – A Survey of Indian Economy* (Bombay: Vora and Co., 1973).

the functioning of parliamentary democracy, and launched a mass movement against I. Gandhi's government led by socialist and political activist Jayaprakash Narayan.

In May 1974, at Pokhran Test Range in the desert of Rajasthan India conducted its first successful nuclear bomb test. As predicted, the explosion of the nuclear device received praises from the entire Indian political spectrum and for a while, was instrumental in diverting the country's attention away from ailing economy and political unrest. Indian government called the test PNE (peaceful nuclear explosion) but abroad it was not welcomed warmly. Not surprisingly, Pakistan reacted fiercely and contended that the test shifted the balance of power and the whole dynamics of strained Indo-Pakistan relations. The Soviet Union did not condemn the Indian test even though it had earlier pressured India to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty and shared American non-proliferation objectives. The Soviet press plainly praised Indira Gandhi's firmness to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.<sup>207</sup> Around the mid-1970s, the Soviet Union and India had closely knit relations especially in economic and cultural fields but a few signs of a temporary setback were evident. In October 1974, D.P. Dhar wrote:

On the eve of departure for Moscow, I saw the Foreign Secretary to acquaint myself with the general thinking of the Ministry of External Affairs on the Indo-Soviet relations. Foreign secretary was rather perturbed over what he described as the almost total breakdown in the dialogue between India and the Soviet Union. <...> He said [that] there are no meetings even at Firyubin [Soviet diplomat] level, leave alone any contacts at a higher level. He said that it was important to remedy the situation. <...> I felt that the general atmosphere, while decidedly not unfriendly, was marked by a certain coolness and reserve.<sup>208</sup>

Naturally, Dhar was asking himself how this state of affairs had developed. He provided a detailed explanation: "A rather facile explanation, popular in some circles, is that the present ambassador is not doing his job as well as he should. <...> At present, he does not have access to the top echelons of the Soviet leadership. <...> It would be grossly unfair, to look for all the blame on our side. <...> The new man has perhaps spent more time in Moscow than in Delhi since he took charge of his office."<sup>209</sup> Viktor Malstev succeeded Nikolai Pegov, the Soviet ambassador who had been heartily appreciated in

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<sup>207</sup> Singh, *The Yogi and the Bear*, 125.

<sup>208</sup> "Planning Ministers notes regarding to Prime Minister regarding his discussions with Soviets," October 9, 1974, III Instalment, no. 269, The papers of P.N. Haksar, NMML.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

India for his active engagement in the promotion of Indo-Soviet relations in the crucial period from 1967 to 1973. According to Indian officials, Malstev was quite neglectful towards his duties in India. Dhar proceeded: "His [Maltsev's] second in command in Delhi is not exactly a very understanding kind of man. The Delhi end of the communication line has remained virtually unmanned for a considerable period. I do not think it would be fair on the part of the Russians to turn round and say that they are not being kept in touch with developments here."<sup>210</sup> In fact, India was disappointed that a man who did not seem to have any considerable interest in India was the substitute of precious and esteemed Pegov. However, there could have been other reasons behind the setback as Dhar wrote:

Have our policies, as it is suggested, particularly in the pro-Soviet Left quarters, led to misunderstanding about our true intentions? Specifically, is there any reason to think that our policies towards USA, Iran and China have contributed to the cooling of relations? Also, has the Left interpretation of the so-called rightward shift in Government's policies created any doubts in the minds of the Soviet leadership? <...> But the Soviet leaders know very well that in trying to improve state to state relations with China, India would not do anything against Soviet interests. <...> About our relations with USA, the USSR feels assured that as long as the Prime Minister is leading India, the Nehru path of independent foreign policy would not be abandoned. Although they might be irked by rather flamboyant style of our Embassy in Washington courting Dr. Kissinger, I do not think they have any manner of doubt regarding our basic position. <...> One can be certain that so called rightward shift does not bother them. They do not take such wild allegations at their face value. They are hard boiled realists and compromises with ideological purity are strewn all over their post-revolutionary history.<sup>211</sup>

Iran, a traditional ally of Pakistan and until 1979 anti-Communist and pro-American power was not looked upon with a friendly eye by Moscow. Either India was uneasy about close Iran-Pakistan relations that in the mid-1970s had been improving. However, I. Gandhi who buttressed the international prestige of her country was determined to change the dynamics of Indo-Iranian relations too. The ice was broken: the 1974 with a successful meeting between Iranian and Indian officials and Indira Gandhi's state visit to

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

the country.<sup>212</sup> The first oil crisis of 1973 had had devastating effects on the Indian economy, but at the beginning of 1974, India managed to secure an oil pact with Iran.<sup>213</sup> In addition, the timid signs of some improvements in Indo-American relations were visible. After conducting its first nuclear explosion, India insisted that it was not an offensive move directed against any country and stated that India was determined to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes only. The USA, like the majority of Western powers, opposed the test, but in the end concluded that India did not violate any agreement.<sup>214</sup> T.N. Kaul who now was Ambassador to the United States had an extensive and steady correspondence with Henry Kissinger who visited India in October and did not contradict India's narrative of "peaceful intentions."<sup>215</sup> Lastly, since the end of the 1960s, India had been making peace overtures to China which at last were accepted. In 1976, India announced that it was sending an ambassador to China, which in turn assured that it would send its emissary to India too. These international developments regarding India could have affected the Soviet stance towards the long-time ally but Dhar dismissed such probability.

As far as domestic politics were concerned, India politics became polarized as ever and not less confusing. Plunging economy was constraining Prime Minister to deviate from "socialist" course and make some concessions to economic liberalisation and foreign investment. The "rightward shift" was damaging the carefully created image of "socialist" Indira Gandhi who tried to regain some reliability by imposing ceilings on urban land ownership but an opposition parties united front had been gripping the whole country in a chain of strikes, demonstrations and riots with the sole objective to oust the prime minister. During this disquieted period, the CPI remained loyal to Indira Gandhi and shared each point of her political agenda. Because of the presence of Hindu extremists in Jayaprakash's movement, Indira Gandhi started to discredit the protesters using slogans like "Save Democracy" and "Defeat fascists", while the Soviet press helpfully dubbed opposition movement as "reactionary."<sup>216</sup> In public, Indira Gandhi viewed this popular unrest like a temporary phenomenon caused by the country's economic crisis. In response

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<sup>212</sup> Farah Naaz, "Indo-Iranian Relations 1947-2000," *Strategic Analysis* 24, no. 10 (January 2001).

<sup>213</sup> Singh, *The Yogi and the Bear*, 117.

<sup>214</sup> George Perkovich, *India's nuclear bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 183–186.

<sup>215</sup> Singh, *The Yogi and the Bear*, 124.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

to these pressures, Indira Gandhi decided not to resign but declared the state of Internal Emergency in the night of June 25, 1975. The main political opponents and thousands of protesters were arrested, citizen rights suspended and the censorship of the press was imposed. The “time tested friend” Soviet Union fully approved of the emergency and measures taken. The Soviet press even speculated that the opposition movement was aimed at destroying “India’s traditional friendship with the socialist world.”<sup>217</sup> In 1949, India declared itself a “democratic” and “sovereign” republic. In 1976, during the Emergency, the “secular” and “socialist” attributes were added to the preamble of Indian Constitution.

Intellectuals at home and abroad denounced the state of Emergency and vilified Indira Gandhi, especially in the West. Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci, who had interviewed Indira Gandhi in 1972, after the proclamation of Emergency, published an article where she revealed some unreported comments of the Indian leader after the interview. Fallaci recalled: “I rose to take leave and <...> Indira said she’d leave too. We walked along the deserted corridors talking <...>. But when we reached the outer door, she fell silent. An aged beggar, lying in a heap of rags, was asleep on the pavement. Beside him, a cow was evacuating its bowels, soiling him with excrement. <...> I murmured: “Things certainly do move a bit slowly in India.” I had barely uttered the words when five steely fingers gripped my arm and an icy voice retorted: “What do you want me to do? I’m surrounded by a bunch of idiots. And democracy...”<sup>218</sup> For those who followed more cautiously the political career of Indira Gandhi the disclosure of Fallaci should not have been that surprising.

Long before the proclamation of Emergency, I. Gandhi had showed her impatience with the functioning parliamentary democracy. In fact, already after the Congress split, some disturbing tendencies of I. Gandhi’s leadership became evident. Journalist Inder Malhotra wrote: “As Indira’s power grew, the political culture got increasingly transformed into the ‘courtier culture’. <...> Ministers anxious to ingratiate themselves with Indira started ‘passing the buck to the boss’ through the Prime Minister’s secretariat instead of discharging their own assigned responsibilities. Bureaucrats took their cue from their political masters. The power centre in the world’s largest democracy was slowly turning

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Oriana Fallaci, “Indira’s Coup,” *The New York Review*, September 18, 1975.

into a *darbar*.”<sup>219</sup> The “idiots” who surrounded Indira Gandhi and hindered the implementation of “progressive measures” were to be contrasted by her own trustworthy men because the “personal” element was crucial in her leadership style. At first, her old Kashmiri friends, the “Kashmiri mafia”, encircled the inexperienced PM and often this “kitchen cabinet” had more power than the official cabinet. Thus, trusty bureaucrats and government officials were installed in the key posts, paving the way for the centralization of power of the Prime Minister. The most faithful elements of the Congress Forum for Socialist Action, namely ex-CPI turned Congressmen, were rewarded for their allegiance by making them government ministers. Even among the ex-CPIs, there were close friends of the Prime Minister. On 31 May 1973, Mohan Kumaramangalam died in a plane crash. His death was a personal blow to I. Gandhi as Kumaramangalam was a dear friend of her late husband Feroze Gandhi. She described him: “While in Cambridge he fell for the “idealism” of the Communist Party. Except for an intense concern for people and a desire to give, he wasn’t a political person. <...> After the last parliamentary elections I took him into the Cabinet to clean up the mess that was our steel production. <...> Quick of mind, eloquent, hard-working—these qualities were combined with total loyalty and dedication.”<sup>220</sup>

When Indira Gandhi ended Emergency quite unexpectedly in March, 1977, fresh elections were called in. The results were disastrous for Indira Gandhi and her Congress. She was not even elected while her Congress showed poorly especially in the Northern States of India that had suffered the bulk of emergency excesses such as forced sterilizations or slum demolitions. The new Janata government tried to reverse India’s pro-Soviet foreign policy line, but in the end concluded that given the long-standing amity, military and economic links, to change the pro-Soviet line in Indian politics would be too risky. Despite the flirt of Janata government with the Soviets, Indira Gandhi started to accuse the new government and the rival Congress (O) of being in West’s pocket and anti-Soviet in its very nature, stressing that only her party-led government was undoubtedly the only true friend of Soviet Union. After her overthrow, Indira Gandhi wrote a very emotional letter to L. Brezhnev. The letter was handed to the daughter of S.A. Dange, Roza Deshpande who delivered it to the Soviet leader. She wrote:

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<sup>219</sup> *Darbar* – the court of an Indian ruler.

Malhotra, *Indira Gandhi*, 126.

<sup>220</sup> Norman, *Letters to an American Friend*, 145–146.  
Letter, June 3, 1973.

Those who speak of socialism or leftism are not necessarily friends of Soviet Union. <...> I have been aware of conspiracy of the CIA against my father and me for many years. Other Heads of State have spoken to me from time to time. <...> The Machiavellian touch was to spread the rumour that I was discarding my progressive policies and my friendship with the Soviet Union. Nothing could be farther from truth. For my beliefs and friendships are not according to position or opportunity but are based on certain deeply felt values. <...> Only my party, the Congress, is in a position to give effective opposition to the Janata party and to resist wrong policies. It is a pity that in these circumstances some of the CPI leaders have chosen to support the other group in the Congress, which is working closely with Janata party. Thus inspite of some leaders speeches criticising some aspects of Janata's policies the CPI as a whole seems to be inadvertently lending support to Janata and hence reactionary policies. <...> My party and I remain firmly committed to friendship with all progressive nations amongst which the Soviet Union is the most prominent. I have warm regard for the leadership of the Soviet Union for they have had to fight long and hard not just for the advancement of their country but even for survival in the midst of hostility.<sup>221</sup>

This letter could seem a desperate cry for Soviet support, which as the future events will show, was swaying away from Indira Gandhi. Besides, in the same period the CPI was actively reconsidering its former pro-Indira Gandhi tactical line. Indira Gandhi returned to power in 1980 but cooling relations with both the Soviet Union and the CPI marked her last mandate. In the 1980s, Indira Gandhi, chagrined by her allies' unresponsiveness, tried to push into a corner both the USSR and the CPI by means of the well-developed Indo-Soviet cultural front.

The era of Indira Gandhi profoundly marked the history of independent India and led to paradoxical outcomes. On the home front, I. Gandhi's style of conducting politics and massive centralization of power weakened India's democratic institutions. Internationally, however, India's standing improved. Political scientist S. Mansingh even talked about the emergence of so-called "Indira Doctrine" that opposed the presence of external powers in the Indian Ocean or South Asia. However, even if India led by I. Gandhi strengthened its international position and prestige, the doctrine remained more

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<sup>221</sup> "Correspondence Indira Gandhi," Instalment I, subject no. 58, The Papers of S.A. Dange, NMML.

an aspiration, not a reality.<sup>222</sup> On both domestic and international fronts in the Indira Gandhi years, the Soviet Union played an important role for India. As argued in this chapter, Indira Gandhi shrewdly used the groups that advocated closer ties with the Soviet Union such as Congress Forum for Socialist Action or the Communist Party of India for her advantage dispossessing them of their “radical” slogans and eventually taking complete control of Indo-Soviet relations into her hands. Besides, Bangladesh War that placed the Indian PM at the pinnacle of glory and power was won with the Soviet Union’s political and military support. In conclusion, both international factors such as Sino-Soviet split and USA-Pakistan-China triangle as well as domestic ones such as initially unstable PM’s position that was eventually strengthened by the support from the groups leaning towards the Soviet Union highly contributed to the consolidation of Indo-Soviet strategic partnership.

For the majority of those who have lived in the Indira Gandhi era in the USSR and India alike, the Indo-Soviet connection became the symbol of the whole period. Hardly it could have been otherwise as the bombastic celebrations of the friendship were seen everywhere: in the TV broadcasts, movies, books or newspapers. In 1974, the tireless promoter of Indo-Soviet friendship D.P. Dhar outlined to Indira Gandhi the importance of Indo-Soviet cultural relations: “It is important that the contacts at unofficial level should be improved qualitatively and quantitatively. A number of institutions in the USSR are now engaged in studies of economic political and sociological subjects relating to the outside world. They have special interest in South Asia. Our scholars, intellectuals and artists have to interact with their counterparts in a much more lively manner than in the past. Social sciences have begun to flower again in the Soviet Union after a long period of stagnation. This opportunity should not be missed.”<sup>223</sup> The last chapter will be dedicated to the cultural dimension of Indo-Soviet relations and will discuss their impact on Indian and Soviet people alike.

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<sup>222</sup> Mansingh, “Indira Gandhi’s Foreign Policy,” 109–110.

<sup>223</sup> “Planning Ministers notes regarding to Prime Minister regarding his discussions with Soviets,” October 9, 1974, III Instalment, no. 269, The Papers of P.N. Haksar, NMML.

#### 4. Indo-Soviet cultural diplomacy

For boys like me, in north Indian railway towns in the '70s and '80s, where nothing much happened apart from the arrival and departure of trains from big cities, the Soviet Union alone appeared to promise an escape from our limited, dusty world. <...> On hellishly hot days, I imagined myself walking along snowbound Nevsky Prospekt in an overcoat. On other days, I saw myself studying to become an engineer in Leningrad and then settling down with one of the pretty Young Pioneers in Turkmen costume and helping to boost production levels in a little corner of that vast land. As I grew older, this fantasy even seemed possible to realize.<sup>1</sup>

The last chapter will focus on the concrete manifestations of Indo-Soviet cultural relations. The chapter 4 is divided into four sections. The first section will examine the history of the influential, but little known Indo-Soviet Cultural Society (ISCUS) and will reconstruct an episode when Indira Gandhi, frustrated by the lack of support from both the CPI and the USSR, decided to break the hold of the ISCUS over Indo-Soviet relations. In the 1950s, the Soviet Union's newly found internationalism was manifested at its best in the Global South and in its engagements with the Third World intellectuals. The second section of the chapter will address the agency of Indian intellectuals within the Soviet-sponsored international organizations. The Soviet Union's ambition to spread its culture and view of the world assumed a very tangible form of foreign-language publishing initiatives. In India, the Soviet books and magazines found fertile ground as in the 1970s, the country became the largest consumer of Soviet printed production outside the socialist block. The third section of the chapter will investigate this widespread and intricate form of Indo-Soviet cultural relations. The final section will provide a discussion of Indo-Soviet cinematic co-productions, the export of Indian movies to the Soviet Union and the little known Tashkent Film Festival where India was a fixed guest.

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<sup>1</sup> Pankaj Mishra, "The East was Read" in *The East Was Read*, ed. Vijay Prashad (New Delhi: LeftWord, 2019).

#### 4.1. Indo-Soviet friendship societies

American diplomat George Kennan in his famous Long Telegram distinguished two types of the Soviet conduct of foreign affairs, the official one and “subterranean” or covert. He even predicted that in the near future, the Soviets would put substantial resources in strengthening cultural links with other countries. After Stalin’s death, the USSR resumed cultural ties with the West disrupted by the war and virtual isolation of the country, but very soon its attention riveted on the developing countries where eventually the Soviet state concentrated its cultural operations.

In the late 1920s, cultural activities abroad had helped the Soviet Union to overcome diplomatic isolation and crucial in accomplishing this task was the Soviet cultural body VOKS. However, the VOKS itself used the methods that had been previously defined in the early 1920s by the Workers International Relief (WIR) created in response to famine ravaging Soviet Russia. The WIR gathered funds, distributed informational material, organized tours by Soviet artists and scientists, conferences attended by foreigners, imported and even produced films. The WIR set a precedent and invented an operational mode of “cultural” Soviet front organizations. The WIR had numerous local affiliates, the bulk of them were the so-called friendship societies claiming their non-partiality and avoiding in any way to expose their funder and patron, the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, already then, these organization attracted suspicion in their hosting countries and increasingly started to be accused of being Soviet “fifth column” especially in the West where at first the Soviets had begun to operate.

The Friends of Soviet Russia (FSR) was the first in the row of friendship societies and was founded in 1921 in the USA. In the early 1920s, the FSR and similar organizations identified themselves with the working class, as the Bolshevik leaders believed that the support for the Soviet Russia at first would come from the “toiling masses”.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the friendship societies were closely connected not only to the national communist parties but also to apparently “neutral” workers organizations. This mode of operation was in line with the official Soviet strategy to transform “each and every non-Party organization

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<sup>1</sup> Louis Nemzer, “The Soviet Friendship Societies,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 13, no. 2, (Summer 1949): 265–266.

of the working class into an auxiliary body and transmission belt linking the Party with the working class.”<sup>2</sup> However, this appeal to the proletariat alone, though proved effective in the short-run, eventually became almost indistinguishable from the activities and rhetoric of the Communist parties and in consequence drew too much suspicion from the Western governments. The VOKS, successor of the IWA, moved in another direction and managed to reach considerable success in the late 1920s targeting the intelligentsia and the middle classes instead. However, in the 1930s, this well-developed network of cultural associations sympathetic to the Soviet Union reduced and became less effective in promoting Soviet foreign policy goals. This operational halt was due to the internal developments inside the USSR when Stalin’s state apparatus was busy in eliminating real and imaginary enemies of the new regime. The Soviet society became increasingly closed and the country greatly reduced its contacts with the wider world. However, the friendship societies renewed and re-emerged with vigour during the Second World War.<sup>3</sup> Already this period witnessed the foundation of Soviet friendship societies in the developing world.

The Indo-Soviet Cultural Society was founded in 1941 in Bengal under the name of All-India Friends of the Soviet Union (AIFSU). The aim of the organization that closely collaborated with Soviet VOKS was “to establish cultural contact between Soviet and Indian people.” The AIFSU became a national organization when its first Congress was held in Bombay in 1944. The participation of prominent non-Communist personalities like Sarojini Naidu, a renowned nationalist, and Jawaharlal Nehru’s sister Vijayalakshmi Pandit lend prestige to the event and organizers. Nevertheless, since its foundation the real control of the AIFSU was in the hands of the Communist Party of India (CPI).<sup>4</sup> Quite soon, the organization lost ground among its non-communist supporters, supposedly because of the general anti-communist feeling that diffused after the CPI has declared its opposition to the Quit India movement but in the early 1950s, the organization reinvigorated as the Soviet opening to the world and the “peace offensive” initiated, meaning more funds and attention to the friendship societies. In February 1952, a preparatory committee for an Indo-Soviet Festival and Convention was formed in Bombay. The convention took place on March 12, 1952 and was attended by a Soviet

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<sup>2</sup> Joseph Stalin, *Problems of Leninism* (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1940), 78.

<sup>3</sup> Especially after 1941 when Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union.

<sup>4</sup> Gene D. Overstreet and Marshall Windmiller, *Communism in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), 408.

delegation led by the Russian writer Nikolai Tikhonov, who had been the chair of the Union of Soviet Writers in the 1940s. From this convention emerged the reformed Indo-Soviet Cultural Society (ISCUS).<sup>5</sup> A.V. Baliga, a prominent physician close to Jawaharlal Nehru, became new chairman and S. Mahmuduzzafar, a veteran CPI member, the general secretary of the organization. The second conference of the ISCUS was held in Delhi in 1954. During the first two years of its existence, the ISCUS established its branches in the major Indian cities like Delhi, Calcutta and Bombay. Indo-Soviet Cultural Society published journals and books, organized symposiums, conferences, exhibitions, film screenings all-over India in collaboration with its Soviet counterpart, Soviet-Indian Friendship Society. Unlike the predecessor AIFSU, the ISCUS during the first years of its existence was unable to attract any persons of prominence in India, leading to the supposition that Indian political elite did not look with a friendly eye at the association. Most probably, from the Indian political figures' side, a direct association with the CPI-controlled ISCUS that promoted Indo-Soviet friendship in the years when India was actively claiming its independence in the foreign affairs would have been considered inappropriate. The 1955 was a watershed year for Indo-Soviet relations as well as for the Indo-Soviet Cultural Society. During Khrushchev's tour in India in 1955, the Society sponsored a dinner attended by Soviet and Indian dignitaries.<sup>6</sup> The press covered the event that did not only enhanced the prestige of the ISCUS but brought its name to wider Indian public. For the first time, the Society had an opportunity to portray the Soviet Union in a good light not only for those few who used to attend the events of the ISCUS before. Between 1954 and 1957 alone, nearly 200 Indian delegations of engineers, artists and scholars visited the Soviet Union. Then, a central element of this cultural exchange was Indian cinema, since it was enthusiastically received by the Soviet public. The significant push for Indo-Soviet cultural relations was the Indo-Soviet Cultural Ties agreement signed on February 12, 1960. The agreement formalized already operative cultural, scientific and academic exchange and expressed the will to establish direct bilateral ties between Soviet and Indian universities.<sup>7</sup> Indo-Soviet commission, created to examine the realization of the agreement, worked according to a two-year plan of activities.<sup>8</sup> The cultural and scientific programmes established the precise guidelines for the exchange

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 409.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 410.

<sup>7</sup> *Pravda*, February 13, 1960.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

between Soviet and Indian sides. These developments on Indo-Soviet cultural front were closely followed in the United States. *The New York Times* highlighted that Indo-Soviet cultural exchange was already active, but to the date, no formal cultural agreement existed between the two countries. Frol Kozlov, the second secretary of the CPSU, and Kliment Voroshilov, Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, led Soviet delegation to India and after the signing of the cultural agreement, Kozlov issued a communique that also hinted about a future increase of Soviet economic aid to India. *The New York Times* bitterly remarked that although the USA had already granted to India three times more aid than the USSR did, only latter's officials were received with open arms in India.<sup>9</sup> For the USA, it became clear that the Soviets were opening a new cultural front in the developing world.

In 1965, the CIA issued a report *Communist Cultural and Propaganda Activities in the less developed world*. The document highlighted that “the signing of a cultural agreement often is the first important Communist step in establishing a presence in a less developed country.”<sup>10</sup> In India's case, Bhilai steel plan and few trade agreements had preceded the signing of the 1960's cultural accord. However, even if the mid-1950s had witnessed significant Soviet efforts to gain India's favour, the early 1960s brought qualitative and quantitative leap in Indo-Soviet relations owing to the circumstances analysed in the previous chapter. The CIA report elaborated on the Soviet cultural agreements' mode of functioning: “Cultural agreements are phrased in broad terms and refer to planned exchanges by general categories of activities. The annual protocols, however, describe in great detail the exchanges to be undertaken. Most cultural agreements provide for exchanges of delegations, performing troupes, exhibits, publications, films, and teachers and specialists in various fields. Many make available scholarships for study in Communist countries and call for cooperation in radio, television, and newspapers activities. The agreements and protocols are drawn up to give the appearance of full reciprocity and balanced exchanges.”<sup>11</sup> The document accurately individuated the main characteristics of Soviet cultural agreements, their attention to details and always persistently stated reciprocity and equality between two contracting parties. Equality ever

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<sup>9</sup> Paul Grimmesspecial, “India to Sign Pact For Cultural Ties With Soviet Union,” *New York Times*, February 6, 1960.

<sup>10</sup> “Communist Cultural and Propaganda Activities in the less developed countries,” CIA Electronic Reading Room, accessed 1 December, 2021, [https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/DOC\\_0000313542.pdf](https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000313542.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

had a special place in the Indo-Soviet agreements. They were usually filled with formulas asserting the equal standing of the both parties, a significant detail for a country as India that had emerged from the colonial subjugation.

The expansion of institutionalized cultural relations gave new impetus to the Indo-Soviet Cultural Society as various governmental and diplomatic figures started to take an active interest in its activities. In order to function more effectively, the association was organized into the following committees: Committees for Russian Language Training, Higher Education, the Promotion of Mutual Understanding, Films and Exhibitions, Committee of Authors, Lecture Committee, Literature Service and Publishing Committee.<sup>12</sup> Each of these bodies had a very specific task, for instance: Literature Service provided Soviet literature to interested public, Committee for the Promotion of Mutual Understanding supervised the execution of the Indo-Soviet cultural agreement, and Committee for Higher Education issued grants and invited Indian students to study in the Soviet Union. For example, Arun Som, a Bengali translator who worked in Moscow for Soviet *Progress Publishing House*, had gone to study Russian language to Moscow State University aided by the ISCUS. He recalled that after a one-year language course, he as other Indian students of Russian, once back to India, was obliged to teach the language for two years at the local branches of the ISCUS.<sup>13</sup> Publishing Committee, as the name suggests, concerned the ISCUS's publishing activities. The Society issued three periodicals *Amity*, a quarterly magazine in English, *Sahajati* in Bengali and a fortnightly ISCUS bulletin in English.<sup>14</sup> However, as will be discussed later, the share of ISCUS publishing activities was very small compared to the amount of periodicals published in various Indian vernaculars by the Information Department of the Embassy of the Soviet Union to India.

In March 1965, the annual conference of ISCUS took place in Ludhiana, in the state of Punjab. On the occasion, K.P.S. Menon, former Indian ambassador to the Soviet Union, was elected as President of the ISCUS and T.N. Kaul, the current ambassador and close associate of Indira Gandhi, as Vice-President. By the mid-1960s, Indo-Soviet cultural relations were already highly institutionalized, plus Indo-Soviet cooperation in all fields

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<sup>13</sup> Interview with Arun Som, "Bollywood and Bolsheviks," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5uM5aA1sT3k>

<sup>14</sup> Peter Sager, *Moscow's hand in India: an analysis of Soviet propaganda* (Berne: Swiss Eastern Institute, 1966), 170.

was steadily increasing and thus, Indian politicians got actively involved with the ISCUS that had direct contacts with Moscow. In the years of I. Gandhi her closest advisors like P.N. Haksar, P.N. Dhar, T.N. Kaul as well as members of parliament, government and of the most important Indian universities participated in the activities of the ISCUS. Indira Gandhi herself occasionally delivered opening addresses to its conferences.<sup>15</sup> Later in 1972, Congress socialist Chandra Sekhar suggested that the ex-members of the CPI were using the Soviet sponsored cultural organizations to achieve their well-defined end, that is, to infiltrate Indian government and eventually take control of the Congress party. Generally, in the 1970s and 1980s, the ISCUS became a sort of extension to Indian politics that mirrored complex dynamics at work within Congress-CPI-Soviet Union relations.

The 1965's CIA report identified the establishment of friendship societies and cultural centres as the most employed Soviet technique to develop closer relations with a certain country. Most importantly, this document shed light on the financial functioning of the Soviet cultural associations: "The annual expenditures of a friendship society may range from several thousand dollars to as much as a million dollars, depending on the scope of activities, the size of membership, and the priority ascribed by the Communists to the activities in the country concerned."<sup>16</sup> As discussed before, since the mid-1950s, India had started to figure very high in the Soviet strategic calculations and therefore, it is not surprising that the US report of the mid-1960s distinguished India as the country where the Soviet-sponsored friendship societies were the most active. The question arises how these associations were funded without drawing too much attention even if the extremely close Indo-Soviet relations in the 1970s could suggest that the ISCUS did not need to worry too much about hiding its source of income. But in the 1960s the situation was slightly different and the report tried to give an answer: "To conceal their involvement in the activities of the friendship societies and to avoid official objections, the Communists frequently resort to indirect methods of financing these organizations. <...> In 1964, the Indian-Soviet Cultural Society requested a donation of \$21,000 worth of records and stamps from the USSR to be sold in India to meet the current expenses of the Society. The USSR planned to augment the Society's 1964 fund drive with a goal of \$500,000 to \$1million by sending a cultural troupe to India and donating the proceeds from its

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<sup>15</sup> Rasheeduddin Khan, ed., *India and the Soviet Union: cooperation and development* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1975), xxxiii–xviii.

<sup>16</sup> "Communist Cultural and Propaganda Activities in the less developed countries," 9.

performances.”<sup>17</sup> Mohit Sen, Marxist intellectual and member of the Communist Party of India, confirmed that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union used to help the CPI materially. According to him, the most important channel to receive funds was the sale of books and magazines imported from the Soviet Union or printed by its affiliates in India. Besides, the CPI-run publishing houses and distribution centres used to receive loans from the USSR.<sup>18</sup> Clearly, some striking parallels could be drawn between the CPI’s funding mechanism and that of the Indo-Soviet Cultural Society described in the US report.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the relations between the CPI and ISCUS were often a subject of great interest as the Society, like its predecessor All-India Friends of the Soviet Union (AIFSU), was entirely controlled by the CPI. In 1965, during the annual conference of the association, a resolution was passed that set some goals such as to extend the network of the ISCUS, to draw more leftist elements of the Congress party and progressive intellectuals into the Society and eventually approved of Nehru’s ideals of peace and coexistence and encouraged collaboration with the CPI.<sup>19</sup> Precisely in this period, the Communist Party of India was reassessing its stance towards the ruling party, from its former adversity the CPI was moving towards collaboration with the Congress. By mid-1960s, the ISCUS, in order to clear its name of any suspicion, had been eager to attract the members with more neutral background with the purpose to become a more mainstream and “palatable” organization to a wider audiences. Simultaneously, former CPI’s members turned Congressmen started to fill the ranks of the Indian National Congress.

Mohit Sen, writing years later about his experience in the Indian communist movement, defended the Soviet-sponsored organizations like the ISCUS and similar, that according to him were not merely “global tourist agencies set up and financed by the Soviet Union”. He stressed that the ISCUS was not founded by the Communists but by Dr. Baliga, friend of Jawaharlal Nehru, and Aruna Asaf Ali, political activist and influential publisher. This fact is only partly true because, as argued before, several members of the CPI had actively participated in the founding of the ISCUS and Aruna Asaf Ali himself had had connection with the CPI. In the 1950s, A.A. Ali founded *Link* publishing house, a daily newspaper *Patriot* and a weekly *Link*, publications by Sen defined as “leftist, pro-Communist and

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>18</sup> Sen, *A traveller and the road*, 260.

<sup>19</sup> Sager, *Moscow’s hand in India*, 171.

pro-Congress.”<sup>20</sup> In 1940s, she had been member of Congress Socialist Party (CSP) while after independence, she drifted away from her old associate socialist J.P. Narayan who got engaged with the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), the US-funded rival of the ISCUS. In the 1950s, Aruna Asaf Ali started to work closely with the CPI. When asked what changed her former attitude towards the CPI, she replied that it was “reappraisal of the Soviet Union” and the conviction that the country was “a staunch anti-imperialist power and a true friend of India.”<sup>21</sup> In 1965, Aruna Asaf Ali was awarded Lenin Peace Prize, the Soviet equivalent of Nobel Prize.<sup>22</sup> At the beginning of Indira Gandhi’s premiership, the publications of Ali as well as those of the CPI fiercely attacked the new Prime Minister. In 1966, I. Gandhi wrote to T.N. Kaul: “As I told you long ago, Aruna and her group of newspapers have always been against me.”<sup>23</sup> Kaul referring to Ali suggested to Indira Gandhi to “keep in touch with her directly and not through intermediaries”, instructing his PM to “maintain direct and personal contacts with leaders of public opinion, both inside and outside the country.”<sup>24</sup> Later, Aruna Asaf Ali and Indira Gandhi reconciled and in the 1970s, Ali’s newspapers like the CPI became favourable to Prime Minister and her party.

Meanwhile, the ISCUS had become the most important channel to promote Indo-Soviet friendship and was actively used by the USSR, the CPI and the Congress Forum for Socialist Action. The Soviet propaganda movie for home consumption *Ot serdtsa k serdtsu/From heart to heart* (1976) lauded Indo-Soviet Society as “having prestige in India.” Brezhnev, who visited India during the Emergency, addressed a multitude of delegates coming from 1.5 thousand regional ISCUS branches. In his speech, Brezhnev once again celebrated Indo-Soviet friendship calling India a “true friend” and stressing that this friendship was “treasure of millions of [Soviet and Indian] people.”<sup>25</sup>

When Indira Gandhi fell from power in 1977, her staunchest supporter and the core of the ISCUS, the Communist Party of India, was reassessing its stance towards the ex-PM and the Congress Party. The Eleventh Congress of the Communist Party of India (1978) formalized anti-Indira Gandhi line and sought “a left and democratic alternative” with the

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<sup>20</sup> Sen, *A traveller and the road*, 304–305.

<sup>21</sup> Sen, *A traveller and the road*,

<sup>22</sup> *The Sumter Daily Item*, August 14, 1965,

<sup>23</sup> Correspondence Indira Gandhi, 25 April 1966, I instalment, no. 84, The Papers T.N. Kaul, NMML.

<sup>24</sup> Correspondence Indira Gandhi, 1 June 1966, I instalment, no. 93, The Papers T.N. Kaul, NMML.

<sup>25</sup> “Serdssem k serdtsu”, accessed March 17, 2021,

<https://www.net-film.ru/film-7850/>

CPI(M), the kindred party which had broken away from the CPI in 1964. The CPI pointed out that “far from isolating and suppressing right reactionary elements, the Emergency actually enabled them to exploit people’s discontent and grab the power through a popular mandate.”<sup>26</sup> The curious detail is that G.A. Aliev, a member of the Politburo, attended the Eleventh Congress of the party leading to speculations that the Soviets approved the new line. Already before 1978, two distinct perspectives of seeing the alliance with the Congress had manifested themselves within the Communist Party. In 1977, S.A. Dange, Chairman of the CPI and influential trade union leader, argued that there was no significant change in the government’s “progressive” policies. Another group led by Rajeshwara Rao, the Secretary of the Party, said that close Indo-Soviet relations are no longer a guarantee that the government would not turn its back to the CPI.<sup>27</sup> The same faction pointed out the need for unity with the split-away CPI(M).

The reasons of CPI’s departure from pro-Indira Gandhi line may have been both pragmatic and ideological. When Indira Gandhi proclaimed the emergency, the CPI was left untouched by central government’s political repressions and mass arrests. The CPI viewed the Emergency as “necessary and justified” and as a symptom of the sharpened ideological conflicts in the Indian society. During the emergency, the party tried to seize every opportunity to move closer to the Congress Party. In 1976, Mohit Sen was member of the CPI’s Central Executive Committee. At the moment, he believed that Congress-CPI unity became “stronger and more wide-ranging than at any time in the past.”<sup>28</sup> The same year the party membership increased significantly by 200,000 members.<sup>29</sup> However, the successes were short-lived as the results of the elections held after the end of Emergency proved disastrous for the party. The seats won in the parliament shrank from 23 to 7, the vote share from 4.89% in 1971 to meagre 2.82% in 1977.<sup>30</sup> Apart from electoral losses, even the pro-Congress line supporters could not have ignored certain internal developments within the ruling party. Sen noticed that certain anti-communist and reactionary trends inside the Congress.<sup>31</sup> During the Emergency, PM’s son Sanjay became extremely influential inside the Youth Congress, the façade for his political

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<sup>26</sup> Varkey Ouseph, “The CPI-Congress Alliance in India,” *Asian Survey* 19, no. 9 (1979): 881–895.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Mohit Sen, “Positive Trends Gaining the Upper Hand in India,” *World Marxist Review* (August 1976), 88.

<sup>29</sup> Ouseph, “CPI-Congress Alliance,” 884.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 891.

<sup>31</sup> Sen, “Positive Trends,” 90.

operations in New Delhi. To the CPI, Sanjay became a symbol of the rightist forces inside the country.

In August 1975, Sanjay was interviewed for the magazine *Surge*. The interview came as a bombshell because Sanjay unreservedly denounced his mother's government policies like nationalization and went as far as to proclaim that the public sector should be allowed to die a "natural death." Besides, he praised multinational corporations and big businesses overtly. He even expressed himself to be favourable to the removal of economic and government controls. Worse than that, he called his mother's ally CPI "the most corrupt people."<sup>32</sup> Indira Gandhi had not known about the interview until it was released. While waiting for her principal secretary P.N. Dhar, I. Gandhi scribbled a note: "Sanjay has made an exceedingly stupid statement about the Communists. At a most crucial and delicate time, we have not only grievously hurt those [the CPI] who have helped us and are now supporting us within the country, [but also] created serious problems with the entire Socialist Bloc. <...> I am terribly worried – it is the first time in years that I am really upset. How do we inform the USSR and others? What excuse do we find or concoct? Should I issue a statement?"<sup>33</sup> To stop the bleed, it was decided to withdraw the interview from *Surge* and all magazines and newspapers. Besides, Sanjay should have been convinced to "clarify" his positions towards the CPI and release a statement. The situation revealed how little control Indira Gandhi had over her own son who had built strong, anti-communist and anti-socialist power base inside the Congress. The CPI report of 1976 complained of an influx of reactionaries into the Youth Congress and indirectly accused some sections of Congress of breeding Sanjay as Indira Gandhi's heir following the most reactionary pattern of dynastic succession.<sup>34</sup> As far as Sanjay's rise was a sign of a true rightward shift inside the PM's party, it was not the sole problem affecting Congress-CPI relations.

By and by such continuous attacks on her son pushed Indira Gandhi to almost incomprehensible move. In late 1976, she chastised the CPI, accusing the party of collaboration with the British during Quit India movement and condemning party's former harsh evaluations of her father's government, that at the time were in line with the Soviet views on India. She passionately defended her son, proclaimed that Sanjay was a

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<sup>32</sup> Frank, *Indira*, 393.

<sup>33</sup> P.N. Dhar, *Indira Gandhi, The Emergency and Indian Democracy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press), 326–328.

<sup>34</sup> Report and Resolutions of the CEC, 1976.

“small fry” and the CPI’s attacks on him were definitely directed against her.<sup>35</sup> Consequentially, the CPI started to question the long-lasting pro-Indira Gandhi policy and two opposite views emerged. Dange’s one asked to keep on supporting I. Gandhi while the group led by Rajeshwara Rao deemed this political line disastrous for the party and eventually it came out victorious.

Glimpses of internal conflict inside the CPI could be caught in the correspondence between Rajeshwara Rao and S.A. Dange. The first episode of S.A. Dange’s “indiscipline” occurred few months before the Eleventh Congress of the CPI, where the new anti-Congress line was officially adopted. On 4 December 1977, S.A. Dange had delivered the speech at Krishna Menon memorial meeting in which expressed his view that “Indira Gandhi should be pardoned for all her sins” and expressed his support for her adding that he was “speaking in his personal capacity.” On the 22<sup>nd</sup>, one day before the party issued an official note condemning his actions, Dange sent his resignations from Chairmanship by telegram, justifying his action “on the grounds of health.”<sup>36</sup> R. Rao heatedly reminded S.A. Dange that his pro-Congress stance do not conform the Party’s policy and that he could not accept his resignations by telegram.<sup>37</sup> In the end, Dange remained in the party but the confusion regarding CPI’s line ensued when I. Gandhi called for fresh elections in 1977. On the one hand, the CPI still valued PM’s foreign policy as “progressive.” On the other, the party urged its voters to give a clear signal against government’s recent “reactionary” economic policies. But the party was not yet ready to move away from Indira Gandhi who, for the time being, had managed to cement an enduring friendship with the Soviet Union.

In 1979, the Janata government collapsed on various issues. It had failed to change India’s pro-Soviet foreign policy either. The Janata’s purpose to scrap Indo-Soviet treaty had not materialized and formally, the Soviet Union was still India’s most reliable international partner when Indira Gandhi came back to power the same year. However, during her last mandate, Indo-Soviet relations could not repeat their former achievements as coldness, and probably weariness, crept into a long cherished friendship. There were two main reasons for this change of both the internal and external status quo. The Soviet invasion

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<sup>35</sup> Ouseph, “CPI-Congress Alliance,” 886.

<sup>36</sup> “Papers relating to efforts towards left unity and S.A. Dange’s isolation in the CPI,” II Instalment, subject no. 48, the Papers of S.A. Dange, NMML.

<sup>37</sup> “Papers relating to the growth of serious differences within the Communist Party of India over the National situation and pro-Congress policy,” II Instalment, subject no. 51, The Papers of S.A. Dange, NMML.

in Afghanistan, a country with which India had deep-rooted relations, at the end of 1979 put Indian government in a political dilemma. At the same time, surprisingly for Indira Gandhi, the Soviets who before seemingly had done everything to strengthen her position domestically, in the 1980s refused to deal with “undisciplined” CPI which was turning its back on her.

The Afghanistan affair irritated India for quite obvious reasons as the Soviet Union had moved physically closer to the Indian borders. The Soviet invasion occurred in the last months of the existence of Janata government, thus the responsibility to express India’s position on Soviet military operations in Afghanistan fell on newly elected Indira Gandhi. She instructed the External Affairs team not to condemn the Soviet invasion but express clearly its opposition to such interventions in any country.<sup>38</sup> Beijing and Washington deemed the Soviet invasion an offensive move, while their Indian counterparts reckoned it publicly a defensive one.<sup>39</sup> India did not take part in the UN Security Council debate on Afghanistan. Though India did not censure officially the Soviet incursion in Afghanistan, it kept insisting, in vain, for the withdrawal of Soviet troops using diplomatic tactics and relying on the support of the neighbouring countries of Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. The brief visit of Andrei Gromyko, the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, to New Delhi was to inform Indian government that the Soviets had no intentions to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan.<sup>40</sup> In January 1980, almost right after I. Gandhi assumed her power, Gromyko came to India to persuade Indira Gandhi to “appreciate” Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. Gromyko gave to Indian PM a lengthy analysis of the Afghanistan situation from the Soviet point of view. When asked by Gromyko whether she appreciated Soviet position, I. Gandhi clearly replied that she did not.<sup>41</sup> After a while, India decided to separate the issue of Afghanistan from the working scheme of Indo-Soviet relations, much to the relief of both Soviet and Indian government officials. The Indo-Soviet rhetoric remained unchanged in this period, but it was clear that this was not a mere temporary glitch in the relations but something that ran much deeper.

A second, internal development had even stronger consequences on the Indo-Soviet relations. The CPI’s pro-Indira Gandhi strategical line was bringing the party towards a

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<sup>38</sup> Singh, *The Yogi and the Bear*, 159.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>41</sup> I. K. Gujral, “India’s Response to the Soviet Military Intervention in Afghanistan (1979-80),” *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal* 1, No. 1 (January-March, 2006): 123–131.

dramatic split. A major event was Brezhnev's visit to New Delhi in December 1980. Besides, Indian officials' determination to put aside the delicate issue of Soviet invasion in Afghanistan was only half-fulfilled. Merely four days before his visit, I. Gandhi, together with President Sukarno of Indonesia, had called for a settlement of the Afghan conflict. Furthermore, her address at the civic reception to Brezhnev did not repeat the usual phrases of reciprocal admiration and friendship but concentrated on the internal situation:

From our newspapers you will get a picture of turmoil in our country. <...> Our freedom movement, which, though very different from your own revolution, was nonetheless, a revolution, though peaceful and non-violent. From the beginning we realized that political independence would be meaningful and enduring only with economic self-reliance. The second phase of this unfinished revolution, i.e., the process of combating economic inequality and social injustice, upsets powerful elements and invites reaction. Understandably we face onslaught from the 'right' and not so understandably from the so-called 'left'.<sup>42</sup>

Indira Gandhi's remark about the "onslaught" from the left directed against her was a subtle hint about CPI's current reluctance to support her and, at the same time, a plea for Soviet involvement in the issue. In the following days, Brezhnev met a CPI delegation and apparently mentioned PM's remarks, but he did not urge for a change in CPI's line.<sup>43</sup> The Soviets did not express their clear position regarding the tensions between ruling Congress and the CPI, even though from the end of the 1970s it was widely speculated that the Soviets supported R. Rao faction and its "left unity" line which sought the reconciliation with the CPI(M). Only in 1982, quite trivial event finally exposed the Soviet position towards S.A. Dange and his supporters. On February 10, the USSR refused to grant a transit visa to S.A. Dange who was going to attend the annual meeting of Soviet-controlled World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) in Havana. Indian observers were certain that the denial of visa by the Soviet consulate was "certainly at the behest of the CPSU which controls the government and their official and non-official

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<sup>42</sup> "Address at the civic reception to Mr. L. I. Brezhnev, New Delhi, December 9, 1980," in *Selected Speeches and Writings of Indira Gandhi, January 1980-December 1981, Vol. 4* (Publications Division: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1985), 533-535.

<sup>43</sup> Singh, *The Yogi and the Bear*, 173.

operations abroad.”<sup>44</sup> This gesture was interpreted as a crystal clear signal to S.A. Dange that he is no longer relevant.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, knowing Dange’s pro-Indira Gandhi sympathies, it ignited discussions in India whether the Soviets still approved of the Prime Minister. Some saw that due to his uncritical pro-Indira Gandhi stand, S.A. Dange was seen “as a useful link between the Soviet leaders and the Prime Minister to be used by Moscow in times of need.”<sup>46</sup> The veteran communist himself said that it became apparent that Moscow’s fraternisation of I. Gandhi has been “tactical”, while its relations with Indian communists were held of “strategic” importance.<sup>47</sup> In another words, the Soviet strategic objective was to encourage breakaway CPI(M) and the CPI to merge and thus, salvage the unity of the Indian communist movement: “Moscow’s attitude seems to support the recent trends in the Indian communist movement. The CPI, after a sojourn in Mrs. Gandhi’s camp, had had to strive hard to return to the mainstream of the left movement in the country.” In this period, the CPI general secretary Mr. Rajeswara Rao congratulated his party in establishing an understanding with the CPM.<sup>48</sup> Before this total exposure of the Soviet position towards Dange and his followers inside the CPI that indicated also the fall-out in Indo-Soviet relations, other important developments took place.

The eventual outcome of differences within the CPI was the formation of the splinter party All-India Communist Party (AICP) led by Dange’s daughter Roza Deshpande and formed by his stalwarts in 1981. S.A. Dange, still a member of the CPI, attended in person the first congress of the new party held in Meerut in 1981. For his action, Dange was bitterly attacked by the CPI and its controlled press. He wrote to Rao: “I have been reading your statements to the press and also read your write up in the *New Age*. I really find it disheartening that I should be thus attacked. <...> The main reason why I happened to be present in Meerut was the 52nd anniversary of Meerut Conspiracy Case. In my capacity as one of the accused, as a communist and one of the founders of CPI, I considered it my duty to attend the function. This is main reason but I also witnessed the founding congress of the AICP.”<sup>49</sup> Dange not only attended the first Congress of the AICP, but also

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<sup>44</sup> *The Times of India*, February 15, 1982.

<sup>45</sup> “Moscow snubs Dange,” *The Times of India*, February 10, 1982.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> “Papers relating to the political background for the formation of the All India Communist Party (AICP),” II Instalment, subject no. 54, The Papers of S.A. Dange, NMML.

addressed it: “Of the events which took place in Meerut the one which seems to have most enraged you is that I addressed the Congress of AICP. As you and those around you know very well that the majority of those present were those you had expelled from the CPI and had been members of the CPI for many decades.”<sup>50</sup> At this time, the CPI tried to dispose completely and definitely of its former pro-Indira Gandhi line by purging the party members who still clung to this strategy. In turn, Dange accused Rao and his faction of collaborating with the previous Janata government: “As for my ‘praising’ of Indira Gandhi I should repeat that it does not require a very profound knowledge of Marxism Leninism to realise that so called left and democratic allies like George Fernandes, Charan Singh and other of the Janata government are in reality agents of Imperialism and monopolism. Therefore to me is just a question of choosing *the lesser evil*.”<sup>51</sup> The heated spat between Dange and Rao led to former’s expulsion from the party. Rao wrote to his former comrade: “You have actively identified yourself with the activities of the splitters directed against the party and its policies. Your speech itself was an attack on the party. <...> This is not only a serious open violation of the Party discipline on your part, which has justly aroused the anger of our Party members. You have chosen deliberately and publicly to put yourself outside the pale of the party.”<sup>52</sup> Dange speculated that his expulsion was urged by the “rival” communist party, the CPI(M): “In your ‘secret’ talks of the unity with the CPM they demanded that I should be dropped from the membership as they will not accept me even as an ordinary member. <...> You agreed and my ‘expulsion’ for attending what you call a splitters conference is one of the by-products of your conspiracy to liquidate the CPI. But despite your conspiracy and attack on me, the CPI will live and grow better despite your policy if liquidation misnamed ‘unity’.”<sup>53</sup> After his expulsion from the CPI, Dange engaged actively with the All-India Communist Party led by his daughter. The Soviet Union did not give the new party any political endorsement. On the contrary, it was widely believed that the Soviets prevented a possible exodus of members from the CPI to the newly formed AICP.

These dramatic developments were mirrored on the Indo-Soviet cultural front. During the second term of I. Gandhi, the uneasy relations with both the CPI and the Soviet Union,

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> “Papers relating to the expulsion of S.A. Dange from the Communist Party of India on account of his attending the first conference of the All India Communist Party held in Meerut,” II Instalment, subject no. 55, the Papers of S.A. Dange, NMML.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

the former's willingness to collaborate with the CPI(M) and an apparent Soviet approval of the new line provoked prime minister to respond to a political crisis that brewed in the late 1970s in an original and novel way. In 1981, in the period when her disaccords with the CPI grew sharper and Indo-Soviet relations got colder, Indira Gandhi set up a rival organization called Friends of the Soviet Union (FSU) to challenge the CPI-dominated Indo-Soviet Cultural Society. The official inauguration of the FSU symbolically took place on May 27, the death anniversary of Jawaharlal Nehru. The name of the association referred to the historical All-India Friends of the Soviet Union that later was reorganized into the ISCUS. Already at the end of February, the formation of the new cultural organization had been announced.<sup>54</sup> Right from the beginning Indian journalists stressed the political implications of this move. Besides, the association stated that it wanted to "dissociate from forces interested in destabilisation and from some sections of the left converging with the rightist offensive."<sup>55</sup> Few days later, at the beginning of March, R. Rao, general secretary of the CPI and advocate of "left unity" line, attended the CPSU Congress held in Moscow. On his return to India, he issued a critical statement against Indira Gandhi and her party. This was a clear sign to prime minister that the Soviet leaders did not oblige R. Rao to change anti-Congress stand of the CPI. Indira Gandhi reacted by pressing All-India Congress Committee (AICC) to informally advise her party members not to take part in the activities of CPI-sponsored organizations like Indo-Soviet Cultural Society, the Peace Council and Afro-Asian Solidarity organization.<sup>56</sup> As far as regarding the Soviets, the task of the prime minister was to avoid any misunderstanding assuring them that Congress members disassociating from the CPI-controlled cultural organization did mean that the Congress was going to adopt an anti-USSR line.<sup>57</sup> It is likely that this move was Indira Gandhi's attempt to push Soviet government into a corner and to force them express clear position regarding its support for her. At the end of March 1981, S.A. Dange was definitely expelled from the party for "indiscipline." Some members of the CPI's national council resigned in protest. They claimed that hundreds of other CPI's members followed their example. Furthermore, pro-Dange elements within the ISCUS were expected to quit the body and join I. Gandhi's newly-formed Friends of the Soviet

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<sup>54</sup> "New pro-Soviet body launched," *The Times of India*, February 26, 1981.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> "No change in CPI stance after Moscow talks," *The Times of India*, March 9, 1981.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

Union.<sup>58</sup>

The first convention of the FSU was held on May 27 in New Delhi. Inaugurating the first convention of the FSU, I. Gandhi said that the revival of this historic organization “would enable Indo-Soviet friendship to be more effective and non-partisan.”<sup>59</sup> The Organising Committee of the Friends of the Soviet Union included various figures who either were communists loyal to I. Gandhi or members of her former government.<sup>60</sup> I. Gandhi stressed that the FSU was qualified to fill the role of the promoter of Indo-Soviet friendship because “it had people of different political affiliations and many other who have no party loyalties.”<sup>61</sup> At the time, Indira Gandhi emphasized “the need to liberate the movement from the clutches of those who considered themselves to be custodians of Indo-Soviet friendship. It was the professional friends and foes of the Soviet Union who create problems for us.”<sup>62</sup> In the end, I. Gandhi added that among “professional friends and foes” there were few who acted differently and courageously.<sup>63</sup> This remark was meant to acknowledge the loyalty and the reliability of S.A. Dange and his followers. These declarations revealed the actual discontent of Indira Gandhi with the CPI’s decision to withdraw its support for her and the apparent Soviet approval of this new line. The foundation of the FSU was a clear warning to both the CPI and the Soviets that now were constrained to choose which of the channels to use to to preserve and eventually enhance Indo-Soviet cultural relations.<sup>64</sup> In fact, both of them had met the establishment of an alternative friendship association with a degree of anxiety and confusion.

L.I. Rovnin, vice-president of the Soviet-Indian Friendship Society, led 10-member Soviet delegation to the first convention of the Friends of the Soviet Union, while Soviet dignitaries sparsely attended the ISCUS function organized two days later. Then Rovnin and Soviet ambassador to India Y.M. Vorontsov delivered speeches in which they made clear that the ISCUS alone should be utilized to promote and develop further Indo-Soviet friendship, despite the setting up of a rival organization by the Congress (I) with the

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<sup>58</sup> “3 Dange supporters resign from CPI,” *The Times of India*, April 15, 1981.

<sup>59</sup> “PM for unbiased Indo-Soviet ties,” *The Times of India*, May 28, 1981.

<sup>60</sup> “Papers relating to the expulsion of S.A. Dange from the Communist Party of India on account of his attending the first conference of the All India Communist Party held in Meerut,” II Instalment, subject no. 55, the Papers of S.A. Dange, NMML.

<sup>61</sup> “PM for unbiased Indo-Soviet ties,” *The Times of India*, May 28, 1981.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> “With such friends...,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 16, no. 25/26 (1981): 1080.

<sup>64</sup> “Friends of USSR,” *The Times of India*, March 10, 1982.

blessings of the Prime Minister.<sup>65</sup> Notwithstanding, Y. M. Katon, the cultural consul of the Soviet Union, declared that the Soviet people had welcomed the foundation of a new society of friendship.<sup>66</sup>

S.A. Dange was among the attendees of the first FSU convention. The General Secretary of the new organization was K.R. Ganesh who had asked Dange to address “about 1000 delegates representing a cross section of our national life from various parts of the country.” K. R. Ganesh’s name figured in the previous chapter. He was one of those ex-CPI members turned Congressmen who had made part of the Congress Forum for Socialist Action (CFSA) and actively supported I. Gandhi. In the early 1970s, for his allegiance he was appointed Minister for Revenue and Expenditure. In the organizing committee of the FSU, there were other figures of the same background like Nurul Hasan, former Minister for Education and Shankar Dayal Sharma.<sup>67</sup>

The contentious issue relations among Indira Gandhi, the CPI and the Soviet Union continued well into the 1981. T.N. Kaul, who still was close advisor of the PM, on July 31, 1981 confidentially met Nikolai Pegov, the former Soviet Ambassador to India (1967-73). After having briefly discussed some international issues, the talk turned to the more pressing question of the CPI. T.N. Kaul explained in detail how the matters stood:

“I then said that unfortunately the CPI was following an anti-Congress (I) policy which would ultimately prove suicidal for itself and strengthen rightist parties and CPI(M). CPI had supported I. Gandhi’s government firmly from 1971 to 1976 and hailed the declaration of emergency. From ’76 CPI started towing CPI(M) line and even collaborated with some of the rightist parties in and outside the Parliament. <...> During Janata rule, they went even further and started openly collaborating with the rightist also. There were factions within the CPI. Some were in favour of cooperating with I. Gandhi’s government while, others were against it. Indira Gandhi does not want to see the CPI destroyed but they themselves were following a suicidal policy at present.”<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> “Soviet diplomats ignore PM’s call,” *The Times of India*, May 30, 1981.

<sup>66</sup> “Make Indo-Soviet ties mass movement: CM,” *The Times of India*, August 8, 1981.

<sup>67</sup> Papers relating to the expulsion of S.A. Dange from the Communist Party of India on account of his attending the first conference of the All India Communist Party held in Meerut,” *Friends of the Soviet Union: Invitation to S.A. Dange, 18 May 1981*, II Instalment, subject no. 55, the Papers of S.A. Dange, NMML.

<sup>68</sup> “Brief record of a conversation with Mr. Pegov, former Soviet Ambassador to India and presently Member of the Central Committee and Secretary of the CPSU, on 31 July, 1981 from 3-4.30 p.m.,” III instalment, subject no. 38, The Papers of T.N. Kaul, NMML.

Pegov's reply to Kaul's threatening hints and concerns was far from comforting: "I agree with your analysis but this is an internal development. A similar development had taken place in the old Congress party also. The Soviet government and party fully supported Mrs. Gandhi then and does so now. <...>. But we do not wish to interfere in the internal affairs of other government's or parties."<sup>69</sup> Now, the Soviet Union seemed eager to wash its hands of Indian internal developments, but Kaul was not that naive to believe in Soviet pretended reluctance to deal with the Indian situation: "I said that we appreciated this. It was good in principle. But in practice, the CPSU did have discussions and exchange ideas with fraternal parties like the CPI. <...> I suggested that CPSU should advise the CPI that they are following wrong and suicidal policies."<sup>70</sup> Pegov coolly replied that he would report to the authorities. Kaul brought forth another embarrassing question for the Soviets. He revealed "in strict confidence" the rumours coming from the CPI's quarters that the current ambassador Vorontsov was encouraging the CPI to follow anti-Indira Gandhi policy. Pegov retorted that nobody could go against Soviet government's choice to support the PM and her government. As far as the Friends of the Soviet Union were concerned, Kaul stated that it was "a step to strengthen, not to weaken Indo-Soviet friendship. It had been necessary to revive this body because the ISCUS, which was dominated by the CPI that had adopted a pro-Janata and anti-Indira Gandhi policy during the Janata rule. The ruling party in India could not allow this to happen, as it would have adverse effect on Indo-Soviet friendship."<sup>71</sup> Pegov hinted that this step caused some headache and irritation on the Soviet side, the very effect that Indira Gandhi had intentionally aimed at: "it is unfortunate that this has happened. ISCUS had done an excellent work for 30 years and deserved some recognition for this. Now that FSU has been formed and since it has the support of Mrs. Gandhi it will stay. However, it is worthwhile finding some way to form one body, that is, the FSU which would also include some old and reliable ISCUS elements. Of course, office bearers should be those chosen and trusted by Indira Gandhi. But a declaration by the FSU that they appreciated the good work done by ISCUS in the past would reassure its thousand branches and thousands of workers. After that they could all join FSU and work with and in it <...>"<sup>72</sup> Kaul

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

concluded the conversation by suggesting to Pegov to visit India formally or informally to see if this was possible.

Indira Gandhi's bold attempt to take the reins of Indo-Soviet cultural links proved the significance of cultural exchange between the two countries. It was rumoured in India that Prime Minister's son Sanjay had suggested this move before meeting his death in an air crash in 1980.<sup>73</sup> The step caused irritation both in Soviet and Indian Communist camps and received wide attention in official and unofficial talks between Soviet and Indian sides. The India's cultural relations with the Soviet Union was always more of a political matter. As discussed before, the Indo-Soviet Cultural Society, a body charged with safeguarding Indo-Soviet Cultural relations, had been dominated by the Indian Communist Party since its foundation. At the end of the 1960s, the CPI adopted a strategy seeking to infiltrate the Congress Party and entered into alliance with it. The channel to gain influence at the Centre was the Congress Forum for Socialist Action, which filled up with ex-CPI members. In turn, the ISCUS acquired new members among the cadres of the Congress party holding "progressive" views. The decision to scrap the dominion of the CPI over Indo-Soviet cultural relations possibly prevented a political showdown that I. Gandhi might not sustained it without damaging her position, given the turbulent domestic situation during her last term that eventually ended with her assassination.

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<sup>73</sup> Peter J.S. Duncan, *The Soviet Union and India*, (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1989), 98.

## 4.2. India in the Soviet-sponsored international organizations

The Indo-Soviet Cultural Society was not the only one organization connected with the Soviet Union operating in India. By 1966, in India there were 53 organizations to some extent related to the USSR.<sup>74</sup> The range of these organizations was vast: friendship societies and cultural organizations, youth and student organizations (e.g. All-India Youth Federation), literary and professional associations, women's associations, workers and farmers associations, associations for peace and disarmament and a myriad of others. Many of these organizations were local branches of huge transnational organizations. For instance, All-India Peace Council (AIPC) was the local branch of the powerful World Peace Council (WPC). By some accounts, the organizations connected with the Peace movement in India were the most active and sophisticated of all Communist front organizations.<sup>75</sup>

In the 1950s, it had started what American observers called Soviet "peace offensive." The main purveyor of this offensive was precisely the WPC that had adopted a formal constitution in 1950. The origins of the WPC are rooted in an initiative of the Cominform that was trying to involve socialist intellectuals in the World Congress of Intellectuals for Peace held in 1948. The Congress was intended to be held in Sheffield, but the British Labour Government exerted pressure to shift the venue elsewhere and eventually the first Congress was held in Wroclaw in Poland.<sup>76</sup> The event in Wroclaw was attended by the prominent Indian English-language writer Mulk Raj Anand, whose name in the near future would figure in the governing bodies of the most active Soviet cultural organizations in India. A year later, a Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace took place at the luxurious Waldorf Astoria Hotel in Midtown Manhattan, New York. The eminent Indian mathematician and polymath D.D. Kosambi, who like Mulk Raj Anand would take part in Soviet initiatives, was among the attendees.

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<sup>74</sup> Sager, *Moscow's Hand in India*, 168.

<sup>75</sup> Windmiller, *Communism in India*, 411.

<sup>76</sup> Philip Deery, "The Dove Flies East: Whitehall, Warsaw and the 1950 World Peace Congress," *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 48, Issue 4 (December 2002), 449.

In the 1950s, the World Peace Council was managed by the International Department of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, which in turn was under the direction of the Soviet Peace Committee. The latter did not show itself as an organ that promoted Soviet foreign policy, but claimed to be recognized as a representative of the aspirations "of the peoples who love world peace."<sup>77</sup> Needless to say, the WPC, like the VOKS and the WIR in the past, tried to conceal its direct affiliation with the Soviet state apparatus. The tactic was as old as the Soviet state itself, however, the World Peace Council had a greater degree of success than its predecessors did. In the early 1950s, the WPC attracted "intellectual superstars" like Jean Paul Sartre, Diego Rivera, Pablo Neruda, W.E. Du Bois and Pablo Picasso, the latter even designed the WPC's emblem of the white dove.<sup>78</sup> The WPC continuously condemned the "militaristic" policies of the United States of America and denounced nuclear armament and military aggression perpetuated by the capitalist countries. The initial successes of the organization, and of the "peace offensive" in general, drew the attention of the Western governments.

In 1951, in the midst of McCarthyism era, the Committee on Un-American Activities prepared an extensive report entitled *The Communist "Peace" Offensive: A Campaign to Disarm and Defeat the United States*. The report dramatically called the peace offensive "the most dangerous hoax ever devised by the international Communist conspiracy."<sup>79</sup> For the USA, the most worrying feature of the peace movement was that "Communists and their conspirators are spearheading this movement in cities and communities throughout the United States—at meetings, on street corners, in shops, homes, schools and colleges, in the press and on the radio—in fact, in every walk of life."<sup>80</sup> The previous Soviet calls for world revolution had been worrisome but not as much dangerous as the slogans of peace that were resonating in the USA. The former alienated the bulk of middle class and those elements in the society who longed for stability rather than radical change. The peace was a different matter, apparently harmless but insinuating and this peace offensive was promoted through different channels augmenting extremely the communist means for propaganda. Besides, the involvement of the "intellectual superstars" lent an immense prestige to the whole movement. However, the WPC's influence in the West

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<sup>77</sup> The Way to Defend World Peace, Speech by Liao Cheng-Chin at the Stockholm session of the World Peace Council, 16 December 1961.

<sup>78</sup> Deery, "The Dove Flies East," 449.

<sup>79</sup> *Report on the Communist "Peace" Offensive: A Campaign to Disarm and Defeat the United States* (Washington: U.S. House of Representatives), 1.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

fell after the organization had failed to prove its impartiality by not censuring the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 or defending the nuclear tests conducted by the USSR while condemning those of the USA. Thus, some intellectuals turned their backs to the movement and many western affiliates of the WPC started to have doubts about the “neutral” character of the organization. It seemed that the history was once again repeating itself as the WPC, like the IWA three decades before, fell from grace in the West. However, that was not the case in the Third World.

In the 1950s, as the Third World was increasingly becoming the centre of ideological and military conflicts sprung up from the Cold War, the efforts to involve Asian and African intellectuals in the activities of the organizations like the WPC invigorated significantly. The Indian section of the World Peace Council, the All-India Peace Council, was founded in 1951, following the Warsaw congress organized by the parent WPC, where the Communist Party of India was also represented.<sup>81</sup> There were political members among the founders such as Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew, veteran Congress leader and freedom fighter, Pandit Sundarlal, disciple of Mahatma Gandhi, Ajoy Ghosh, freedom fighter and Communist leader, A. K. Gopalan, freedom fighter and Communist leader, but as in the West, the organization attracted also prominent cultural figures such as the celebrated film personalities of Prithviraj Kapoor and Balraj Sahni, noted writers Krishan Chander, Rajendra Singh Bedi, renowned poets Vallathol and S. Gurbaksh Singh.<sup>82</sup> Romesh Chandra, the most important figure in the AIPC and later in the whole peace movement, joined the Indian branch in 1952.

Romesh Chandra had become member of the CPI in 1939. In 1952, he was in the Central Committee of the Party and six years later, he entered Central Executive Committee. Chandra worked predominantly in the cultural field supervising artistic and editorial activities of the party. For instance, in the years between 1963 and 1966, he edited the party’s English language weekly journal *New Age*. In 1966, the party considered to launch a Hindi weekly journal in order to “counter right reactionary and communal propaganda which has assumed menacing proportions in Hindi speaking region” and “take progressive and communist policies to the masses.”<sup>83</sup> S.A. Dange instructed the editorial

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<sup>81</sup> Sager, *Moscow’s Hand in India*,

<sup>82</sup> “All India Peace and Solidarity Organization (AIPSO),”

file:///C:/Users/admin/Downloads/AIPSO\_UPR30\_CUB\_E\_CoverPage.pdf

<sup>83</sup> “Papers relating to cultural fraction and Progressive Writers Conference of the Communist Party of India, 1952-1964,” II instalment, subject no. 23, The Papers of S.A. Dange, NMML.

staff to work under guidance of the Secretariat, whose representative was Romesh Chandra. At the time of Bangladesh crisis in 1971, Chandra was sent to Moscow to mobilise the public opinion in the USSR in favour of Bangladesh, however Rajeswara Rao alleged that the news were false.<sup>84</sup> Almost immediately after joining All-India Peace Council, Chandra became its General Secretary.

In 1953, he entered the World Peace Council where he made an impressive career. In 1966, he became the General Secretary of the organization, then its President in 1977 and remained in the post until 1990. In 1969, an episode occurred which could have threatened his leading position in the peace movement: “*The Current* learns on authority that Comrade Chandra’s criticism of Soviet action in Czechoslovakia and his overambitious plans to activate the World Council of Peace are likely to cause his downfall sooner than expected.”<sup>85</sup> As the Hungarian events and the consequent WPC’s failure to condemn the Soviet actions had distanced many members from the organization in the 1950s, the Soviet conduct in Czechoslovakia risked doing the same in the developing countries. In the end, Romesh Chandra resolved his differences with the Soviet patrons and managed to retain his leading position in the peace movement.

When Chandra Sekhar claimed that the CPI and its former members turned Congressmen were aiming at infiltrating the Indian National Congress, he stressed that these elements were using “Afro-Asian Solidarity and Peace Council organizations <...> for their ends.” It should be recalled that in the I. Gandhi years, the political channel to “infiltrate Congress” was the Congress Forum for Socialist Action (CFSA). Sekhar also delicately hinted that in this way the Soviets were closely following the dynamics in the Indian government. In fact, the names of the members of the CFSA often figure in the documents related to the ISCUS, thus supporting Sekhar’s claims. However, Sekhar alleged that the Peace Council was an even more important channel for the CPI and their ex-members to push their agenda.

Strangely, the personal papers of Romesh Chandra available at the Indian archives do not shed much light on his role and activities within the World Peace Council and its Indian

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<sup>84</sup> “Papers relating to role of Indian left parties in the Bangladesh liberation war,” instalment II, subject no. 42, The Papers of S.A. Dange, NMML.

<sup>85</sup> “Kremlin’s Blue-Eyed Boy, Romesh Chandra, Awaits Sack Order For Opening Mouth on Czechoslovakia,” *The Current*, May 31, 1969.

branch.<sup>86</sup> However, even few scattered notes could help to ascertain Sekhar's claims. For instance, the list of participants of All-India Congress for Peace of Solidarity held in Calcutta in September 1972 contains much the same names encountered before in the CFSA and ISCUS. Once again, the notables were Nurul Hasan, K.R. Ganesh, K.V. Raghunatha Reddy, Chandrajit Yadav (the core of the "radical" section of the CFSA) and Krishna Menon who in the 1970s staunchly supported Indira Gandhi and her party. At least 5000 people attended the All-India Congress for Peace and among them were "MPs, MLAs, trade unionists, *kisan* [peasant] organisers, women, Congressmen, Communists, writers, lawyers, doctors, students and teachers. Thirty fraternal delegates came from Vietnam, Brazil, Palestine, UK, France, GDR, Iraq, USSR, Bangladesh, Ceylon, Nepal."<sup>87</sup> The headquarters of the All-India Peace Council were stationed in Asaf Ali Road, Darya Ganj, historical book district in Old Delhi.

In 1967, Romesh Chandra was awarded the prestigious International Lenin Peace Prize, the Soviet equivalent of Nobel Prize, usually conferred on the prominent non-Soviet communists and "friends" of the Soviet Union. The most noteworthy winners were W.E. Du Bois (1959), Faiz Ahmad Faiz (1962), Pablo Picasso (1962), Fidel Castro (1961) and Salvador Allende (1973). Indians were often among the recipients: Saifudin Kitchlew (1952), the first president of the AIPC, Sahib Singh Sokhey (1953) and C.V. Raman (1958), members of the Indian Academy of Sciences, Rameshwari Nehru (1961), social worker, Aruna Asaf Ali (1965), freedom fighter, K.P.S. Menon (1979), former Indian ambassador to the USSR and posthumously Indira Gandhi (1985).

Importantly, the highly politicized nature of organizations like the All-India Peace Council is proved not only by the participation of certain political figures in its activities. During the last Indira Gandhi's mandate, she cut the "lifeline" of the CPI and founded the rival Friends of the Soviet Union to counter the influence of Indo-Soviet Cultural Society. However, the move did not regard the ISCUS alone. Apparently, Indira Gandhi made a bold and ambitious attempt to break the dominion of the WPC's Indian branch. She pressed All-India Congress Committee (AICC) to informally advise all party members not to take part in the activities of CPI-sponsored organizations like the Peace Council.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> In February 2020, I have researched the Personal Papers of Romesh Chandra at the Manuscript Division of the Nehru Memorial Museum & Library, to my knowledge the only institution that contains the papers of R. Chandra.

<sup>87</sup> "Papers and Correspondence regarding the All India Peace Council," instalment II, subject no. 32, the Papers of Romesh Chandra, NMML.

<sup>88</sup> "No change in CPI stance after Moscow talk," *The Times of India*, March 9, 1981.

Nihal Singh, who had worked as a foreign correspondent in Moscow, described even more bizarre incident.<sup>89</sup> According to Singh, Indira Gandhi set up a parallel *World Peace and Solidarity* organization in order to deprive the WPC of its strength, and in this way to send a loud and clear warning to the Soviets who continued to support the CPI.<sup>90</sup> Besides, the WPC's head was Romesh Chandra, one of the most important members of the CPI. Singh even quoted N.V. Goldin, Soviet Minister of Heavy Industry, who pleaded with some Congress members not to abandon the WPC, reminding them that the organization "has an Indian as its chairman."<sup>91</sup> Knowing I. Gandhi's unconventional methods used in the political struggles, the ambitious attempt could be attributed to her. In India, the WPC and its affiliate worked as loudspeakers transmitting the objectives of Soviet foreign policy. In the 1970s and in the early 1980s, the All-India Peace Council used to censure continuously the US foreign policy and hold interminable meetings and discussions on the subject in different regions of India. Occasionally, the so-called "peace marches" to the American consulates, or even to the office of the United States Information Service (USIS), were held.<sup>92</sup> The organization published the monthly magazine *Peace Herald*, *Antarjatika* in Bengali and another publication in Hindi. These, like many other publications that were related to the Soviet front organizations in India, are almost unobtainable in the archives and libraries. From the 1980s, the WPC and its affiliates' decline started, following the socioeconomic downturn of their patron, the Soviet Union. The last leader of the country, Mikhail Gorbachev, did not meet for once WPC's president Chandra. It was speculated that the Soviet Peace Committee, the force behind the WPC, concluded that the Council had lost its political significance and usefulness. Besides, the maintenance of such an extensive organizational network by and by had drained up the Soviet financial resources.<sup>93</sup> The WPC reached its peak and maximum visibility during the 1970s. Precisely in this period, the organization draw into its activities top intellectuals of the Third World. For instance, Mulk Raj Anand became head of cultural commission inside All-India Peace Council. The Indian writer, along with some of his colleagues, was also active in the Afro-Asian Writers Association, another important Soviet-sponsored international organization.

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<sup>89</sup> Up until, Singh's account of the incident is the only one.

<sup>90</sup> Singh, *The Yogi and the Bear*, 174.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.

<sup>92</sup> "Peace March," *The Times of India*, February 22, 1984.

<sup>93</sup> Rob Prince, "The Ghost Ship of Lennrotinkatu," *Peace Magazine*, May-June, 1992, <http://archive.peacemagazine.org/v08n3p16.htm>

Writers, “engineers of the human soul”, received special attention in the Soviet Union. Andrei Zhdanov, Stalin’s faithful ideologist and father of the “two camp” theory, who through his protégées controlled also the Union of Soviet Writers, at the congress of the organization in 1934 had proclaimed that “Our Soviet literature is not afraid of the charge of being "tendentious". Yes, Soviet literature is tendentious, for in an epoch of class struggle there is not and cannot be a literature which is not class literature, not tendentious, allegedly non-political.”<sup>94</sup> The foundation of the Union of Soviet Writers inspired Third World writers with Marxist leanings to form their own national associations. In fact, in India, the necessity for an institution that could unite Indian writers with progressive views was encouraged by the setting up of the Soviet organization in 1932.<sup>95</sup> Significantly, in December of the same year, in Lucknow, *Angāre*, a collection of 10 short stories of Indian Marxist authors, was published.<sup>96</sup> The occurrence is considered the first stone in the foundation of the All-India Progressive Writers Association (AIPWA).<sup>97</sup> The AIPWA manifesto revealed its strong Marxist inspiration and stressed the need for Indian intellectuals to oppose the reactionary and revivalist ideas that were finding voice in the contemporary literature and offer alternatives to the moralizing and edifying adventure stories deemed means of evasion from a painful and disheartening reality of casteism, communalism, oppression, patriarchy and foreign domination. The document stated that an Indian writer should observe and describe real facts, places, and environment, deal with social issues and try to grasp the changes that were affecting the country in order to offer his own contribution to the spread of progressive ideas in Indian society.<sup>98</sup> Some of AIPWA’s members later actively committed themselves to the Afro-Asian Writers Organization and Peace and Solidarity Committee.

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<sup>94</sup> *Soviet Writers' Congress 1934, The Debate on Socialist Realism and Modernism* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1977).

<sup>95</sup> The founding of the Union of Soviet Writers was formalized by the resolution passed by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in 1932. The Union of Soviet Writers was actually organized in 1934.

<sup>96</sup> Those authors were Sajjad Zaheer, Rashid Jahan, Ahmed Ali and Mahmudzafer.

*Angāre* attacked the dominant social, political, religious and cultural institutions, triggering a reaction of conservatives and the colonial political authorities to the point that four months after its publication, the text was banned by the government of the United Provinces and all copies of the volume, except five, destroyed by the police.

Mahmud Shabana, “*Angāre* and the Founding of the Progressive Writers' Association,” *Modern Asian Studies* 3, (1996): 447-467.

<sup>97</sup> Talat Ahmed, *Literature and Politics in the Age of Nationalism: The Progressive Episode in South Asia, 1932–1956* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>98</sup> “Manifesto of Progressive Writers Association, adopted in the foundation conference 1936,” <http://pwa75.sapfonline.org/gpage4.html>

*Afro-Asian Writers Association (AAWA)*

Since its foundation, the Soviet Union showed a significant interest in the colonial world. The Soviet's professed anti-imperialism attracted and drew not only freedom fighters from colonial countries that benefitted from the political initiatives of the USSR, but also helped to augment the prestige and interest in Russo-Soviet literary works in those countries. Two main reasons behind this growing cultural bent towards the socialist country was its geographical proximity to Asia and a growing anti-Western sentiment diffused in the developing world. In fact, Stalin often reiterated the belief, present already in the years of tsardom, that Russia, due to its geographical position, was more qualified to work with non-European peoples than the West. Since the beginning, the Soviets put substantial efforts to gain favour with Third World intellectuals even if the initiatives halted during the WWII and some years succeeding the conflict, only to be resumed anew with more vigour in the mid-1950s.

Already in 1921, the Soviet Union addressed directly the Third World countries when it founded the Communist University of the Toilers of the East. Some students of this institution such as Nâzım Hikmet, Hamdi Selam, and Emi Siao would later become major writers in the developing world and would actively participate in the Soviet initiatives in the literary field.<sup>99</sup> In 1921, during the third congress of the Comintern emerged the idea of Litintern, the literary equivalent of Communist International but it never came into existence.<sup>100</sup> More successful and concrete step towards Soviet literary internationalism was the foundation of the International Union of Revolutionary Writers (MORP) in 1930, during the Second Conference of Proletarian Writers held in the Ukrainian city of Kharkov. The event brought 120 writers not only from Europe but also from China, Arab world, Japan and Brazil.<sup>101</sup> However, the Great Terror purges of 1937-38 liquated most of the platforms of Soviet cultural internationalism and by the end of the WWII the Soviet Union fell into a virtual isolation that limited its contacts with the rest of the world.

Due to the geopolitical and ideological shifts described in the previous chapters, the Soviet Union enthusiastically renewed its cultural apparatus and actively participated in

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<sup>99</sup> Rossen Djagalov, *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism: Literature and Cinema between the Second and the Third Worlds* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020), 36–37.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>101</sup> Rossen Djagalov, "Red apostles: imagining revolutions in the global proletarian novel," *The Slavic and East European Journal* 61, no. 4 (Fall 2017): 396-422.

international enterprises. However, this new Soviet internationalism faced a strong response in American initiatives. The most significant of them was the CIA-sponsored Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF). Though founded in West Berlin in 1950 to counter the Soviet cultural hegemony in the West, later on it expanded its activities to Asia and Africa through literary magazines, cultural gatherings and funding of translations.<sup>102</sup> For obvious reasons the CCF elicited attention among Soviet cultural bureaucracies that were alarmed by “Western efforts to manipulate Afro-Asian writers.”<sup>103</sup> The first branch of the CCF, the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom, was inaugurated in India in 1951.

Mulk Raj Anand, one of the founders of the All-India Progressive Writers Society, entered the Soviet cultural orbit in the mid-1930s, when he got involved with the Association of Writers for the Defence of Culture, a Soviet-funded anti-fascist organization. He was one of the four non-Western writers who worked at the international bureau of the association.<sup>104</sup> The relaxing of Stalinist ideological grip on the country undoubtedly contributed to the increasing Soviet engagements with Africa, Asia and Latin America. However, the de-Stalinization was not the sole factor that could explain the country’s rapid opening to the developing world. Simultaneously with the ideological shifts in USSR, the decolonization processes were sweeping through former colonial societies while the Bandung Conference of 1955 marked the political emergence of the Third World. Transnational political enterprises such as the Bandung Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement were quickly followed by the cultural initiatives aimed at asserting Third World’s unity. For the Soviet Union, this was a virgin opportunity to ride the wave of the cultural and political upsurge in the Third World, and in this way, to establish a strong presence there.

The first step towards literary equivalent of the Non-Aligned Movement was made in Delhi in 1956 when Mulk Raj Anand convinced Prime Minister Nehru to organize an international writers’ gathering in the spirit of Bandung Conference. On Anand’s insistence, the Soviet delegation was invited to the event, whilst it had not been to Bandung.<sup>105</sup> Quite soon, in October 1958, over a hundred writers from Asia and Africa came to Tashkent to attend the first Afro-Asian Writers Congress organized by the USSR.

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<sup>102</sup> Thomas W. Shillam, “Shattering the ‘looking-glass world’: the Congress for Cultural Freedom in South Asia, 1951–55,” *Cold War History* 20, Issue 4 (2020): 1.

<sup>103</sup> Djagalov, *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism*, 76.

<sup>104</sup> Others being Pablo Neruda, Nâzım Hikmet and Emi Siao. *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

The association was formally inaugurated only at the Second Congress in Cairo in 1962. Although Soviets succeeded in controlling Afro-Asian literary orbit, Afro-Asian Writers' Congress functioned not merely as a front organization, but also as a sort of forum for writers otherwise separated by geography and language. At the same time, the organization became a battleground for its most powerful members like the USSR, China until Sino-Soviet split, Egypt and India. The association was national-based and consequently national delegates acted as state representatives. The functioning of Afro-Asian Writers' Association depended entirely on various geopolitical pressures and reflected USSR's relations with other countries as well as relations between country members of Asia and Africa.

The Indian writer and journalist Krishnalal Shridharani participated in the first Afro-Asian Writers Congress of Tashkent. He wrote that "for the first time in history, some 200 writers from no fewer than 35 Asian and African countries were meeting to talk about their art and to form new friendships and collaborations. <...>. A fraternity which should have emerged ages ago was finally finding a birth at Tashkent."<sup>106</sup> However, the political matters overshadowed the joy of Indian writer of finally meeting his Asian and African colleagues: "The Indian writer felt isolated at Tashkent. What is more, the Indian writer, as we know him, felt isolated even in the Indian delegation because half of its members were either ideologists or willing to look at poetry and drama and life through ideological eyes. But it was the Indian writer who made his mark at Tashkent, and not the Indian Communist writer because the latter was indistinguishable from the solid and monotonous rest." The part of Indian delegation warned other participants to be cautious and not to turn Afro-Asian Writers Association into the Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee, another front organization, working as a semi-official organ of Soviet foreign policy.<sup>107</sup> Seven congresses followed the first one held in Tashkent in 1958: Cairo (1962), Beirut (1967), Delhi (1970), Alma-Ata (1973), Luanda (1979), Tashkent (1983) and Tunis (1988).

It seems that warnings issued by some members of Indian delegation not to turn the AAWA into a semi-official organ of Soviet foreign policy did not have any effect. An observer of the fourth congress that was held in Delhi wrote with bitterness that "the voice

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<sup>106</sup> Krishnalal Shridharani, "Association and Isolation at Tashkent," *Indian Literature* 2, No. 1, (Oct. 1958—Mar. 1959): 57.

<sup>107</sup> Naomi J. Weinberger, *Syrian intervention in Lebanon: the 1975 -76 Civil War* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1986), 310.

of Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterjee (Chairman of the Sahitya Academy, the Indian Academy of Letters) turned out to be a lone cry in the wilderness - the only sane one in a babel of rabid anti-U.S., anti-Israel hysteria. In his inaugural address as chairman of the Indian preparatory committee, he made a brave but futile attempt at persuading the fellow-organizers against socio-political acrobatics, bringing in extra-literary issues and bogging down a literary conference in blatant anti-West propaganda.”<sup>108</sup> By the early 1970s, the AAWA degenerated into a mere amplifier of Soviet rhetoric. In fact, some observers of the 1970 Delhi conference noticed that its resolutions echoed those passed a month earlier by the *Presidential Committee of the World Council of Peace*, whose members included the already familiar names of Mulk Raj Anand and Krishna Menon, Sajjad Zaheer, one of the founding members of All-India Progressive Writers Society, and Kamil Yashen, Uzbekistani poet.

At the time of Delhi Conference, the general secretary of Afro-Asian Writers Conference was Mulk Raj Anand.<sup>109</sup> Around 1970, Bhisham Sahni, famous Hindi writer and essayist who in the early 1960s had worked as a translator for Foreign Languages Publishing House in Moscow, got involved with the Afro-Asian Writers Association. He saw his nascent cooperation with the AAWA as an “opportunity to get closer to the Afro-Asian literary community” and got several more chances to go back to the Soviet Union and visit Asian and African countries.<sup>110</sup> Unlike some of his Indian colleagues who saw the AAWA overwhelmed by political matters and having nothing to do with the building of Afro-Asian literary solidarity, Sahni thought that the Soviet Union, the patron of the AAWA, was “instrumental in bringing the Afro-Asian nations closer to one another, for building world peace, and for the common goals of those nations. <...> but once the Soviet Union was dissolved, the alliance of the Afro-Asian nations fell apart.”<sup>111</sup> Sahni memoir’s also reveals some “inside” stories of the Afro-Asian Writers’ Association. He described vividly the meeting of the executives of the association in Bulgaria. After two days of meetings, customary sight-seeing programme was organized. The whole delegation was taken to the local liquor factory: “the hospitality commenced. The beefy manager gave a short speech praising the qualities of liquor. Then he poured small

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<sup>108</sup> R. K. Kaushik, “Tin Hawks and Clay Gods,” *Mahfil* 8, No. 2/3 (Summer - Fall 1972): 237-245.

<sup>109</sup> “Fourth Afro-Asian Writers Conference,” Sajjad Zaheer Digital Archive, DDS Center for Research Libraries (crl.edu)

<sup>110</sup> Bhisham Sahni, *Today’s Pasts: A Memoir* (Gurgaon: Penguin Books, 2015), 341.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 342.

amounts of the liquor from the bottles into our glasses. <...> Bottles of liquor were still being brought in. For some of us, our heads were spinning. I got so emotional that not only I was praising the bright future of the factory, but I was also wishing the beefy manager a long life after every two sips.”<sup>112</sup> During the last decade of AAWA’s existence in the 1980s, Bhisham Sahni became its executive secretary and organized the last Conference held in Tunis. The Indian delegation in the last AAWA congress included famous writers like Kamleshwar, Joginder Paul and Abdul Bismillah among others.<sup>113</sup> The Afro-Asian Writers’ Association revolved on fourfold axis: international writers’ congresses, a permanent bureau, a multilingual literary magazine and an international literary prize. The organization of the congresses depended on strictly political circumstances and incidents. For instance, the five-year gap between the first and the second congress was due to Sino-Soviet split. Daily decisions about Association’s running were made in the headquarters, initially located in Colombo Sri Lanka that due to the Sino-Soviet split and Sri Lanka’s tilt towards China were shifted to Cairo. Therefore, congresses and the activities of the bureau suffered heavily from the political squabbles. At any rate, the publication of literary magazines was the proof of the existence of an Afro-Asian literary field. A literary quarterly materialized only in 1967 with the name *Afro-Asian Writings* that, in 1969, at Mulk Raj Anand’s insistence, was changed to *Lotus* in 1969.<sup>114</sup> The magazine was published in French, English and Arabic until 1991. The last axis of the Afro-Asian Association was the Lotus Prize. At the time when very few Asian and African writers had chances to win the Nobel Prize for literature, the Lotus Prize became a sort of an Afro-Asian Nobel for literature to such extent that some of its winners well before reaching fame in the West, had been awarded the Lotus Prize.<sup>115</sup> Most importantly, the Lotus Prize was given not only for particular work but also for the engagement in activities within the Afro-Asian Writers Association. The political context and the country of origin of certain authors was decisive either. During Brezhnev years, according to one Soviet cultural *apparatchik*, the possibility to win the prize also increased significantly if one was an official head of some national section of the Afro-Asian Writers Association.<sup>116</sup> In 1979-80, Bhisham Sahni won the Lotus Prize and in

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 354.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 426.

<sup>114</sup> Lotus flower is traditionally associated with Indian art and religions. In 1950, it became the national flower of India.

<sup>115</sup> Some of them: Alex La Guma, Faiz Ahmad Faiz or Mahmoud Darwish.

<sup>116</sup> Djalalov, *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism*, 41.

1983, Soviet Land Nehru Award, an honour instituted by *Soviet Land* magazine which will be discussed in the next section of the chapter.

### **4.3. Soviet publishing activities in India**

The Soviet ambition to spread their culture and view of the world assumed a very tangible form in the foreign-language publishing initiatives. In India, Soviet books and magazines found such a fertile ground as in the 1970s, the country became the largest consumer of Soviet printed production outside the socialist block. The past time popularity of the Soviet printed materials in India is proved by the cult status acquired today by the Soviet books, especially the beautifully illustrated children's literature. Now it is easy to find various forums and social media groups where enthusiasts digitalize and share their collections. Besides, the Soviet magazines today became a rare and valuable item for Indian collectors. Pankaj Mishra, an Indian writer who like many his contemporaries in the 1970s and 1980s grew up reading Soviet books and magazines, explained that this "subtle [Soviet] campaign" waged also in the remotest Indian towns in which the counterpart, USA, had barely participated, was related to the India's political situation and its role in the Non-Aligned Movement. In his view, India was a major beneficiary of Soviet cultural philanthropy because it had "strong communist parties <...>, was constitutionally committed to a form of socialism, and was also a leader of the third world non-aligned movement, which tilted towards the Soviets."<sup>117</sup> Soviet published production could be divided roughly into two categories: books and magazines translated and published in the Soviet Union then distributed in India through a web of local publishing houses and bookshops on one side, and the material printed in India itself, usually by the Information Department of the Embassy of the Soviet Union to India on the other.

The Soviet publishing industry in the global context stood out on several counts. The sheer amount of books and magazines published was impressive and had no parallels in other countries. Gregory Walker who researched the phenomena of Soviet book publishing estimated that around 300 000 people worked in the Soviet publishing, printing and book distribution machinery.<sup>118</sup> Another striking feature of the Soviet

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<sup>117</sup> Pankaj Mishra, "The East was Read." In *The East Was Read*, ed. Vijay Prashad (New Delhi: LeftWord, 2019), 72.

<sup>118</sup> Gregory Walker, *Soviet book publishing policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 1.

publishing industry was its total centralization. The Soviet government with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union ahead exercised almost total control over the processes of publishing and dissemination of printed material. Officially, the laws of free market based on consumer demand did not govern the Soviet state. The Soviet officials made a distinction between “demand” (*spros*) and “need” (*potrebnost*), and believed that the production should be guided by the strategical needs of the Soviet state, always having in mind the principal goal, the creation of a socialist society. Thus, the cultural production did not have to be shaped by audience tastes. In fact, it was stated that the tastes of the Soviet people should “formed”, or educated to match the clearly defined needs of the Soviet state.<sup>119</sup> Cinema and publishing industries occupied a special place in bringing socialist culture to the masses and subsequent moulding process of socialist citizen. In the USSR, the book or printed production was considered as having primarily an ideological function. Therefore, it should have been accessible on modest price, even disregarding the possible financial losses. For instance, the prices of books should have not be altered in the case of rising printing and paper costs.<sup>120</sup> Thus, when the Soviet published production entered the markets of Asia and Africa, the primary concern of the Soviet state was not to make profits but to bring its socialist message and culture to the foreign masses.

Already in the early post-revolutionary years, there was a high degree of certainty that the knowledge and the literature of other cultures would bring international unity. Maxim Gorky, right after October Revolution, had decided to realize a dream of his own when he founded the short-lived World Literature Publishing House (1918-1924). Its main purpose was to create a library of world literature’s Russian translations dreaming it would draw closer different peoples from all continents.<sup>121</sup> Maria Khotimsky argued that Gorky’s project was both romantic and political in its nature and had a long-ranging impact on the development of Soviet literary translation tradition.<sup>122</sup> From historical perspective, the behemoth Soviet undertaking to translate books into the myriad of Asian and African languages that had been initiated on the mass scale in the 1950s, is not that surprising, as the idea itself had had strong roots among the Soviet intellectuals.

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>121</sup> Maria Khotimsky, “World Literature, Soviet Style: A forgotten episode in the history of the idea,” *Ab Imperio* 3 (2013): 120.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

Indian writer Rahul Sankrityayan, one of the first Indian intellectuals infatuated with the Soviet Union, after his prolonged stay in the country (1945-47) wrote:

Capitalist journalists and writers continue to spread propaganda claiming that there is no freedom of speech in Soviet Russia, and how many people believe in this falsehood! (Reading these articles) it seems that Soviet people get their tongues ripped out for what they say ... But there is freedom of speech, one can say and write what he thinks. In India there is not much room for freedom of thought for the writers of the Birla papers; the doors (of these newspapers) are open to representatives of the owner's personal interests.<sup>123</sup> The truth is that the newspapers in India are in the hands of millionaires and this causes those with independent opinions to get their tongues ripped out. On the other hand, in Russia there are no millionaire owners and no space is given to propaganda in their favour. Here there are monthly magazines, state newspapers like *Izvestia* or Communist Party newspapers like *Pravda*, in addition there are city newspapers, trade unions, army, student associations. There is so much choice of newspapers that even the kolkhozes have their own. It is evident that these newspapers do not say conflicting things when they go to print. And this is the real public platform. All of these platforms are opposed to the capitalist discourse.<sup>124</sup>

A passionate Marxist, Sankrityayan distinguished two important traits of Soviet publishing: the number and variety of the newspapers and magazines and the unanimity of opinions expressed in these publications. Needless to say, the printed material was just another mean to spread the Soviet government's propaganda. However, at the time when Sankrityayan wrote these lines about Soviet newspapers, the production of Soviet publishing machinery was predominantly destined to home consumption, with the exception of some sporadic initiatives aimed at foreign readership. However, the situation changed in the mid-1950s, when the export of the books increased exponentially.

In 2002, Richard Hellie, an American historian who during his academic career had looked into Russian history, published an article in which he revealed his collaboration with the enigmatic *Mezhkniga* in the period between 1959 and 1961. *Mezhkniga*, shortened name for *Mezhdunarodnaya Kniga* (International Book), was the main Soviet book export agency. The history of this agency had started in 1921, when Lenin signed a decree titled *Law on Acquiring and Distributing Foreign Literature* on which a Russian-German joint venture *Kniga* was founded in Berlin. However, *Kniga* was entirely directed

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<sup>123</sup> Sankrityayan refers to the newspapers *Aditya Birla Group*. The most famous newspaper published by this editorial group is English-language *Hindustan Times* founded in 1924.

<sup>124</sup> Rāhul Sāṃkr̥tyāyan, *Merī Jīvan yātrā*, (Nāī Dillī: Rādihākṛṣṇa Prakāśan Prāiveṭ Limiteḍ, 1994), 59.

by the Soviet Union, and its head was USSR's trade representative to Germany, B.S. Stomonyakov. The Council on Books operated under the protection of USSR's National Committee on Foreign Trade. In 1922, *Kniga* opened a branch in Moscow and changed its name to better-known *Mezhdunarodnaya Kniga*. The first news on the “suspicious” activities of *Mezhkniga* in the West appeared in 1941 when *The New York Times* article reported on the trial of three Americans indicted for failing to register with the Secretary of State as propaganda agents.<sup>125</sup> The documents presented to the court, together with witnesses’ accounts, proved that in the USSR *Mezhkniga* enjoyed monopoly over the import and export of printed material. Significantly, the Soviet agency had managed to establish its presence in the US.<sup>126</sup>

Hellie, who had collaborated with *Mezhkniga* at the end of the 1950s, after forty years shed some light on the functioning of the agency. He narrated that certain Mrs. Rose, lower class businesswoman and sympathizer of the USSR, though as many working with the Soviets probably did not belong to the Communist Party of the United States, had got a franchise from *Mezhkniga* and opened a bookstore in Chicago. As she knew no Russian, Mrs. Rose hired Hellie, Russian history graduate, to help her with book orders. The bookstore used to sell dictionaries, Russian classics, and books of Soviet history, mathematics, Soviet technology, science, geography and even chess.<sup>127</sup> The books used to arrive in two ways: directly from the Soviet Union and from the established dealers inside the country, in this case, the US. Hellie recalled often visiting the *Four Continent Book Corporation* founded in the 1930s as branch of *Amtorg*, the “suspicious” organization mentioned in *the New York Times* article. This mode of functioning, getting a franchise to open a bookstore and ordering books either directly from the USSR or from trusted dealers was the ordinary functioning of *Mezhkniga* wherever it established its presence.

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<sup>125</sup> “Bookniga is held creation of U.S.S.R.,” *The New York Times*, June 11, 1941.

The Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) is a United States law requiring persons engaged in domestic political or advocacy work on behalf of foreign interests to register with the Department of Justice and disclose their relationship, activities, and related financial compensation. The act came into effect in 1938. It was originally administered by the Department of State until transferred to the Department of Justice in 1942.

<sup>126</sup> Through the Book department of Amtorg Trading Corporation, Amkniga Corporation and the Bookniga Corporation.

Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Richard Hellie, “Working for the Soviets: Chicago, 1959-1961, Mezhkniga and the Soviet book industry,” *Russian History* 29, no. 2/4 (2002): 541.

During the span of three years 1954-57, nearly 200 Indian delegations of engineers, artists and scholars visited the Soviet Union. At this very moment, the Soviet printed material started to flow into India, even before the signing of Indo-Soviet cultural ties agreement in 1960. *Mezhkniga* exported books, magazines and newspapers in Russian and as well as in Indian vernaculars. The number of printed items exported to India grew impressively from 17,000 to 4,000,000 copies in the years between 1955 and 1958.<sup>128</sup> Moreover, the Soviet books destined for Indian market were translated into English and Indian vernaculars maximizing their diffusion. During the famous Khrushchev's visit to India in 1955, both he and Nehru endorsed greater Indo-Soviet cultural exchange as a principal mean to dispel mutual ignorance and bring two sovereign nations together.<sup>129</sup> The Cultural and Scientific Exchange Programme for 1965/1966 provided extremely detailed guidelines for the Indo-Soviet cultural exchange. For instance, it fixed the number of technicians and cultural workers to be exchanged in cultural and technical fields and of Soviet teachers and students to be sent to India in order to study Indian culture. The points 14 and 34 of the programme regarded the printed material. The former highlighted that "both sides will promote exchanges of scientific journals, magazines and periodicals published in each country."<sup>130</sup> In conclusion, by the mid-1960s, India and the USSR already had a formalized scheme to conduct successfully their cultural relations.

Indians, who grew up especially in the 1970s and 1980s, today vividly remember their Soviet book reading experience. For example, Indian writer and ornithologist Abdul Jamil Urfi recalled that in his hometown of Aligarh there was a bookshop called *Naya Kitab Ghar/House of New Books* that used to sell exclusively Soviet books and was managed by an enthusiastic worker of the CPI.<sup>131</sup> By many of Urfi's generation, the Soviet books were perceived as a symbol of a relation dictated from above, "the main way in which we experienced the Soviet connection was through the propaganda literature, marketed in India by Russian agencies such as FLPH [Foreign Languages Publishing House],

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<sup>128</sup> Barghoorn, *Soviet cultural offensive*, 288.

<sup>129</sup> Surjit Mansingh, *Indo-Soviet Relations in the Nehru Years: the view from New Delhi* in Parallel History Project on Cooperative Security (PHP), [http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/lory1.ethz.ch/collections/coll\\_india/NehruYears-Introduction3593.html?navinfo=96318#F1](http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/lory1.ethz.ch/collections/coll_india/NehruYears-Introduction3593.html?navinfo=96318#F1) accessed December 18, 2020.

<sup>130</sup> "Cultural and Scientific exchange programme for 1965/1966" in Sager, *Moscow's hand in India*, 212–219.

<sup>131</sup> Abdul Jamal Urfi, "Remembering the Soviet Books for Children in the Cold War Years," accessed December 13, 2021, <https://www.caleidoscope.in/nostalgiphilia/remembering-the-soviet-books-for-children-in-the-cold-war-years>

Progress Publishers, Raduga (Rainbow), Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, Mir Publishers.”<sup>132</sup>

According to the 2011 Census conducted by the Indian government, around 10% of Indians speak English. In the 1970s and 1980s, English was spoken primarily by educated Indian elite but was also used as administrative medium in the communications between linguistically diverse Indian states and the Central administration. The Soviet Union’s choice to publish in 13 Indian vernaculars was not accidental but was the result of the Soviet study and knowledge of Indian linguistic situation. The USSR’s strategy brought significant results in disseminating Soviet worldview and culture. In addition, the extensive network of distribution of published material hugely amplified the successes of this cultural strategy. In fact, the Soviet book readers in India recall that the Soviet books used to be sold not only in cities’ bookshops, but the books used to be brought in “mobile shops” on wheels to the remotest villages.<sup>133</sup> The organization that executed the biggest part of this colossal undertaking of publishing was Moscow-based Progress Publishers, which became the main translator, publisher and distributor of Russo-Soviet literature in Asia and Africa.

The Publishing Cooperative of Foreign Workers (ITIR) was founded in Moscow in 1931 and at first, it was exclusively devoted to the translation of Marxist texts.<sup>134</sup> The ITIR’s history was marked by continuous internal reorganizations: in 1938, it became Publishing House of Literature in Foreign Languages and in 1963, Progress Publishers. During its existence, Progress had partnerships with the New York-based International Publishers, the London’s Lawrence & Wishart, and the New Delhi’s People’s Publishing House (PPH).<sup>135</sup> The People’s Publishing House was the publishing organ of the Communist Party of India, at first established in Bombay (modern-day Mumbai) in 1947, later its headquarters were shifted to New Delhi. The PPH was the main importer of Soviet texts in India that reprinted, commissioned and distributed the texts produced by Moscow’s Progress and other publishing houses.

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Pankaj Mishra, “The East was Read.” In *The East Was Read*, ed. Vijay Prashad (New Delhi: LeftWord, 2019).

<sup>134</sup> Djalalov, *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism*, 98.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 99.

In the 1950s, when the Soviet Union intensified its project “to win hearts and minds” in the former colonial world, Progress and other Soviet publishing houses like Mir, which published scientific titles only, assumed a pivotal role in this enterprise. However, in order to spread effectively the USSR’s image, worldview and message in different languages of India, the Soviets had to turn to Indian translators. Arun Som was invited to Moscow and hired to translate Soviet works for Indian market, working at first for Progress publishers and later on for Raduga.<sup>136</sup> Usually, Indian translators worked in Moscow on the contracts of 2-3 years and were paid generously in comparison with the translation fees that could have been expected in India at the time. Some translators like Som remained in the Soviet Union for two or three decades and only the collapse of the Soviet Union and the consequent absence of translation work constrained them to go back to India. Bhisham Sahni, the foremost Hindi writer, had worked in Moscow in the period between 1956 and 1963. He recalled that “the publishing house where I was going to work as a translator translated books into twenty-seven world languages. Four of us had been brought from India to translate into four different Indian languages—Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, and Tamil. Later, more Indian languages were included, eventually adding up to thirteen. <...> Those days were a flood of new stimuli for me.”<sup>137</sup> T. Dharmarajan, who spent eight years in Moscow translating Soviet books into Tamil, revealed that there was no literary canon and no clear rationale behind the choice of works to translate because Soviet officials were in charge of the business and they used to handpick them beforehand. In addition, Tamil translators mostly worked on English translations and not on the originals in Russian.<sup>138</sup> It is probable that Dharmarajan’s described mode of working was not an isolated case and many texts that reached India were translated from English in order to speed up the whole process.

Children’s books represented the biggest share of Soviet literature exported to India. Arun Som estimated it to be around 70-80% of all imported production.<sup>139</sup> According to him, this prevalence of children’s literature in the Soviet book export was pushed by the need to spread Soviet worldview. However, the favouring of children’s literature was not

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<sup>136</sup> Interview with Arun Som, “Bollywood and Bolsheviks,”  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5uM5aA1sT3k>

<sup>137</sup> Sahni, *Today’s Pasts*, 257.

<sup>138</sup> Giedrė Jankevičiūtė, and V. Geetha, *Another History of the Children’s Picture Book: from Soviet Lithuania to India* (Chennai: Tara Books, 2017), 1

<sup>139</sup> Interview with Arun Som, “Bollywood and Bolsheviks,”  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5uM5aA1sT3k>

merely chosen to spread more effectively propaganda, as the centrality of children in the Soviet messianic ideology was deep-rooted. The children, rather than adults, were on the threshold of change, and precisely they would have to build the communism. Therefore, the young ones had to be reclaimed by the Soviet state from tradition, old ways and family customs that hindered their social progress, and eventually turned into “little comrades.”<sup>140</sup> The amount of Soviet children’s literature in India suggests that the Soviets had a tailored cultural project regarding the country. On the other hand, India had enormous educational problems of its own. In 1971, Indian literacy rate stood at meagre 34.35%.<sup>141</sup> On the contrary, by 1959, the Soviet Union achieved almost universal literacy.<sup>142</sup> The rate when Bolsheviks took power had stood at 37.9% of the male population and 12.5% of the female. This impressive progress was initiated with the eradication of illiteracy campaign called *Likbez* carried out during the 1920 and 1930s. At the time, throughout the Soviet Union schools, reading rooms and different educational institutions had started to mushroom. Thus, cheaply available abundant books were crucial to achieve universal literacy. No doubt, this enormous achievement of the USSR fascinated the Third World intellectuals. Bhasham Sahni, whose both children studied in Moscow, in his memoirs wrote: “<...> I didn’t have to spend a single paisa on either child’s education. It was entirely free. <...> This free education was provided for all children in the Soviet Union. Before the revolution, a majority of the people in Russia were illiterate. When we were there, a hundred percent of the people—women and men—were not only literate, but secondary education was also mandatory. I am sitting here singing praises of conditions that have already been destroyed.”<sup>143</sup> Not surprisingly, the programmes of Indo-Soviet Scientific and Cultural Exchange regarded also educational matters. For instance, the point 34 of the programme for 1965/1966 established that the both sides will “continue to exchange text books, teaching aids, children’s books, methodological literature and film slides.”<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Jankevičiūtė and Geetha, *Another History of the Children’s Picture Book*, 27–29.

<sup>141</sup> “Census 2011: Literacy Rate and Sex Ratio in India Since 1901 to 2011,” <https://www.jagranjosh.com/general-knowledge/census-2011-literacy-rate-and-sex-ratio-in-india-since-1901-to-2011-1476359944-1>

<sup>142</sup> Ronald D. Liebowitz, “Education and Literacy Data in Russian and Soviet Censuses” in *Research Guide to the Russian and Soviet Censuses*, ed. Ralph S. Clem (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016).

<sup>143</sup> Sahni, *Today’s Pasts*, 261.

<sup>144</sup> “Cultural and Scientific exchange programme for 1965/1966” in Sager, *Moscow’s hand in India*, 212–219.

Another group of Soviet publications in India consisted of material produced by the Information Department at the Embassy of the USSR. The CIA estimated that by 1985 the number of Soviet books, magazines and pamphlets in India was around 25 million copies a year.<sup>145</sup> The official data issued over the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s by the Indian government on Foreign Missions publications reveal an interesting pattern of publishing activities. This “dry” and statistical data disclose not only publishing patterns of both Great Powers but also mirror the fluctuations of their policies towards India. Already in 1966, the year Indira Gandhi became the Prime Minister, the USSR ranked first in the list of Foreign Missions publications with forty-two publications out of total 90 published by 21 embassies. The majority of Soviet printed material was in English (8), but was followed by numerous publications in Indian vernaculars like Hindi (3), Bengali (3), Malayalam (4), the language spoken in Kerala, the communist stronghold in India, Marathi (2), Gujarati (2), Tamil, Telugu, Assamese, Kannada and Oriya 3 publications each, Urdu and Punjabi (2).<sup>146</sup> The USA lagged behind with 13 publications, out of which five were in English, while Hindi, Bengali, Malayalam, Marathi, Gujarati, Tamil and Telugu had one publication for each.<sup>147</sup> In 1971, the total number of Foreign Missions publications was at 119. The *Press in India* report on the year 1971 also provided the summary of publication patterns in the period 1966-71. The USSR once again was first on the list: 42 publications in 1966 and 48 in 1971. The USA distributed 13 and 20 publications respectively. The amount of all printed material in English remained stable, while in Hindi, albeit modestly, grew.<sup>148</sup> In 1973, the total number of publications declined to 106. The decrease was due to cessation of some journals’ publication. For instance, the USA ceased to publish *American Reporter* in eight Indian languages. The difference between the USA and the USSR was even starker now. The former published nine journals in comparison with forty-nine of the Soviet Union. The number of the USA’s publications was the highest in 1971 when it stood at 20, but merely a year later

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<sup>145</sup> “The Soviets in India: Moscow’s Major Penetration Programme,” An Intelligence Assessment, CIA Electronic Reading Room, 1,

<https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP86T00586R000400490007-7.pdf>

<sup>146</sup> *Press in India, 1967: Annual Report on the Press compiled by the Registrar of Newspapers for India under the PRB Act for the year 1966, Part I* (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1967), 276–277.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> *Press in India: Sixteenth Report of the Registrar of Newspapers for India under the Press and Registration of Books Act, Part I* (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1972), 336–348.

started a steep decline.<sup>149</sup> In August 1971, India had signed the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation and to America's chagrin, had managed to carve out independent Bangladesh out of former East Pakistan. After 1971, US attention to India decreased sharply.

The report that reveals the most information is *Press in India 1976* that deals with data of 1975. The Soviet Union was once again ahead all among Foreign Missions with 50 publications, five times more than the USA, the second in the list.<sup>150</sup> Importantly, the report gives a full catalogue of publications. The most circulated Soviet publication was *Soviet Bhūmi*, a Hindi fortnightly that according to official data distributed 104,195 copies.<sup>151</sup> In the late 1970s, the pattern of Soviet publishing remained steady. In 1976 and 1977, the Soviet embassy published 50 publications while the number of USA's publications declined further and stood at 8 publications.<sup>152</sup> The 1980s did not brought significant changes as the number stood at 49 Soviet publications.<sup>153</sup> The last report deals with the data of 1991. Even then, the number of Soviet publications remained unchanged (49).<sup>154</sup> However, the data on Soviet periodicals' circulation and number of copies distributed is missing in the reports of the 1980s and early 1990s.

Today, the majority of the USSR's embassy publications are hardly accessible; they disappeared in either Indian homes or dustbins. However, the nostalgic accounts of those who grew up reading Soviet books and magazines started to pour in recently. Pankaj

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<sup>149</sup> *Press in India: Eighteenth Report of the Registrar of Newspapers for India under the Press and Registration of Books Act, Part I* (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1974), 335–348.

<sup>150</sup> *Press in India: Twentieth Report of the Registrar of Newspapers for India under the Press and Registration of Books Act, Part I* (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1976), 343.

<sup>151</sup> "Appendix V, List of Foreign Missions Publications-1975" in *Press in India: Twentieth Report of the Registrar of Newspapers for India under the Press and Registration of Books Act, Part I* (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1976), 449–453.

<sup>152</sup> *Press in India: Twenty first Report of the Registrar of Newspapers for India under the Press and Registration of Books Act, Part I* (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1977), 282–293

*Press in India: Twenty Second Report of the Registrar of Newspapers for India under the Press and Registration of Books Act, Part I* (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1978), 329–333.

<sup>153</sup> *Press in India: Thirty Third Report of the Registrar of Newspapers for India under the Press and Registration of Books Act, Part I* (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1989), 339–343.

<sup>154</sup> *Press in India: Thirty Sixth Report of the Registrar of Newspapers for India under the Press and Registration of Books Act, Part I* (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1992), 363–369.

Mishra, an Indian essayist now based in the West, recalls the eagerness with which he awaited the arrival of *Soviet Life*, another Soviet magazine: “It is hard now, in these days of visual excess, to recall the sensuous poverty of the towns I lived in: the white light falling all day from the sky upon a flat land only slightly relieved by bare rock and the occasional tree <...>. It explains the eagerness with which I awaited *Soviet Life*, the first magazine I subscribed to, which was an illustrated press release boasting of Soviet achievements in science, agriculture, industrial production, sports, and literature.”<sup>155</sup> Another reader of Soviet magazines said that “each issue <...> had smiling faces of Russian working class, happy families, clean streets with swanky cars and factories with state-of-the-art machinery. Everything was picture-perfect. It was nothing but a public relations exercise to extol the virtues of communism.”<sup>156</sup>

Some issues of the most circulated *Soviet Bhūmi* could be found in several libraries in the world, but often in closed collections.<sup>157</sup> *Soviet Bhūmi* in all respects was similar to Mishra’s mentioned *Soviet Life*. The articles on Soviet metallurgical works, *kolkhoz* life, the culture of the various nationalities inhabiting the Soviet Union and Soviet art and literature filled the pages of the magazine. Written in simple language and plain style, the magazine was destined for children and adults alike, as it combined descriptions of great technological achievements and articles on foreign policy with children’s stories and abundance of visual imagery. The Soviet Union through its magazines in India not only presented a sort of aesthetics of its own by creating a certain image of itself but also pushed its foreign policy agenda. In an issue of 1965, a lengthy article entitled “The sacrosanct goals of Soviet foreign policy” explained to Indian public the peaceful goals of Soviet foreign policy.<sup>158</sup> As the Indo-Soviet relations grew in all fields, the articles on Indo-Soviet friendship became more frequent. “In the relations between India and the Soviet Union, the month of August is of a particular importance, because in this month two important anniversaries are celebrated, that of Indo-Soviet treaty of Friendship and Cooperation and of Indian independence,” the article reminds and vividly describes the

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<sup>155</sup> Mishra, “The East was Read,” 71–72.

<sup>156</sup> “A Generation Fed on Misha, Sovietland...”, *The Citizen*, <https://www.thecitizen.in/index.php/en/newsdetail/index/9/9945/a-generation-fed-on-misha-sovietland>

<sup>157</sup> The most reliable way to obtain this magazine is to acquire it on *eBay* or other internet auctions from some passionate Indian collectors who managed to preserve it.

<sup>158</sup> “Soviyat videś nīti ke punīt lakṣya,” *Soviet Bhūmi*, September, 1965.

celebrations in both countries.<sup>159</sup> The visual imaginary present in these magazines is striking as well. For instance, the cover of 1985 issue was adorned by a photo of an immense Soviet ship named “Indira Gandhi” in memoriam of the first death anniversary of the Indian Prime Minister.<sup>160</sup>

If *Soviet Bhūmi* even at the peak of Indo-Soviet friendship remained quite balanced in its content, that is, a blend of simplistic articles mixed with pictures on various aspects of Indo-Soviet relations and Soviet life and culture, the same could not be said about its English equivalent *Soviet Land* in 1980s. For instance, the issue of December 1980 was almost entirely dedicated to Brezhnev’s visit to India and Indo-Soviet relations with occasional mix of photos of Russian beauties and the poetry of Alexander Blok. Although, the return to power of Indira Gandhi 1980 was marked by cooling Congress’ relations with both the Soviet Union and the Communist Party of India, the Indo-Soviet rhetoric not only remained unchanged but also became even more intense and formulaic. When Brezhnev landed in India, “New Delhi’s Palam Airport was a blaze of colour and wore an exquisitely beautiful look <...>; with crowds of men, women and children wreathed all in smiles, their faces radiating joy and warmth <...>. Under the perfectly cloudless sky, in the warm glow of the bright December morning sun, the flags of the USSR and the Republic of India fluttered proudly in the gentle breeze, clasping each other as closely as the hands of the two friendly peoples who have been inspired over the long years of their legendary colours.”<sup>161</sup>

*Misha*, a children’s magazine was popular in India. This magazine, unlike *Soviet Land* and *Soviet Bhumi*, was printed in the USSR then shipped to various countries. *Misha* had editions in English, Russian, Spanish, French, Italian and Hungarian. One Indian reader of the magazine recalls that “*Misha* was the most beautiful magazine I have seen as a kid. The glossy pages featured Russian folk tales, riddles, puzzles and exquisite illustrations. It was our window to the world... Russia literally delivered to your doorstep.”<sup>162</sup> The striking feature of all Soviet magazines delivered to India was the abundance of visual content. Especially English editions, the language that was used by a comparably small section of Indian society, were much more graphic than the editions in Indian vernaculars.

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<sup>159</sup> “Śānti aur maitrī ke dṛṣhikaraṇ kā yug,” *Soviet Bhūmi*, September, 1975.

<sup>160</sup> *Soviet Bhūmi*, November, 1985.

<sup>161</sup> “L.I. Brezhnev: New Historic Visit to India,” *Soviet Land*, December 1980.

<sup>162</sup> “A Generation Fed on Misha, Sovietland...”

This feature of Soviet magazines in English allowed them to reach even those who did not know the language at all, as the images of Soviet life or Indo-Soviet friendship spoke more than words to the Indian readership.

In 1965, Soviet Land magazine together with its vernacular equivalents instituted the Soviet Land–Nehru Award which would be conferred on Indians "for their outstanding contribution to the promotion of international understanding, goodwill and friendship among people of the world."<sup>163</sup> The award consisted of a medallion with inscription "Long Live Indo-Soviet Friendship" both in English and Hindi, a cash prize that varied from 10,000 to 15,000 rupees and a two-week trip to the Soviet Union.<sup>164</sup> Usual recipients of the Soviet Land-Nehru Award were mainly Indian writers, journalists, playwrights and translators but occasionally even film stars received the award. For instance, in 1974, Nargis, Indian film superstar who was immensely popular in the USSR, received the award "for her signal services to the cause of Indo-Soviet friendship and peace, especially for her role in *Pardesi*."<sup>165</sup>

In 1981, Raj Kapoor, Nargis' partner and director in various movies, was awarded. During the ceremony, O.P. Mehra, Governor of Maharashtra, urged the winners to "continue their efforts toward building bridges between the two countries [India and the USSR] and highlight the ideals of Pandit Nehru." The Soviet consul-general A.G. Kashirin added that "Soviet people revered a great son of India like Nehru and a leader who had laid the foundations of Indo-Soviet friendship."<sup>166</sup> In fact, in the 1970s, the usual motivation for being awarded was "promoting Indo-Soviet friendship" and similar.<sup>167</sup> Already in 1967, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, who often participated in the Soviet Land award ceremonies, had stated that "Soviet Land Nehru Awards to writers, journalists and children would further strengthen the ties between India and the Soviet Union" and would "open a new door to the Indian people to know the Soviet people."<sup>168</sup> That year, Bhisham Sahni's brother, Balraj Sahni, famous Indian theatre and cinema actor, got the award for

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<sup>163</sup> <https://www.marudhararts.com/printed-auction/auction-no-28/lot-no-299/medallions/others/lead-medallion-of-soviet-land-nehru-award-.html#:~:text=It%20was%20established%20in%201965,award%20is%202.5%20million%20rupees.>

<sup>164</sup> 10,000 rupees of 1975 today would be around 240,000 rupees or around 3,200 dollars. <https://www.inflationtool.com/indian-rupee/1975-to-present-value>

<sup>165</sup> "Nargis wins "Soviet Land" award," *The Times of India*, November 13, 1974.

<sup>166</sup> "Raj Kapoor gets Soviet award," *The Times of India*, December 29, 1981.

<sup>167</sup> "Nehru awards to poets, writers given away," *The Times of India*, December 23, 1975.

<sup>168</sup> "Nehru Awards will strengthen Indo-Soviet ties," *The Times of India*, November 16, 1967.

his travelogue *Meri Rusi Safarnama/My Russian Travelogue*.<sup>169</sup> As mentioned by Indira Gandhi, even Indian children were among the receivers of Soviet Land Nehru Award. The Embassy of the USSR used to organize children's painting contests through its magazines. Indian children were required to send their paintings on the specific topic established by the Embassy. For example, in 1968, the topic was "an Indian festival with Soviet friends" and in 1976, "a visit to Soviet friends." Usually, five children were awarded with a month's holiday on the Black Sea at Young Pioneer's camp "Artek", a model camp for the children from privileged Soviet families or coming from abroad.<sup>170</sup> In the 1970s, the chairman of the award committee was already familiar K.P.S. Menon, one of the most fervent friends of the Soviet Union.<sup>171</sup> He had become the head of the committee in 1965 when the award was instituted and in 1979, he welcomed the audience for the 15<sup>th</sup> year in succession.<sup>172</sup> K.A. Abbas, a leading playwright who used to visit the USSR frequently, since the 1970s was head of the advisory board of the Soviet Land Nehru Award Committee. In the 1980s, major changes occurred as the chairman of the committee became T.N. Kaul, an advisor of the Prime Minister.<sup>173</sup> The substitution of Menon was due to Indira Gandhi's fallout with him in the period between 1977 and 1980 when her relations with the CPI and the Soviet Union started to deteriorate. In 1979, K.P.S. Menon was awarded Lenin Peace Prize and P.G.N. Nayar congratulating him reminded quite uneasy facts:

In any appraisal of the Indo-Soviet relations of the period 1952-1976, apart from your good name, three other names stand eloquently significant. Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Nikita Khrushchev. A friend of mine drew my attention to your article. <...> you have brought many names. Khrushchev and Nehru were just mentioned in passing. But not once even a distant reference is made about Mrs. Gandhi. <...> Perhaps Indira Gandhi has become persona non grata with the elite of India today. <...> As I told K.A. Abbas "everyone praised her sky-high, sycophancy and flattery reigned supreme." I think I wrote to you that Indira would have declared

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> "PM to present Soviet Land awards on Friday," *The Times of India*, November 13, 1968.

<sup>171</sup> "Soviet award for Hindi writer and journalists," *The Times of India*, November 11, 1976.

<sup>172</sup> "Soviet Land awards distributed," *The Times of India*, November 17, 1979.

<sup>173</sup> "Soviet Land award for Ms. Parulekar," *The Times of India*, November 11, 1984.

with concurrence of the Soviet Union your birthday as the Indo-Soviet Friendship Day.<sup>174</sup>

The *Soviet Land* magazine, with its vernacular editions, exercised cultural influence not only through printed material. First of all, the magazine introduced to Indian readership a captivating image of the Soviet Union, its ways and customs together with the political propaganda on Indo-Soviet relations and Soviet foreign policy. In 1968, G. R. Okulov, publisher of *Soviet Land* and chairman of the western regional advisory board of the Soviet Land Nehru Award, told that the magazine “had been a mouthpiece of Indo-Soviet friendship” and by that time had already 500,000 subscribers.<sup>175</sup> The *Press in India* reports suggested an increasing pattern of Soviet magazine publishing over the years, thus it could be supposed that the readership grew in the two following decades reaching numbers that were more impressive.

The Soviet Land Nehru Award was destined to two susceptible groups, Indian children and intellectuals. The first preference could be explained by the traditional attention to children in the Soviet cultural ideology. Children, unlike the adults, could be moulded easier and were less conscious of the “sub-texts” present in the written texts and in the cultural diplomacy initiatives like Soviet Land awards. The second choice to target Indian intellectuals, in all probability, was based on the widely diffused conviction in the West and Soviet Union alike that claimed that it is better to influence those who can influence others than to address the masses directly.

After the WWII, the strident calls for worldwide workers revolution had lost their appeal. The Soviet Union in admitting the “national ways” to socialism had to change its strategy. India, defining itself as a “socialist” country, became a proving ground for the Soviet covert methods to gain influence in other countries. Leaving aside the sensational claims of Soviet defectors about the massive scale of KGB operations in India aimed to spread disinformation, plant articles in the Indian press or “buy” Indian politicians, it should be admitted that the Soviet cultural project in India went hand in hand with active political, military and economic reciprocal engagements, if not surpassed them. The Soviet books

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<sup>174</sup> “Correspondence and papers regarding the award of Lenin Peace Prize to K.P.S. Menon, felicitating and congratulating him,” II instalment, subject no. 36, NMML.

<sup>175</sup> “4 children among 8 to win Soviet Land awards,” *The Times of India*, December 21, 1968.

and magazines were extremely cheap and easily available, read by the children of liberal middle class and working class families alike.

#### **4.4. Indo-Soviet cinematic collaborations, Tashkent Film Festival and Indian cinema in the USSR**

Cinema, the most important of the arts according to Lenin, constituted a crucial part of Indo-Soviet cultural diplomacy. It could be said that India exported its culture through films very successfully. In the period between 1954 and 1964 alone, better known as Khrushchev Thaw in the Cold War historiography, thirty-seven Indian films (mostly Hindi-language productions) were screened in the Soviet Union, and in the same decade, festivals of Indian cinema in the USSR began to take place. *Awara* (1951), a movie that reached enormous success in Soviet movie theatres and made Indian actors Raj Kapoor and Nargis stars in the USSR, attracted around 64 million of viewers in 1954, an unprecedented success at that time in the Soviet Union that will be matched later by *Zeeta Aur Geeta* (1972) and *Disco Dancer* (1982). However, the export of Indian movies to the Soviet Union represents only one side of the medal as Indian and Soviet filmmakers decided to work on joint projects. The first in the series of Indo-Soviet cooperation was *Pardesi* (1957), a *Mosfilm Studio* and *Naya Sansar International* co-production that included scriptwriters, directors, cast, set designers and composers of both countries. Soviet movies in India did never match the successes their Indian counterparts reached in the USSR. However, Soviets were eager to create a space for Third World cinemas as they had done with the literature founding Afro-Asian Writers Association. The initiative came to be known as Tashkent Film Festival and managed to attract some major filmmakers like Raj Kapoor.

##### *Indo-Soviet cinematic co-productions*

In 1968, Soviet Lithuanian cinema magazine *Ekrano naujienos*/News of the Screen, the equivalent of Russian *Sovetskii Ekran*/Soviet Screen, published an interview with Indian cinema's megastar Raj Kapoor. The interview was directly requested by the readership of the magazine who had sent numerous letters to the editor asking news about upcoming films of the Indian actor. By this time, Raj Kapoor was well known even in the remotest corners of the USSR, in its eastern and western flanks alike. The Soviet fans wanted to know why India produced so many films. Raj Kapoor explained that "illiterate people do

not have opportunities to enjoy any forms of art, except cinema. For the poor people cinema was an escape and their window to another world.”<sup>1</sup> Indian cinema had such a massive audience at home because of its escapist nature and of the low literacy rate that was still plaguing Indians, but this escapist quality attracted the Soviet audiences too.

The Soviet courting of India had started in the 1950s and from this decade, the beginnings of cultural diplomacy between the two countries where cinema played a central role could be traced. In 1954, the first delegation of Indian filmmakers that visited the USSR constituted of Raj Kapoor, K.A. Abbas, screenwriter linked to the CPI-affiliated Indian People’s Theatre Association (IPTA) and director Bimal Roy. All of them were central figures in the nascent Indian Hindi film industry of Bombay and in the near future, they would play their role in the developing of Indo-Soviet co-productions. The visit of 1954 marked the beginning of Indo-Soviet cinematic collaboration, when the “friendship and cooperation” era also in this field was announced. In practice, this declaration meant a future increase of the import/export of Indian and Soviet films in each country and more significantly, the opportunity of joint co-productions.<sup>2</sup> The idea behind joint-productions was to create films that could blend each culture’s favoured narratives and motifs, truly popular films that could be the proof of genuine Indo-Soviet friendship. Importantly, not only the narrative of these collaborations should represent both countries at once, but also staff and crews should have equal representation, including two directors, two scriptwriters, and Soviet and Indian actors.

The first Indo-Soviet cinematic collaboration saw the light of the day in 1957. *Pardesi/Khozhdenie za tri morya/Journey Beyond Three Seas* described the travels of Afanasy Nikitin, a merchant from Tver who had travelled to India at the end of the fifteenth century. Popular actors Oleg Strizhenov and Nargis played the leading roles.<sup>3</sup> “Progressive” actor Balraj Sahni also figured in the cast and K.A. Abbas was the director. He later recalled that during his stay in the Soviet Union in 1954, where the idea of a joint film had emerged, the Soviet side “expressed the wish that the material of such a joint film should be equally interesting for audiences in both India and in the Soviet Union. <...> From the Soviet writer Boris Polevoy I heard about the Russian traveller of the 15th

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<sup>1</sup> “Mūsų interviu: Radžas Kapuras,” *Ekrano naujienos*, no. 22, 1968, Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania (MMNLL).

<sup>2</sup> Masha Salazkina, “Soviet-Indian Co-productions: Alibaba as Political Allegory,” *Cinema Journal* 49, no.4 (Summer 2010): 74.

<sup>3</sup> K.A. Abbas and V. Pronin directed the movie.

century Afanasy Nikitin, who reached India and lived for three years among the peasants of Maharashtra and the people of South India. I suggested this idea to the Soviet side: it was immediately approved <...>.”<sup>4</sup> Among all Indo-Soviet cinematic collaborations, *Pardesi* remained the most acclaimed one at home and abroad as it had been nominated for Cannes Palme d’Or in 1958. The narrative regarded Nikitin’s trip to India and his prolonged stay there where he fell in love with Indian girl Champa. Nikitin is portrayed as a foreigner, who unlike British and other Europeans, comes to India not to exploit resources and people, but guided by his curiosity and fascination for an unknown land. Once arrived, he put all his efforts to study and understand Indian people and culture. In the succeeding decades, Afanasy Nikitin often figured in Indo-Soviet rhetoric as a symbol of genuine and reciprocal curiosity towards each other, untainted by mercenary concerns. Nikitin was the first real link that connected the two countries together which in the twentieth century grew into the genuine friendship based on the mutual respect. Abbas later recalled, “during the filming in India, we again and again convinced each other that our work is entirely consistent with the spirit of friendship. A variety of people — poor merchants, students, peasants, fishermen, boatmen and even priests from the temple — sought to help us when they learned that we were working with Soviet filmmakers.”<sup>5</sup>

In 1973, K.P.S. Menon, head of the ISCUS and of the Soviet Land Nehru Award Committee, proposed to ISCUS Soviet equivalent, the Society of Soviet-Indian Cultural Relations, to produce a joint documentary about Afanasy Nikitin. From the Soviet side, V. Lobumudrova agreed that such film “would be of a great value since the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his visit to India is really a great event” and informed Menon that “a full length documentary about Soviet-Indian cooperation and friendship is going produced in our country by the USSR State Cinema Committee.”<sup>6</sup> Menon replied to Lobumudrova that he “had tried to enlist the interest of Balraj Sahni, a most eminent actor and great friend of the Soviet Union, who, as you know has passed away. He was deeply interested in this project. <...> He [earlier had] suggested that perhaps we might like to make use of his son Ajay Sahni who had his training in cinematography in Moscow.”<sup>7</sup> However, it

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<sup>4</sup> “Journey Beyond Three Seas,” Russian Information Centre, <https://russinfo.in/en/journey-beyond-three-seas-the-film/>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> “Correspondence received by K.P.S. Menon as the president of Indo-Soviet Cultural Society,” I instalment, subject no. 536, NMML.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

seems that this joint documentary never saw the light of the day but the imagery of Afanasy Nikitin and the narrative of his travels survived even the collapse of the Soviet Union. For instance, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Ministry of External Affairs of India commissioned the documentary *Footsteps of Nikitin* that follows the itinerary of the traveller.<sup>8</sup> A very recent study on Indo-Russian diplomatic relations written by Arun Mohanty claimed that “Nikitin did not complain about India as harshly as other Europeans. <...>. While speaking about his impressions, he was always an unprejudiced and wise observer. <...> He has no repugnance for the natives and does not talk about endless beastly qualities of Indians, as a Western traveller would do.”<sup>9</sup> Even nowadays, marked by stable and reliable relations between India and Russia, Nikitin’s figure and travel remain an important cultural narrative promoted by both countries.

In the 1970s, three other joint co-productions *Black Mountain/Chernaya gora* (1971), *Rikki Tikki Tavi* (1975), based on Rudyard Kipling’s short story of the same name, and *Mera Naam Joker/My name is Joker* (1970) were released. The most significant among them was *Mera Naam Joker*. It was directed, produced and edited by Raj Kapoor who also took the leading role while K. A. Abbas wrote the script. The movie had some Russian actors in its cast, however, this time direction and production was entirely in the hands of Indian filmmakers. A colossal saga, more than four hours long, depicted the life of Raju, a clown who must make his audience laugh at the cost of his own sorrows and of three women who had influenced the course of his life. The first “chapter” concentrated on Raju’s childhood and teenage years’ experience. The second one narrated Raju’s collaboration with Soviet circus artists in Bombay and his love story with Russian trapezist Marina; while the third, his short-lived artistic and romantic partnership with the orphan Meena, an aspiring actress. The idea to create a movie about a clown’s life struck Raj Kapoor after he had watched a Czechoslovakia State circus show in Bombay in 1960.<sup>10</sup> The second chapter of the movie is the most relevant as it depicted Soviet entertainers coming to Bombay to promote Indo-Soviet relations. Soviet circus artists, though unable to communicate with Raju directly, are friendly and collaborative. From the beginning, Marina feels a degree of sympathy towards Raju and the sentiment is reciprocal. The two cannot speak with each other, but slowly both start to learn their

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<sup>8</sup> *Footsteps of Nikitin*, Indian diplomacy,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q1zujxAhmg8>

<sup>9</sup> Mohanty, *Tracing Indo-Soviet diplomatic history*, 22.

<sup>10</sup> K.A. Abbas, *Mera Naam Joker: The Complete Story* (New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2014), 1.

languages and understand each other. In the end, broken-hearted Marina had to leave Raju, as she cannot remain in India. Often small details could gain a significance and for instance, in one scene is revealed that Marina is a fan of Kapoor's *Awara* (1951), the first Indian blockbuster in the USSR. The benign portrayal of the friendly Soviet circus artists could be interpreted as symbols of Kapoor's gratitude to the USSR and Soviet audiences for the immense popularity he had enjoyed there.<sup>11</sup> In present-day India, the movie acquired cult status but upon its release, it was a box office flop in the country probably due to its excessive length. Years later, also Kapoor attributed such a failure to the same reason. It did much better in the Soviet Union where in 1972 the movie's three parts were released separately becoming box office success. A combined audience of around 73 million watched *Mera Naam Joker*.<sup>12</sup> However, Sudha Rajagopalan, examining Soviet documents, pointed to another explanation for movie's commercial failure in India. Raj Kapoor became involved in a controversy with the IMPEC, Indian trading organization that allegedly had been neglectful in promoting the distribution of the film. Besides, some Indian anti-Soviet groups had opposed the screening of the film in Bombay.<sup>13</sup> The expensive and lengthy production of *Mera Naam Joker* drained Kapoor and his family's financial resources, and the subsequent box office failure in India put the whole Kapoor family in a very precarious condition. Kapoor, declaring himself a "sincere friend" of the USSR, in order to compensate at least partially his immense financial losses, requested the Soviet government to purchase and distribute the movie. Goskino, USSR State Committee for Cinematography, requesting Ministry of Trade more funds to buy the film because "it will enjoy great commercial success", highlighted that Indian film professionals of Kapoor's stature exercised a great influence in India and thus were worthy of cultivation.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, this situation revealed that the support of Indian filmmakers was an important element of the Soviet political strategy in India.

The joint Indo-Soviet productions in the 1970s were not as successful as it had been anticipated, however the 1980s was marked by commercially successful film in India and the Soviet Union alike. *Ali Baba aur chalees chor/Prikliucheniiia Ali Baba i soroka razboinnokov/Ali Baba and the forty thieves* (1980) was directed by Uzbek Latif Faiziyev

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<sup>11</sup> Ashish Rajyadhyaksha and Paul Willemen, ed. *Encyclopedia of Indian cinema* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 404.

<sup>12</sup> "Menya zovut Dzhoker," <https://www.kinopoisk.ru/film/39723/>

<sup>13</sup> Rajagopalan, *Leave disco dancer alone!*, 89.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

and Indian Umesh Mehra. That year, the movie became the most screened foreign film in the Soviet Union with 52.8 million viewers. In India, it reached “Silver Jubilee” status after running in cinemas for twenty-five weeks continuously.<sup>15</sup> *Ali Baba* proved to be the most financially successful of all Indo-Soviet cinematic collaborations.

### *Tashkent Film Festival*

In the early 1950s, the USSR became alarmed of US-funded Congress for Cultural Freedom’s activities in the developing countries. Yet the Soviet state had an advantage: its international propaganda contained anti-racist and anti-colonial rhetoric while the USA was continuously criticized for racism and segregation. The USSR had always been eager to present itself as an ethnically diverse country where different people managed to live in peace and harmony. In order to convince Third World intellectuals that the Soviet Union was not just another white empire, various Soviet Central Asian cultural bodies were created to engage with the developing countries.<sup>16</sup> Historically, Central Asia was a meeting point for different Asian peoples and, as pointed out in the second chapter of this thesis, the Russian Empire saw Central Asia as a gateway to Indian subcontinent. Thus, not surprisingly, in the Soviet era this region became a major hub of Afro-Asian and Soviet encounters. Tbilisi, Baku, Alma-Ata, Samarkand and Bukhara often figured in the itineraries of Afro-Asian and Latin American visitors but Uzbek capital Tashkent emerged as the Soviet showcase city for the Third World.

In 1957, Khrushchev, while visiting Tashkent, reminded the communist party workers there that Soviet Uzbekistan should be a model of a Soviet development for the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America who already had or were liberating themselves from the colonial oppression.<sup>17</sup> In 1958, the first conference of Afro-Asian Writers’ Association, the first major gathering of Third World intellectuals, was held in Tashkent. One month after the inaugural conference of the AAWA, Tashkent hosted the Festival of Asian and African Film either. However, this festival fell into oblivion and was a sort of a false star because much bigger and better-known festival inaugurated ten years later overshadowed its memory.<sup>18</sup> However, the first attempt to promote Afro-Asian unity in

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<sup>15</sup> Salazkina, “Soviet-Indian Co-productions,” 75.

<sup>16</sup> Djagalov, *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism*, 18.

<sup>17</sup> Masha Kirasova, “Building anti-colonial utopia: the politics of space in Soviet Tashkent in the “long 1960s.” In *The Routledge Handbook of the Global Sixties: between protest and nation-building*, edited by Chen Jian, Martin Klimke, and Masha Kirasova (New York: Routledge, 2018), 53–66.

<sup>18</sup> Djagalov, *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism*, 137.

the cinematic field occurred in 1958 attracted twenty-two foreign delegations largely consisting of state officials rather than actual filmmakers. Another two festivals held in Cairo (1960) and Jakarta (1964) followed the first one. Unlike the Afro-Asian Writers Conferences, the first three film festivals did not manage to create permanent structures and wider networks connecting developing world's filmmakers, actors and critics.<sup>19</sup> The troubled beginnings of such Third World cinematic events were affected not only by the dynamics of the Sino-Soviet split that provoked China's opposition to every Soviet effort to gather Afro-Asian intellectuals. If the AAWA enjoyed the effective means of the well-established Union of Soviet Writers, the soviet cultural bureaucracies were still inexperienced in organizing international cinematic networks like those at work in the West. Only in 1965, Soviet Union of Cinematographers established an international committee that permitted the country to play a much greater role in the international cinematic exchange. The rapid success of the Afro Asian Writers' Association to create a separate literary field compared to the meagre earnings of the Soviet Union of Cinematographers could be explained by the simple act that the Union of Soviet writers had had been establish thirty years before that of cinematographers.<sup>20</sup>

In 1968, 240 filmmakers, actors, critics, government and business figures involved in cinema industry from 49 African and Asian countries arrived to Tashkent to attend the inauguration of the First Tashkent Festival of African and Asian Cinema. Among the attendees there were some major figures like Raj Kapoor from India, Japanese Fumio Kamei or Ousmane Sembene from Senegal.<sup>21</sup> As the Afro-Asian Writers' Association was an attempt to create an exclusively developing world's literary sphere and a related consciousness, the Tashkent Film Festival aimed at constructing a Third World cinematic platform that could compete with the global supremacy of Hollywood and European film industry.

After the first festival, Soviet Lithuania's *Ekrano naujienos*, that at the time was still a cinema magazine dedicated to mainstream cinema, started to publish a series of articles on the motion pictures screened at the First Tashkent Festival. Works from Cambodia, Iraq, Egypt, Indonesia, Japan and India were extensively presented to Lithuanian

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>21</sup> Rossen Djagalov, Masha Salazkina, "Tashkent '68: A Cinematic Contact Zone," *Slavic Review* 75, no. 2 (Summer 2016), 279.

*Ekrano naujienos*, no. 46, 1968.

readers.<sup>22</sup> Even though Indian movies used to arrive to the country little later than to Soviet Russia, Lithuanian viewers like their Russian or Uzbek counterparts, were extremely familiar with mainstream Indian cinema. *Ekrano naujienos* wrote that “extremely popular in India and abroad alike, are talented director and actor Raj Kapoor and the star of Indian cinema Nargis. The movies of Raj Kapoor *Awara* and *Shree 420*, that expose the flaws of capitalist society, displaying the social inequality and class prejudices that push the youngsters to commit crimes, became immensely popular all around the world.”<sup>23</sup> The author was compelled or maybe constrained to remind the reader that “progressive” Indian movies like *Aandhiyan/Storms* (1952) or *Rahi/Wayfarer* (1952) were “appreciated” by the Soviet audiences. Not surprisingly, the article published in the aftermath of the 1968 Festival focused especially on serious Indian movies that depicted the hardships of Indian life rather than unreal images filled with songs and dances. *Apanjan* (1968), a story of a childless widow constrained to move to Calcutta where she faces exploitation; *Balika Badhu* (1967), a movie about the child marriage, and *Raat aur Din* (1967), an unusual story about a woman suffering from dissociative identity disorder were presented to the readers. However, the festival organizers and journalists alike could not ignore the Soviet public’s preference for “traditional” Indian melodramas whose authors “artificially dramatize the events, giving them extremely tragic tones and stressing the force of destiny against which human is helpless.”<sup>24</sup> It becomes clear that the Soviet cultural bureaucracies were compelled to manoeuvre between public’s tastes that preferred amusing movies and the accomplishment of the project to create a *progressive* cinematic field.

The second Tashkent Film Festival took place in 1972 and presented 106 movies from sixty-one countries of Asia and Africa. The major Soviet Lithuanian cinema magazine *Kinas* published a lengthy article on the festival entitled *We need a forum like that*. “The famous festivals of Venice and Cannes attracts the most famous and world known cinematographies’ For this reason, for the beginners it is very hard to make their way into these festivals. Even in the festivals held in Moscow, which welcome the cinemas from all over the world, African and other developing countries’ films disappear in the stream of Italian, French and American *supermovies*,” the article commented.<sup>25</sup> The need for

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<sup>22</sup> *Ekrano naujienos*, no. 44, 45, 46, 47, 1968.

<sup>23</sup> *Ekrano naujienos*, no. 26, 1960.

<sup>24</sup> *Ekrano naujienos*, no. 68.

<sup>25</sup> Živilė Pilipavičienė, “Mums reikia tokio forumo,” *Kinas*, no. 2, 1972, 12.

such festival was motivated by the fact that without help Afro-Asian cinema simply could not emerge and compete with Western and American cinema. Therefore, cinematic forum like Tashkent's for many Third World filmmakers could become a diving board to wider waters or just an opportunity to screen their movies, otherwise completely ignored at the Western festivals.

During the Tashkent Festival, meetings and discussions used to accompany the film screenings. In 1972, festival's participants discussed on the topic *Cinema in the struggle for peace, progress and freedom of the peoples*. Egyptian writer and filmmaker Abdel Rahman el Khamesy warned others that "Cinema could serve for radically different purposes. Imperialist powers are using not only bullets, but also books. Not only prisons, but also cinema."<sup>26</sup> After having participated in the discussion, Latin America's delegation asked for a more active participation in the festival as "the goals of Asian, African and Latin American countries are identical, the problems and hardships to overcome very similar."<sup>27</sup> The organizers heard the delegation's pleas and eventually Latin America was granted an observer status in the next festival held in 1974.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, by 1972 the festival became a truly Third World cinematic forum.

Unlike Western film festivals, the Tashkent festival was not a contest, did not have a jury that valued and awarded the films and in consequence, there was no competition. This organizer's choice was an unambiguous message to all participants that everyone was equal. It was not important whether one was representing countries of "developed cinematographies like India, Egypt and Japan" or those of "yet unknown cinematic traditions like Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Mauritania."<sup>29</sup> The organizers proclaimed that Tashkent festival was not characterized by the glamour and pomp that was so evident in the Western festivals. Even though it was stated the atmosphere in Tashkent was dominated by friendliness and professionalism and no one wanted to distinguish from the others, the cinema lovers had their favourite stars. Indian actress Nargis, Raj Kapoor's partner on screen, was greeted with long applause and it was not important that "the years passed left a mark, that actress is neither no longer young, nor slim, for everyone she remains charming Rita from *Awara*."<sup>30</sup> At the same time, in the

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Djalalov, Salazkina, "Tashkent '68," 280.

<sup>29</sup> Živilė Pilipavičienė, "Mums reikia tokio forumo," *Kinas*, no. 2, 1972, 12.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 13.

article dedicated to the festival, the new trends gaining momentum in Indian cinema were congratulated: “The fresher winds are blowing in Indian cinematography. Traditional [commercial] Indian films, bringing huge profit to the country, little by little give space to art, portraying the life of real people.” Raj Kapoor’s *Mera Naam Joker* screened at the festival was praised for its distinctiveness from the mainstream Indian cinema.<sup>31</sup> Fiction movies and documentaries were both presented at the festival and it was noted that all of them embodied the social and political peculiarities of the period and the changes affecting the developing world’s societies.

The third Tashkent Film Festival (1974) was attended by 313 guests and participants. The orientation of the festival remained unchanged: it should represent the Third World progressive cinema engaged with social and political issues. However, immensely popular Raj Kapoor and his son Rishi, the sheer symbols of Indian mainstream cinema, were among the guests of the festival. That year it was stated that the Tashkent event should be diametrically different from the “glamorous” Western festivals and the organizers tried to consolidate the festival’s reputation as such. One journalist wrote: “I would say that progressive filmmakers from African, Arab and Latin American countries sit capitalist ideologists, fierce conquerors and mercenaries on embers.”<sup>32</sup> According to this observer, the filmmakers stressed the need to create anti-imperialist and anti-war movies because generation had grew up with no experience of colonialism and war at all. By that time, Tashkent became a real model city to be showcased to Afro-Asian and Latin intellectuals as an embodiment of Soviet modernity achieved in a profoundly Asian country. The city “with the help of all the Soviet nations, became even more beautiful. In the [Uzbek] republic more than 100 industries were developed, where function 188 scientific research institutes, 25 theatres, 4.000 cinemas and almost 6.000 libraries.”<sup>33</sup> The fourth Festival (1976) managed to attract the representatives of 100 countries, significant increase from the first Festival where 41 countries had participated. Raj Kapoor’s presence once again lent prestige to the event. According to the festival reports, at the centre were “the movies portraying serious problems affecting millions of people. The progressive artists of the three continents in their works talk about colonial past of the nations, which now are fighting for their own happiness and prosperity.”<sup>34</sup> Therefore, it

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>32</sup> Vincas Aleknavičius, “Kad saulė būty skaistesnė,” *Kinas*, no. 8, 1974.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> “Trijų kontinentų kino forumas,” *Kinas*, no. 7, 1976.

seems that commercially more successful but entertaining mainstream movies were pushed aside in the festival programme by the progressive cinema.

By the mid-1970s, the reports in the Soviet magazines on the festival became increasingly routine and merely limited to the number of attendees and countries represented. The rhetoric surrounding the festival remained unchanged, the same motifs were repeated all over again: the “friendship and solidarity” that filled the festival’s atmosphere, the beauty and hospitality of Uzbek people and the Soviet role in enhancing prestige and visibility of Third World cinema. Generally, even the space in the press dedicated to the Tashkent festival reduced significantly. One of the reasons for this decreasing attention was the poor sales of Third World progressive movies in the Soviet Union as only a handful of cinema enthusiasts watched them. The Soviet audiences in the dullness of Brezhnev era craved for amusing mainstream movies and precisely this factor strongly limited the Soviet cinematic internationalism.<sup>35</sup> In consequence, the Tashkent festival attracted less and less public attention and interest. The tenth Tashkent Festival of 1988 was the last. Sebastian Alarcon, a Chilean film director and screenwriter, commented on the decline of the Festival:

I would like to ask the organizers how they imagine the future existence of the Tashkent Film Festival. I have been attending it since 1974 and with every year, its degradation becomes more visible. There is a feeling that no one needs it, or rather that it’s only necessary to the Uzbek authorities and numerous organizations – Sovexportfilm, Soyuzinfilm, Sovinterfest. Don’t you think the festival has exhausted itself?<sup>36</sup>

Some signs of weariness in the Tashkent Festival had already appeared in the late 1970s. In the succeeding decade, the festival’s gradual decline started in concurrence with the decay of various other Soviet internationalist initiatives like the World Peace Council. Simultaneously, the internal problems were besieging the main patron of these initiatives, the USSR, and the irreversible process commenced that led to the eventual dissolution of the Soviet state.

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<sup>35</sup> Djagalov, *From Internationalism to Postcolonialism*, 167.

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 172.

### *Indian movies in the Soviet Union*

The dynamics of Indo-Soviet cultural relations coincided with the ideological and political shifts inside the USSR. In early 1950s, Stalin renewed his interest in the former colonies and through his emissaries called for increased political and economic collaboration with them. India proclaimed the socialist inspiration of its democracy, defining itself as being “progressive” and thus, could be considered at least sympathetic country to the Soviet Union. Indian cinema had attracted the attention of Soviet cultural bureaucrats since the mid-1940s. Vsevolod Pudovkin, filmmaker and head of the VOKS, found himself fond of Indian cinema. In 1951, he, accompanied by actor Nikolai Cherkasov visited India where he met Indian cinematographers and explored Indians’ willingness to “learn from masters of Soviet cinema.”<sup>37</sup> After this watershed event, Indians delegation of film professionals started to visit the Soviet Union on a regular basis. The Soviet cultural bureaucracy’s primary concern was to distribute Soviet films in India, however, it was realized that the Soviet Union at first had to acquaint itself with the Indian cinema. This proved to be a far-reaching decision because Indian movies became immensely popular in the USSR, raising the revenues of Soviet cinemas to record heights either. Therefore, Goskino, USSR State Committee for Cinematography, decided to set up regional branches like Soveksportfilm whose first office in India was set up in Bombay in 1946 and in 1978, it opened branches in Madras and Calcutta.<sup>38</sup>

The first Indian movie brought before the Soviet audiences was *Dharti ke Lal/Children of the Earth* (1946), directed by K.A. Abbas and commissioned by the IPTA. The film became emblematic of India’s social-realist movement in cinema. This political movie marked the beginning of a new wave in Indian cinema as it focused on socially relevant themes. The movie is set in Bengal, during the famine of 1943, and narrates the story of a sharecroppers' family which as thousands of others in the region, lost its property to crooked landowners. Following tragic twists of the plot, the family’s patriarch decides to go back to his native village where, in the end, he witness the farmers get together and opt for a Soviet-style collective farming. *Dharti ke Lal* represented independent and progressive cinema in India, however, this movie did not attract the attention of most Soviet movie-goers and in the peripheries of the country, as in Lithuania, it was not

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<sup>37</sup> Sudha Rajagopalan, *Leave Disco Dancer Alone! Indian cinema and Soviet movie-going after Stalin* (New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2008), 11–12.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

screened at all.<sup>39</sup> Most probably, the Soviet authorities feared that *Dharti ke Lal's* “progressive” content, portraying an oppressed rising against the oppressors, could have emboldened Lithuanians who at that time were fighting their war of resistance against the Soviet occupation. *Kabuliwala* (1957, dir. Tapan Singha) was the first Indian movie screened in Soviet Lithuania in 1960.<sup>40</sup> However, later in the 1960s, Indian movies, though arriving later to local cinemas in Soviet peripheries were fixed in the repertoire in all the Soviet venues. Meanwhile, in 1954, Moscow hosted the first festival of Indian cinema. Realist movies as *Do Bigha Zameen/Two Acres of Land* (1953) and *Rahi/Two Leaves and a Bud* (1952), along with social-critical melodramas *Aandhiyan/Storms* (1952) and *Awara/The Vagabond* (1951) were screened and received enthusiastically by critics and audience alike.

A central figure in the export of Indian movies to India was K. A. Abbas. He worked tirelessly to set up and oil the machine of Indian cinematic exports. N. P. Koulebiakin, the first head of Sovesportfilm, initially had some difficulties in establishing contact and communicating with Indian institutions and red tape. Often his first messages and missives dispatched to Indian government officials went unanswered. Unable to come out of this bureaucratic limbo, Koulebiakin addressed K. A. Abbas who proved willing to help. His willingness was not motivated by merely personal and political sympathies regarding the Soviet Union, but also by much more serious and practical concerns. In the initial years following independence, India and Pakistan had an extremely troubled relation to say at least. This animosity extended also to the cultural front as films produced in India were boycotted in Pakistan, an important market for Indian cinema.<sup>41</sup> The Soviet Union, with its widespread network of state-run cinemas and immense audience, seemed a lucrative market for Indian filmmakers that could either compensate the loss of Pakistan's market. In September 1953, Abbas started to lobby Indian government on the Sovesportfilm's behalf. Abbas was not only an affirmed figure within Bombay Hindi film industry but had far-reaching connections with prominent Indian politicians and journalists. His lobbying campaign was fruitful as Indian government officials secured him that no obstacles would exist for Indian films to be exported to the Soviet Union in

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>40</sup> “Indijos kinas Lietuvoje,” Lietuvos Respublikos ambasada Indijos Respublikoje, Indijos kinas Lietuvoje | Dvišalis bendradarbiavimas | Lietuvos Respublikos užsienio reikalų ministerija (mfa.lt)

<sup>41</sup> Paul M. McGarr, “A rather tedious and unfortunate affair: the *Rahi* saga and the troubled origins of Indo–Soviet cinematic exchange,” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 36, no. 1 (2016): 6.

the future.<sup>42</sup> Now, blissful Koulebiakin brought forth the idea to organize Indian film festival in Moscow.

The festival screened the movies of “exotic” but “friendly” India and was a huge diplomatic success. Besides, it opened the Soviet market for Indian filmmakers. Almost a million viewers attended the first four days of the festival and Soviet audience literally went crazy for *Awara*.<sup>43</sup> Songs and dances in the movie charmed the Soviet movie-goers, tired from ideologically charged and serious Soviet movies. Critics praised “humanist” content and appreciated dance and song, the specific “cultural features” of Indian cinema.<sup>44</sup> The festival guests were crème de la crème of Indian film industry: Dev Anand, Raj Kapoor, Nargis, Nirupa Roy and K.A. Abbas.

Raj Kapoor, director and leading actor in *Awara*, reached an immense popularity and almost fanatical following in the Soviet Union. His son Rishi remembers that when his father was working on *Mera Naam Joker* in the 1960s, he had to travel to Moscow. “There was no welcome committee for him because he landed unannounced. So he got outside and waited for a taxi...By then people started recognizing that Raj Kapoor is in Moscow. His taxi came and he sat in. Suddenly what he saw was that the taxi is not moving forward and instead is going up. The people took the car on their shoulders,” recalled Rishi Kapoor.<sup>45</sup> In the Soviet peripheries, the craze for Raj Kapoor and Indian melodrama was also felt. His romantic drama *Sangam/Confluence* (1964) arrived to Soviet Lithuania in 1968 after having reached success in Soviet Russia. *Ekrano naujienos* dedicated several pages to present the movie to Lithuanian viewers.<sup>46</sup>

In the 1960s, Indian cinema started to move away from political and social issues towards entertainment-driven movies. In the 1970s, Indian cinematic export consisted of melodramas and “angry young man” action movies, consequentially social and political content became less and less explicit.<sup>47</sup> Soviet critics increasingly started to ignore Indian popular cinema in their writings because of the “frivolousness” of such Indian melodramas. However, the appeal of this kind of Indian works among the mass audiences did not shrink but augmented. For example, the teary melodrama *Zita Aur Geeta* (1972)

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>43</sup> Rajagopalan, *Leave Disco Dancer Alone!*, 15.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> “When Raj Kapoor’s Car Was Lifted by Russian Fans,” Book my show, accessed January 5, 2022, <https://in.bookmyshow.com/buzz/blog/Movies/when-raj-kapoors-car-was-picked-up-by-russian-fans-on-their-shoulders>

<sup>46</sup> “Žiūrėkite ekranuose: Sangamas”, *Ekrano naujienos*, no. 43, 1968.

<sup>47</sup> Salazkina, “Soviet-Indian Co-productions,” 74.

was one of the most popular movies in the decade. Therefore, the Soviet film critics often were constrained to mention these movies at least: “Another film with Raj Kapoor! There are probably few popular actors like him. His films are no less popular.”<sup>48</sup> At the same time, the critics were compelled to remind that “Indian cinema is more than just colourful, sentimental dramas with dance and music” and advised the audience to watch more “serious” and progressive movies of Satyajit Ray instead.<sup>49</sup> Whatever the Soviet critics thought about Indian melodramas, the export machine of Indian movies was working too smoothly to stop it. Indian films delighted not only their viewers, but also the managers of Soviet cinemas, as the movies generated significant revenues, unlike the Soviet ones. The 1970s was a highly significant decade for Indian cinema in the Soviet Union, but the absolute peak was reached in the early 1980s. In this period, even authoritative cinema journals like *Kinas* in Soviet Lithuania were constrained by their readership, who sent letters to the editor, to publish articles on the Indian (popular) cinema: “R. Marcevičiūtė and V. Zavistauskaitė from Alytus, T. Zableckytė from Kaunas, J. Stirnaitė from Žiežmariai and many of our other readers are interested in Indian cinema. Satisfying their request, we are starting to publish an extensive article, based on the foreign press, about this, one of the world's largest cinema industries.”<sup>50</sup> The symbol of this era became the movie *Disco Dancer* (1982). Released in 1984 in the USSR, it drew more than 60 million viewers that year, the highest turnout for *any* film that year.<sup>51</sup> At the venues, long queues marked the entrances. In Tajikistan, the long wait to buy a ticket even proved fatal for one movie-goer.<sup>52</sup> Mithun Chakraborty, the leading actor, became an iconic star in the USSR and somewhat substituted the aging idol Raj Kapoor.

The reasons behind the phenomenon of Indian cinema’s popularity in the Soviet Union were multiple. First, the intrinsic characteristics of the Soviet state and its produced movies are to be “blamed” for the successes of Indian ones. Even though Indian cinema is noted for its elite filmmakers like Satyajit Ray and so-called “art movies”, one of the first attributes that sets apart Indian mainstream cinema from other cinematic traditions is its “escapist” quality. Frequent dance and song sequences, sometimes apparently at odds with the plot, simplistic hero-villain characterisation and a blend of action and

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<sup>48</sup> “Nakties priedangoje,” *Ekrano naujienos*, no. 43, 1968.

<sup>49</sup> “Pastabos apie indų kiną,” *Kinas*, no. 6, 1973.

<sup>50</sup> “Legenda apie Sati-Savitri,” *Kinas*, no. 10, 1981.

<sup>51</sup> Rajagopalan, *Leave Disco Dancer Alone!*, 93.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

melodrama are the principal elements in Indian mainstream cinema.<sup>53</sup> Gaston Roberge, who was the director of Chitra Bani Institute in Calcutta, the oldest media training institute of Eastern India in the 1970s, tried to explain this escapist quality of the majority of Indian movies. According to him, downtrodden population needed to forget their wretched lot and overwhelming social problems like caste discrimination. Besides, in the 1970s, the literacy rate in India stood at the meagre 34%. Therefore, for illiterate population cinema was one of the few available distractions. Roberge wrote that “the greater the destitution of the audience, the more attractive the entertainment offered them must be. Does the unrealism of the film actually prevent people from thinking about the current problems or does it only provide a necessary and welcome escapism in the midst of unbearable destitution?”<sup>54</sup> Though material living standards in the USSR were higher than in India, paradoxically, the Soviet audiences, once the exhausting Stalin’s era was over, found themselves in a dire need of distraction. Like other forms of art in the USSR, cinema must have served the ideological needs of the state promoting the “Soviet way of life.” One Soviet viewer writing to *Sovetskii Ekran* complained about the quality of Soviet movies: “It is simply offensive. My brother returned from his work shift at the factory. Weary and wishing to relax, he turned on the television, only to see his second work shift began—a film about a factory. <...> Life is gloomy, dull, tedious, but in Indian films one sees so much beauty <...>.”<sup>55</sup> Not only had the life of ordinary Soviet citizen at home seemed to be dull because the travel outside the USSR was strictly forbidden to the New Soviet man. The Indian cinema that arrived right after the cultural bareness of Stalin’s era, for Soviet viewers previously largely fed on the movies about war and factory life, was an eye-opener, a glimpse of the world, exotic and unknown.<sup>56</sup> For some this fascinating view became the symbol of Khrushchev’s Thaw and relaxing of political, cultural and social grip. Even when foreign films became no rarity in Soviet cinemas, Indian cinema managed to distinguish itself in the audiences’ eyes because India was not the “materialist West.” Friendly but unfamiliar Indian cinema was capable of raising curiosity and fascinate. During the Era of Stagnation (1964-1985), the need to escape the

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<sup>53</sup> Michael P. Gallagher, “Indian and Western Cinema: Film Report,” *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 65, no. 260 (Winter 1976): 344.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 345.

<sup>55</sup> Rajagopalan, *Leave Disco Dancer Alone!*, 2.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 43–44.

dullness of life did not disappear at all and here once again “beautiful” and “colourful” Indian movies fulfilled their relaxing and amusing function.

Second, in most cases mainstream Indian movies depicted simplified stories of love and fights between good and bad. Indian movies were naïve in their simplicity but they could show the best and worst qualities of human nature. Precisely this portrayal of the ordinary life of humble and simple people, the private sphere of emotions and feelings so present and accentuated in Indian movies, was the element that appealed to the Soviet viewers.<sup>57</sup> Soviet citizens, in the heartland and periphery alike, keenly tried to safeguard their personal lives from the ever-watchful eye of the state. There was a clear distinction between ideologized public sphere and private realm. One Soviet viewer recalled that Indian movies were “simple storylines...who married whom, who left whom <...>. They were so gentle and somewhat naïve, but very human. Our films were very good, but different; they were very social. In Indian films we were confronted with the personal for the first time.”<sup>58</sup> Therefore, Indian movies allowed escaping “monumental and glorified” reality where the human, personal dimension was severely neglected.

The third and the last reason I would like to stress for the popularity of Indian movies in the USSR, regarded cultural trait that could be attributed only to the Slav population of the USSR. Some interviewees of Rajagopalan explained that Indian movies appealed to their *dusha* or spirit.<sup>59</sup> Slavic *dusha* could be translated into “Russian soul.” This nebulous concept that marks the uniqueness of the Russian national identity first appeared in some literary works around the mid-eighteenth century, roughly the same time when the slavophile ideas, discussed in the second chapter, claiming Russia’s uniqueness started to emerge. Nikolai Gogol is considered one of the first Russian intellectuals to suggest the existence of this Russian *dusha*. Fyodor Dostoyevsky popularized the concept further and brought it to the West’s attention describing “Russian soul” as something inexorably free and independent, attributable to Russians (Slavs) only.<sup>60</sup> Surprisingly, Russian

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 48.

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<sup>58</sup> Quoted in Rajagopalan, *Leave Disco Dancer Alone!*, 2.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>60</sup> However, some Russian authors described “Russian spirit” in less romantic terms. Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin, Russian writer and satyrist, wrote that “we Russians have no system of social upbringing. We are not mustered or drilled to become champions of “social principles” or other principles, but simply left to grow wild, <...>. That is why there are few hypocrites among us, but many liars, empty-headed bigots, and babblers. We exist in perfect liberty, that is, we vegetate, lie, chatter quite naturally, without regard for principle.”

Russia Beyond,

viewers detected this precisely “Russian” quality in Indian films. The translator Natalia Beniukh told: “The affinity of our dushas...one felt that immediately. With French films, for instance, you could not say that happened. And here with Indian films that was true. There was a consonance between what the actors expressed, inter-personal interactions portrayed and the inner world of the Soviet person. Our worldviews, relationships...they converged.”<sup>61</sup> As mentioned in the third chapter, Francine Frankel argued that a sort of emotional affinity between Gandhian thought and the moral basis of Marxism had ignited the Indian intellectuals' attraction towards Marxism. However, Rajagopalan's account, on the contrary, suggests that this pure, innate and spontaneous emotional affinity could be traced in the common people's nature of both nationalities. A bond that transcends political ideologies, capable of binding two nations on not merely pragmatic but also on emotional and spiritual level. In fact, the Indo-Soviet rhetoric and propaganda often stressed the personal dimension, for instance, the cordial relations between Indian and Soviet workers building steel plants. K.P.S. Menon wrote that “the manner in which relations [between India and the USSR] were established revealed the grace and spontaneity that have always characterized Indo-Soviet relations.”<sup>62</sup> The diplomatic, economic and military relations between India and the Soviet Union had concrete manifestations in the form of state visits, summits, treaties, and trade agreements. Yet, as Menon pointed out, it is evident that existed a peculiar, amorphous emotion-related dimension that helped to forge and preserve such a long-lasting friendship.

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<https://www.rbth.com/arts/327188-10-masterful-quotes-about-russian>

<sup>61</sup> Rajagopalan, *Leave Disco Dancer Alone!*, 57.

<sup>62</sup> “A Saga of Indo-Soviet Relations,” *Soviet Land*, no. 8, 1982, 10.

## Conclusion

Although independent India was not affected by the Cold War era proxy wars such as those in Vietnam or Afghanistan, nonetheless experienced its share of ideological and economic superpower interventions. Once the country emerged on the world map, it found itself to defend its hardly gained independence from the possible economic, military and cultural meddling by both the USSR and USA. Jawaharlal Nehru's non-alignment position that advocated a "third" position in world affairs and refused to enter into the camp of either superpowers was related also to the emergence of the Cold War tensions. When during the 1962 Sino-Indian War, India received US and Soviet military aid, M.S. Rajan, India's foremost scholar of international relations, argued that non-aligned position had not been compromised since India had not become over-dependent on neither the US nor the Soviet Union. Others like Sauripada Bhattacharya maintained that India's neutralism by receiving military assistance from both the superpowers was not endangered but vindicated.<sup>1</sup>

In 1966, right after Indira Gandhi was nominated Prime Minister of India she declared that "I will continue to pursue peaceful policy that is aimed the friendship with all nations and protect independent pattern of thinking and behaviour in our country. The Indian foreign policy principles that are inspired by our best traditions since Jawaharlal Nehru's time and have been granting custody to our national well-being will provide me with a guidance. I will always be committed to these international peace principles and to the strengthening of international cooperation."<sup>2</sup> After the celebrated Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, that was a crystal clear expression of India's heavy leaning towards the Soviet Union, India still proclaimed to be a non-aligned country. New rationalizations emerged that had to sustain the notion of Indian non-alignment. Once again, M.S. Rajan tried to explain that now India was "merely balancing its earlier close affiliation with Western ideas and institutions." K.P.S. Menon, one of the staunchest advocates of Indo-Soviet relations, stated that the Treaty was a "logical consummation of the foreign policy of Jawaharlal Nehru." D.P. Dhar, I. Gandhi's advisor whose insights

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<sup>1</sup> T. A. Keenleyside, "Prelude to Power: The Meaning of Non-Alignment Before Indian Independence," *Pacific Affairs* 53, no. 3 (Autumn 1980): 461–462.

<sup>2</sup> K.P. Miśrā, "Rājanayik paripakvatā kī pratīk," in *Eka pṛṣṭha itihāsa kā* (Naī Dillī: Ākāśavāṇī Patrikā Samūha kā prakāśana Vitaraka Prakāśana Vibhāga, Sūcanā evaṃ Prasāraṇa Mantrālaya, Bhārata Sarakāra), 7.

were often present in this doctoral thesis, argued that there could not be “mechanistic balancing of sides” and it was permissible, even advisable, to take position towards the actions of two superpowers. Although Nehru himself had taken sides on the issues, India remained profoundly a non-aligned country according to Dhar who also negotiated the 1971 treaty: “The Russians have developed a much healthier respect for our policies of non-alignment. <...> I remember that when I was discussing the draft of the Treaty, I inserted a sentence to the effect that USSR appreciated and supported the policy of non-alignment pursued by India. The Russians’ response was far from enthusiastic.”<sup>3</sup> Therefore, according to Indian official view, non-alignment was an assertion of independence from the Soviet Union in the decades when the relation reached its peak. The rocky USA-India relations, whose development in the 1940s and 1950s I endeavoured to examine, was one of the primary factors that led to the closer collaboration between India and the Soviet Union. The United States never concealed its irritation towards non-alignment and India’s reluctance to aid Americans in their anti-communist pursuit. In the early 1950s, US government mandarins strongly despised Nehru’s neutralism as “obsolete, immoral and short-sighted.” Not even the fact that India was a democratic country did bring American goodwill to the country. This decade, especially the first part of it, was crucial for the nascent Indo-American relations but in this period, both India and the USA were not that elastic in their views. Nehru often expressed his antipathy towards exploitative character of American capitalism and criticized US foreign policy deeming it an instrument aimed at global domination. The USA, in turn, was in the midst of McCarthyism era and its foreign policy was dominated by Cold warriors like the Secretary of State John Foster Dulles who evidently preferred strategically located Pakistan that, in its turn, also did not have scruples regarding the alignment with the USA.

China, a common neighbour of India and the USSR, became a thorn in the side of both countries that eventually brought them closer. The fluctuations of India-China relations, from *Hindi-Chini bhai bhai* to the war that erupted along the shared border in 1962, were examined as well as the Soviet fraternisation of China that ended up with a fall out. Once again, D.P. Dhar was capable to explain eloquently the situation: “It is not without significance that from a position of neutrality in the India-China conflict, the Soviet Union

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<sup>3</sup> “Planning Ministers notes regarding to Prime Minister regarding his discussions with Soviets,” November 3, 1973, III Instalment, no. 269, The papers of P.N. Haksar, NMML.

has now come much closer to supporting India in the dispute with China. As time has passed, the possibility continuously explored by the Soviet leadership of making up with China has receded. India more than ever appears as the pivot of security and stability in Asia.”

Therefore, when Indira Gandhi was appointed Prime Minister, important geopolitical reconfigurations had already taken place. However, I argued that the domestic factors and peculiarities of Indian political situation of the time transformed cordial but still distant Indo-Soviet relations into a full-fledged strategic partnership and a zealously professed friendship. Indira Gandhi’s unstable and shaky position in Indian politics pushed her to adopt a socialist rhetoric, bordering on populism, and to split her own party claiming that her rivals were a bunch of reactionaries had one crucial implication. In order to seal her “progressive” image, her government had to embrace even more the Soviet Union, which she did accordingly. The Prime Minister’s Soviet turn was engineered by her coterie of advisors, the “Kashmiri mafia,” and lesser-known actors such as the Congress Forum for Socialist Action. On the domestic front, she entered into alliance with the Communist Party of India (CPI) that was eager to gain influence at the central government. After the 1971 elections and Bangladesh War, the Indian PM managed to strengthen so much her government’s position that for a while it seemed that India was dictating the rules in Indo-Soviet relations. The mid-1970s witnessed the peak of the cooperation to the point that both countries started to investigate even the possibility to merge their economic systems. Since then, Indo-Soviet relations entered into a phase of decline due to internal and external configurations examined. Nonetheless, until the end of I. Gandhi’s premiership, the Soviet Union remained the most important India’s partner.

The range of Soviet cultural operations in India was vast. The ample network of Indo-Soviet friendship societies in India worked as an extension to Indian politics that mirrored complex dynamics at work within Congress-CPI-Soviet Union relations. Indian intellectuals actively participated and occupied leading posts within the Soviet-sponsored international organizations such as the World Peace Council or Afro-Asian Writers Association. The Tashkent Film Festival, a cinematic equivalent of AAWA, managed to involve intellectuals from the Global South while Indian filmmakers were permanent guests of the festival. Soviet books and magazines found a fertile ground in India and were consumed eagerly by Indian middle and working class alike. However, this cultural exchange was not a one-way street. India, for its part, successfully exported the

Bollywood production to the USSR that literally went crazy for Indian movies. Significantly, both countries decided to collaborate also in the cinematic field and produced some successful Indo-Soviet cinematic co-productions. The main difficulty that arose while researching this section was due to the scanty material available. For instance, Soviet magazines in India, though once circulated widely, today are very hard to obtain. The cultural side of Indo-Soviet relations could be investigated further and grow into a separate study taking into account oral histories of those who participated intensely in those exchanges.

India's relations with the Soviet Union was also shaped by geographical and historical factors. Russia, the heartland of the USSR, stretching almost all over Eurasian region always had a peculiar and intense relationship with Asia. Apart from individual attempts such as that of Afanasy Nikitin to reach India, there were also state-led attempts from the Russian side to arrive to the country via Central Asia. Thus, looking from this perspective, the close Indo-Soviet relations in the twentieth century did not appear as a complete anomaly, but as a quite natural course of events also motivated by the historical and geographical linkages. In fact, the closeness and intensity of these relations cannot be explained merely in terms of geopolitical, international or even political factors. Indo-Soviet relations already before their peak, the tenure of Indira Gandhi, had had a wider cultural base that went beyond the limits of official and formal connectivity. Here comes into picture cultural, amorphous, emotion-related dimension that more than trade agreements or state visits managed to transform formal Indo-Soviet relations into some sort of a collective memory for the peoples of both Russia and India. From a theoretical point of view, culture is capable to bring about a change in foreign policy orientation and draw closer two nations towards each other. This could be achieved with the help of soft power, country's resources to attract, and public and cultural diplomacy, a set of means and strategies aimed at diffusing soft power resources to others. In the case of Russia-India cultural interactions, the resources to attract each other were immense. Both Soviet books and Indian movies evoke nostalgic memories for those who grew up in the 1970s and early 1980s witnessing the celebrations of Indo-Soviet relations in Russia and India alike. I would even speculate that India had and still has bigger soft power resources than Russia ever had with regard to India.

As argued, Indo-Soviet relations were extremely multi-faceted and pervasive. After the fall of the Soviet Union, despite temporary setbacks and fluctuations, India-Russia

relations are solid as the both countries still actively collaborate in military, economic and cultural fields. On 6 December, 2021 Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi and President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin issued a joint declaration entitled *INDIA-RUSSIA: Partnership for Peace, Progress and Prosperity* that stated: “The completion of 5 decades of the 1971 Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation <...> is symbolic of the long standing and time-tested India-Russia relations characterized by mutual trust, respect for each other’s core national interests and similarity of positions on various international and regional issues.”<sup>4</sup> This present closeness of India and Russia could be explained only exploring and narrating the twists and turns in the history of Indo-Soviet relations at which this doctoral thesis was aimed.

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<sup>4</sup> “India- Russia Joint Statement following the visit of the President of the Russian Federation,” December 6, 2021, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, [https://mea.gov.in/bilateraldocuments.htm?dtl/34606/India\\_Russia\\_Joint\\_Statement\\_following\\_the\\_visit\\_of\\_the\\_President\\_of\\_the\\_Russian\\_Federation](https://mea.gov.in/bilateraldocuments.htm?dtl/34606/India_Russia_Joint_Statement_following_the_visit_of_the_President_of_the_Russian_Federation)

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