

Note on conversations between the Prime Minister of India and Mr. A.I. Mikoyan, First Deputy Premier of the U.S.S.R., in Parliament House on March 28, 1956, at 6 p.m.

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Also present:

U.S.S.R.

1. Mr. S.R. Rashidov
2. Mr. M.A. Menshikov
3. An interpreter.

India

1. Shri N.R. Pillai
  2. Shri Rishi, Interpreter.
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Mr. Mikoyan asked whether the Prime Minister could give him some account of his talks with the three Foreign Ministers who had recently been to Delhi. The Prime Minister said he would gladly do so, and spoke first about the visit of Mr. Selwyn Lloyd who came to Delhi immediately before the SEATO Council meeting at Karachi. The situation in Western Asia, more particularly the progressive deterioration of relations between Israel and the Arab countries, and the dismissal of Glubb Pasha by the King of Jordan, news of which he had received on his way to India, seemed to have upset Mr. Selwyn Lloyd. With him as well as with Mr. Dulles and M. Pineau who visited Delhi after the SEATO Council meeting, the Prime Minister discussed in detail the situation in Western Asia and other major international problems. Naturally the Prime Minister spoke at length to all the three Foreign Ministers about SEATO and the Baghdad Pact, expressing India's objection to these military pacts and pointing out the great harm they had done. Apart from

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the objections of principle which India had to these pacts, the pacts were open to the further criticism that they had increased tension and brought about conditions of instability and disunity in the Arab world. More particularly, these pacts affected India closely, encircling her from the east and from the west. They had worsened relations between India and Pakistan. Mr. Selwyn Lloyd and Mr. Dulles said that these pacts were defensive pacts and were not directed against India and that India need not be apprehensive about them. The Prime Minister maintained that the pacts did affect India, and pointed out how as a result of the aid being received by her, Pakistan was getting more and more aggressive towards India. Whatever might be the motives of the U.S., aid given by it to Pakistan could be used against India. In any event, such pacts led away from the paths of peace.

2. The Prime Minister then asked Mr. Mikoyan whether he understood him to say the previous day that the Pakistan leaders had told him that they expected no trouble from the Soviet Union but did so from India. Mr. Mikoyan replied that both the President and the Prime Minister of Pakistan had said to him that India was a threat to Pakistan and that these pacts were necessary for defence against India. Later on they mentioned Afghanistan. They said that Pakistan bases and Pakistan armed forces would never be used against the Soviet Union. Mr. Mikoyan pointed out to them, however, that Pakistan had already entered into commitments and that these might be invoked by the other parties to these pacts. The

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Prime Minister recalled that as against this, Mr. Dulles had made it clear that the Baghdad Pact was intended against the Soviet Union. Mr. Mikoyan said that this was perfectly correct but that, as the U.S. was acting jointly with Pakistan, which was against India, the pact had a double purpose. Mr. Dulles was being hypocritical. It was not a matter of chance that at the last meeting of the SEATO Council the principal topics discussed were Kashmir and Pukhtoonistan. There was no discussion about the Soviet Union or any threat from it. Though SEATO had been repeatedly declared to be intended as a defence against communism, it had now been tied up with the problems of Kashmir and Pukhtoonistan, which really did not present any threat to Pakistan. The principal aim of the U.S. was against the Soviet Union, but the U.S. gave in to Pakistan on these issues in order thereby to increase its hold on Pakistan.

3. The Prime Minister inquired whether he might say in Parliament in general terms, without mentioning Mr. Mikoyan's name, that Pakistan had been saying that she had no quarrel with the Soviet Union and looked upon SEATO and the Baghdad Pact as being of help to them against India and Afghanistan. Mr. Mikoyan replied that his talks with Pakistan leaders were confidential and they might well refuse to admit the correctness of the version he had given. He could affirm, however, that both the President and the Prime Minister of Pakistan did say what he had reported. With regard to the Soviet Union itself, the only request they had made to him was that the Soviet Union should

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not interfere in the internal affairs of Pakistan. The President of Pakistan suggested at the same time that an improvement should be sought in Soviet relations with Turkey. With regard to India, the President, in a speech in Parliament to which Mr. Mikoyan had listened, later said that he would make an approach to India.

4. Continuing his narrative, the Prime Minister said that Mr. Dulles had asked him for his impressions of his visit to the Soviet Union and of the visit to India of Mr. Bulganin and Mr. Khrushchev as well as his impressions of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R. The Prime Minister told him that he was much impressed by his visit to the Soviet Union and thought that Mr. Bulganin and Mr. Khrushchev had been impressed by their visit to India and that this exchange of visits had promoted mutual understanding. He also told Mr. Dulles that in his opinion the Government and the people of the U.S.S.R. desired peace and that the Congress also desired peace and was considering further methods of promoting international peace. Mr. Dulles agreed that the new trends were in the right direction but felt that these trends would take a much longer time than the Prime Minister thought to show visible effects. On a long-term view the new trends might be satisfactory, but he (Mr. Dulles) was concerned with the short-term position, and anything might happen in that period. The Prime Minister went on to say that there was a difference in the reactions of Mr. Dulles and Mr. Selwyn Lloyd. The latter, though he had certain doubts, said he was glad to hear the Prime Minister's reactions and hoped that they would prove correct.

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Mr. Selwyn Lloyd also welcomed the forthcoming visit to the U.K. of Mr. Bulganin and Mr. Khrushchev, which, he hoped, would produce good results. Mr. Dulles was more rigid; he admitted the tendencies, but feared that they would be slow.

5. The Prime Minister also discussed the question of disarmament with both Mr. Selwyn Lloyd and Mr. Dulles, and told them that, in his opinion, the time was favourable for taking effective steps towards disarmament and atomic control. Mr. Selwyn Lloyd said that the U.K. welcomed the steps already taken, but Mr. Dulles appeared doubtful of the possibility of substantial progress being made. The Prime Minister pointed out that SEATO and the Baghdad Pact came in the way of disarmament. Neither Mr. Selwyn Lloyd nor Mr. Dulles agreed with this.

6. Mr. Mikoyan said that, while in Karachi, he received a telegram from Moscow to say that the U.S. had put forward new proposals at the London meeting. They had raised the limit for land forces for the "big" countries (China, the Soviet Union and the U.S.) from 1.5 millions to 2.5 millions. The Prime Minister asked whether these were connected with proposals in regard to atomic energy and atomic weapons. Mr. Mikoyan said no; the U.S. probably wanted to keep the military use of atomic energy as a separate question. They had given up all previous proposals, and suggested control of everything but without disarmament. The Prime Minister said control must necessarily involve the acceptance of some limit; otherwise it would have no meaning. Mr. Mikoyan agreed, and said that a French newspaper

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man had used a vivid phrase, "no control without disarmament, no disarmament without control".

7. The Prime Minister then referred to his talks with Mr. Dulles about China, Taiwan, the coastal islands and the talks going on in Geneva between China and the U.S. at Ambassador level. He had told Mr. Dulles clearly that the present trouble was mainly due to China being kept out of the U.N. No Government could tolerate the presence of hostile forces on islands as close to the mainland as were the Matsus and Quemoy. In regard to the Geneva talks the Prime Minister expressed the hope that these talks would lead to some agreement and later to a meeting between the two Foreign Ministers. It was of course unrealistic to expect spectacular results, but the Prime Minister nevertheless hoped that a step forward would result. It was obvious, however, that because of the U.S. elections this year the U.S. Government would be reluctant to take any important step for fear of its effect on their own prospects at the elections.

8. The Prime Minister also discussed with Mr. Dulles the question of Indo-China, especially the situation in South Vietnam. He told Mr. Dulles that the position of the International Commission in Vietnam was becoming impossible. The Commission could not function unless the South Vietnam Government assumed the responsibilities under the Geneva Agreement, especially as the French were leaving. The Prime Minister mentioned also that India had referred the matter to the two co-Chairmen and that Mr. Selwyn Lloyd had told him that he hoped to meet Mr. Molotov for discussions. Mr. Dulles had said that he would meet Mr. Diem in Saigon, and expressed the hope that some way could be found out of

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the difficulty. He wished the Commission to remain in Vietnam and stressed the need for finding suitable means for making this possible. The latest news from Saigon, the Prime Minister said, was somewhat hopeful. India's Representative on the Commission had met Mr. Diem, who for the first time appeared to be somewhat amenable and gave the impression that he might in practice assume the obligations hitherto discharged by the French.

9. The Prime Minister added that he had spoken at much length to Mr. Dulles about the declaration on Kashmir made by the SEATO Council and the statement on Goa made jointly by Mr. Dulles and the Foreign Minister of Portugal. The Prime Minister had taken exception to both.

10. In his talks with M. Pineau, the French Foreign Minister, the Prime Minister said he covered much the same ground. From his point of view, M. Pineau appeared more reasonable than the other two Foreign Ministers. M. Pineau admitted the Indian criticism of the Kashmir declaration and frankly said that he did not know much about the problem himself. On many major international problems M. Pineau's position was different from that of the U.K. and the U.S.A. and showed greater understanding. In Algeria, the difficulty was caused by the presence of 1½ million Frenchmen who had been resident there for four or five generations. It was impossible for France not to feel concerned for the future of these persons. The French Government wished therefore to obtain some assurance regarding their future, but there

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were no influential public leaders in Algeria with whom they could negotiate. It might be that elections might throw up responsible leadership, but in the present disturbed conditions it was difficult to hold elections. The Prime Minister pointed out that delay would only aggravate the situation and that it was necessary therefore for France to take the initiative. Only thus could better security be assured for the French colons.

11. The Prime Minister then referred to the invitation conveyed to him by Mr. Dulles from President Eisenhower to pay a short visit to the United States. This was in continuation of certain previous invitations. The Prime Minister had accepted this invitation and intended to go to Washington for three or four days after the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' meeting in London. He was going to Washington for the sole purpose of having talks with the President and was not accepting any other engagements.

12. Mr. Mikoyan thanked the Prime Minister for the information given to him and asked about his talks with the Shah of Iran. The Prime Minister said that the Shah of Iran had been wanting to visit India for two or three years, but it was not until recently that a date for the visit could be fixed. Soon after that came the announcement of the Baghdad Pact, and the Shah feared that he might not receive a good welcome in India. The Government of India told him that, though India differed from Iran on the Baghdad Pact, the Shah could count on a proper welcome in India if

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he should come, and the Shah thereupon decided to come to India. He was given a cordial welcome, wherever he went during his three weeks' tour, and by all accounts he was much impressed with his visit. When he was in Delhi the Prime Minister explained to him why India objected to the Baghdad Pact. He did not, of course, suggest that Iran should leave the Pact, as the Shah was here as India's guest, but made it clear that the Pact was neither good nor effective from the point of view of ensuring security. The Shah said that Iran, being a small country which had lived in fear of Russia since before the revolution, was differently situated from India. It was because of that fear that Iran had entered the Pact. The Prime Minister told him that that fear could not be removed by Iran's joining the Pact. On the contrary, it would lessen the chances of security and stability, in the same way as it had produced disunity in the Arab world. The Prime Minister then spoke to the Shah about his visit to the Soviet Union. He told him that he knew something about Iran's history and about the Tsarist and British pressures on that country. But times had changed and the Shah must consider the situation in the light of present conditions. If war were to break out, the Pact would be of little help to Iran, and it was of no use either as an instrument for the maintenance of peace. The proper policy was to cultivate friendly relations with all countries. Facts, on the contrary, only served to antagonise those against whom they were directed. India followed a policy of friendliness towards all, though some countries had in some ways acted against her interests. The Prime Minister also expressed his pleasure at the Shah's forthcoming visit to the Soviet

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Union and hoped that opportunity would then be found for full and frank talks with the Soviet leaders in order to develop understanding and better relations.

13. The Prime Minister then said that he did not know exactly when the Shah signified his acceptance of the Soviet invitation. The Shah had told the Prime Minister that it would be a good thing for him to visit Moscow but that the Americans did not like it.

Mr. Mikoyan replied that there was an understanding last year about the Shah's visit to the Soviet Union. After the Baghdad Pact, however, the Soviet Government wondered whether they should withdraw the invitation, also put off the proposed visit of a Parliamentary Delegation from Iran. The Soviet Government decided finally to take these developments quietly and not to disturb the arrangements already entered into. The visit of the Parliamentary Delegation took place according to schedule, and this visit had done much good. So would, they hoped, the visit of the Shah. The Soviet Government would naturally be glad to have talks with him.

14. The Prime Minister said that his own impression of the Shah was that he was an earnest type of man and obviously wanted to do his best for his country. He liked the Shah as a man.

15. Referring back to his talks with Mr. Dulles the Prime Minister said that Mr. Dulles had told him that he (Mr. Dulles) himself was not in favour of the Baghdad Pact and that it was concluded against his advice. He added, however, that he nevertheless had to stand by his allies. Mr. Mikoyan said that this information had reached the Soviet Government also. The Baghdad Pact

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owed its existence to the initiative of the U.K. The Prime Minister referred to the sequence of agreements - first Iraq and Turkey, then Pakistan, followed by the U.K. and later by Iran. Nouri el Said, the Prime Minister of Iraq, was the principal figure behind these moves. Mr. Mikoyan said that was also the Soviet Government's information. But for Nouri el Said, Iraq would not have come into the Pact. The Egyptian envoy in Karachi had told him this.

16. The Prime Minister said Nouri el Said visited India two years ago. He was no doubt an able man in his own way, but he had not yet entered the 20th century, and it was difficult therefore to follow the workings of his mind. Mr. Mikoyan said "Let us wait and see. The Baghdad Pact may collapse before long, even legally". The Prime Minister said that the Pact was still-born and there was little life in it.