

42. I enquired about the position of the Communist Party in relation to Planning and its implementation. Saburov said that according to their Constitution, the Party was the leader of the people and had worked out the basic ideas and principles. The recommendations of the Party were discussed by public bodies and the Government considered them in drafting its plans. The Party was even more useful in the implementation of the plans at all stages. Its chief business was to give an overall guidance without going into details.

43. I mentioned to Saburov the Yugoslav system of Workers' Councils. Saburov replied that they had tried this in the Soviet Union at one time, but now it was past history. Their experience had shown that there must be a clear-cut division of functions and responsibility. This was necessary for effective direction.

44. Saburov said in answer to a question of mine that the question of defence had played an important part in planning. If there had not been a continuous threat of invasion from outside, then far greater resources would have been directed towards the raising of the standard of living of the people. Between 1914 and 1955, twenty years had been wasted either in war or in the rehabilitation of the war devastated economy. It took five years to repair the damages caused by the last war. The Soviet Union did not want this to happen again and wanted to devote itself to peaceful progress.

45. Saburov concluded by saying that as the planning in India was proceeding on a different basis, it was quite possible that a situation might arise in which the Soviet Union might be able to learn a great deal from India.

New Delhi;
August 1, 1955.

THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO THE SOVIET UNION

The Prime Minister visited the Soviet Union from the 7th to the 22nd June. There are of course many facets to his visit and many angles from which it can be viewed. In this letter I shall dwell on what may be called the public aspect of the Prime Minister's visit and the nature and significance of the great reception accorded to him. Many foreign statesmen have travelled to Moscow since the Revolution, the latest being Herr Raab, the Austrian Chancellor, who came in search of independence and got it, and Cyrankiewitz, the Polish Prime Minister, who came to celebrate the Tenth Anniversary of the liberation of Poland from Germany. For them there were the usual official receptions and the usual formal banquets, but the man in the street knew little about their visits until he read about them in the stilted phrases of the PRAVDA and the IZVESTIA the next morning. The welcome accorded to our Prime Minister was altogether different. It was different not merely in its magnitude but in its nature. It was a people's welcome that he received.

The Prime Minister arrived in Moscow on the afternoon of the 7th June. The entire Presidium, headed by Bulganin, went to the airfield to receive him. Diplomats like Sohlman, who have been here for many years, say that that was the first occasion on which all the members of the Presidium turned up to receive a foreign guest. There was also an unusually large assemblage of Ministers, officials and representatives of Soviet art and culture. A novel feature was the

presence of a group of Pioneers who ran up to the Prime Minister to present him and his daughter with bouquets. As the Prime Minister's plane landed, the people, breaking their usual decorum, rushed up to see him with the result that the Heads of diplomatic Missions, who alone stood their ground, were left high and dry in bewildered dignity. For many days diplomats here had been speculating how our Prime Minister would be received and whether there would be many people in the streets to welcome him. What they saw surpassed their—and our—wildest expectations. All Moscow, it seemed, had turned out to greet him; the streets were lined with throngs of people carrying flowers; and at the cross-roads, the car had to plough its way through a sea of humanity. Strangest sight of all, Bulganin and our Prime Minister travelled in an open car. To our Prime Minister that was nothing unusual, but to Bulganin it was a new experience. Normally, the members of the Presidium travel in closed and curtained cars, but this time, to the amazement of the people, Bulganin stood by the side of the Prime Minister in an open car through the streets of Moscow. Thus, thanks to the Prime Minister's visit, the Soviet leaders have come literally closer to their own people.

During the first three days of the Prime Minister's stay in Moscow, there were a number of official functions. The lunches given by Molotov on the 8th June and by Voroshilov on the 9th were also attended by all the members of the Presidium. Even the Embassy dinner on the 8th and the Embassy reception on the 10th were attended by all of them, an honour which no other Embassy has so far had. Molotov came to our dinner and stayed till midnight, even though he was to

leave for San Francisco three hours later. At the dinner the Prime Minister proposed a toast to Voroshilov and read out the President's message. I then proposed a toast to Bulganin who, in turn, proposed a toast to the Prime Minister. In replying, Prime Minister laid stress on our desire for peace, our friendship with all nations and our anxiety to secure peace by peaceful means. Evidently, his remarks went home, for Khrushchev followed by a historical exposition of the circumstances which had moulded Soviet policy and added that he was anxious that Prime Minister should understand them and that he—Khrushchev—fully recognised that we might follow different methods. These two speeches were not mere after-dinner talks but serious statements of policy. They raised the whole atmosphere to a higher level so much so that I refrained from proposing any other toast, as I had intended, according to the Russian custom, to others like Molotov and Zhukov.

By far the most solemn statement of policy, made by the Prime Minister, was at the banquet given by Bulganin in the Kremlin and attended by a distinguished gathering, including all the Heads of Missions in Moscow. The Kremlin had never been used for such a function since the War, and rarely since the Revolution. The Prime Minister's speech has appeared in the newspapers and it is unnecessary for me to summarise it. It created a profound impression on Russians as well as on foreigners. The Asian diplomats, present at the dinner, were enthusiastic about it. The Western diplomats saw, in some passages of the speech, a homily to the Soviet Government, though in reality those passages were applicable as much to Western as to Soviet policy.

"A very fine speech—a very subtle speech", said Hayter to me after the dinner. "A sincere speech", I replied.

The Prime Minister left Moscow for a tour of the Soviet Union on the 11th June. He covered about ten thousand miles in ten days. He had glimpses of the Republics of Georgia, the Ukraine, Turkmenistan, Kazakistan, Uzbekistan and a number of places in the Russian Federation, including the autonomous Tartar Republic. He saw a variety of scenery—the great central plains of Russia; the vast steppes of the South; the former region of the Cossacks, who have now been tamed by Communism and the Volga-Don Canal; the hills and dales of Crimea; the Caspian Sea, over which we flew to Ashkabad, the capital of Turkmenistan; the Pamir range; the Tien Shan or the Heavenly Mountains, under which nestles the capital of Kazakistan, Alma Ata; the virgin lands of South West Siberia, now being converted to cultivation; the lakes and marshes of the Ural river; the birches, pines and firs of North Russia; and the Gulf of Finland, on which Peter the Great built that "window into Europe", St. Petersburg, now Leningrad. The Prime Minister visited a number of historic towns like Samarkand, Tibilisi and Kazan, from which the Tartars had ruled Russia for two centuries. He also visited a number of industrial towns. The most important of these was Magnitogorsk, which produces six million tons of steel a year and straggles on both sides of the Ural river. In crossing a bridge from the right bank of the river to the left, we had the thrill of passing from Europe to Asia. We noticed that the great factories of Magnitogorsk were on the Asian side of the Ural river, while the modern tenements, clubs, cinemas and theatres were on the European side. "Evidently", said

the Secretary-General jocularly, "You make Asia work and let Europe enjoy!"

The Soviet Government spared no trouble or money to make the Prime Minister's tour comfortable. Bulganin's own plane was placed at his disposal and was followed by four other planes to take the staff, Indian and Russian, and the Indian press correspondents. Molochkov, the Chief of Protocol, and Kuznetsov, the First Deputy Foreign Minister and until recently the Soviet Ambassador to Peking, accompanied the Prime Minister everywhere. The Prime Minister and party were accommodated in the best available villas. In Yalta Voroshilov's own datcha was put at his disposal. In some places sanitation left much to be desired; and Azim Hussain's principal worry was that wherever he went he had to share the bath room with someone else. In Moscow the Prime Minister had a lovely country-house to sleep in as well as a town-house in which to change or to rest during the day. The Soviet authorities went all out to satisfy the slightest wish expressed by him. For instance, the Ministry of Culture had taken great pains to arrange a variety of entertainment at the Bolshoi theatre, including scenes from Swan Lake, Don Quixote and Bakchisarai ki Fountain, in which the best ballerinas, Ulanova, Plesatskaya and Lepshenskaya were to have danced. When they heard that the Prime Minister would prefer to see a full ballet, these arrangements were cancelled, literally at the eleventh hour, and Swan Lake was put on the stage.

The Soviet Government had also intended to load the Prime Minister with presents. Kuznetsov told me privately that it was their intention to present a Zis car

to the Prime Minister and his daughter. After mentioning it to the Prime Minister, I told Kuznetsov that this would make an embarrassing present as the Prime Minister generally used a simple car and the Government of India had recently prohibited the import of luxury cars. Pressed to suggest some other present, I said that an agricultural tractor would be more appropriate. May we present ten or fifteen tractors, Kuznetsov asked? No, I said, one would be a symbol; more would be embarrassing.

Wherever the Prime Minister went in the Soviet Union, there were large crowds to greet him. In all the factories workmen gathered in thousands to have a glimpse of the Prime Minister. Indeed, in Stalingrad the crowd was so huge that the Prime Minister was unable to enter the factory and returned to it three hours later after the crowd had dispersed. At the University on Lenin's Hill, the students left their classes and gave a great ovation to the Prime Minister. He said a few words to them and was greeted with loud applause when, referring to the greatness of the Soviet Union and India, he said that what counted was not bigness in size, but bigness of heart.

In Crimea the Prime Minister had a flowery welcome. From Simferopole to Yalta, a distance of some 150 kilometres, it was flowers, flowers all the way. Villagers as well as town-folk lined the streets with large bouquets of flowers and flung them into the Prime Minister's car. Often the car had to be emptied of them. "Flowers are good", Bulganin had said in Moscow, "but not when they are flung at you". The Prime Minister seemed to enjoy catching the vaulting bouquets of roses from his running car. The security attendant, provided

by the Soviet Government, stood in front, warding off the floral attacks as best he could. Once or twice, while warding off an attack from the right, one came from the left and hit him full in the face. Kuznetsov, who accompanied us throughout, hurt his fingers which bled a little. "Today", he said, "I have shed some blood in the cause of Indo-Soviet friendship."

The reception in Georgia was equally warm and even more boisterous. There the high spirits of the Georgian youth showed themselves. Children would run along, and in between, the fleet of cars, almost risking their lives; the crowd which had gathered in front of the opera theatre, which the Prime Minister was to visit, almost burst the iron railings and over-flowed into the side entrance, through which the Prime Minister was taken in. The Secretary-General, conveniently sized, could crawl or stride almost between the legs of the people in front of them, but I, with my back, found it difficult to keep pace with the Prime Minister. Once the Secretary-General was taken to be a Georgian, pressing behind the Prime Minister, and was nearly assaulted by a policeman.

In the Asian Republics, the welcome extended to the Prime Minister, was truly Asian in its joy, pride, excitement and confusion. There, as well as in Georgia, the sight of Mrs. Gandhi, standing by her father's side, and waving to the people, sometimes for a whole hour or more, filled the people with admiration. I saw a romantic looking Georgian, running by the side of the car for two or three furlongs, just in order to present a bouquet to Mrs. Gandhi, and having succeeded in his mission, being carried on the shoulders of his admiring comrades. How great a strain all this must have been

for Mrs. Gandhi, let alone for the Prime Minister, can be imagined. Yet Mrs. Gandhi, who so graciously discharged a public duty for the sake of her country, leaving her children to themselves during the vacation, had to pay her own passage in the Air India International. Financial righteousness can go no further!

To some extent, the difference in the welcome accorded to the Prime Minister in different places was an index to different national temperaments. The Polish Government had taken as much trouble as the Soviet Government to give a mass welcome to the Prime Minister. The traditional torch light welcome, extended to the Prime Minister by the miners in front of the Town Hall in Stalinogrod, was one of the pleasantest spectacles during his tour. Yet in Poland one missed the wild enthusiasm, the irrepressible eagerness, which one saw in the Soviet Union. There the organisation was sometimes too obvious. People greeted the Prime Minister, not so much with flowers as with little Indian flags, which had been supplied to them in thousands. Here and there one could see cheer leaders. One could even detect a little anxiety on the face of our Polish companions lest the welcome to the Prime Minister should prove less enthusiastic than in the Soviet Union. Indeed, one felt that some middle-aged persons looked even glum. Perhaps, they, unreconciled to a Communist regime in Poland, suspected that their Government was trying to gain prestige for itself through the Prime Minister's visit, for dissident elements in Poland have not been rooted out as completely as in the Soviet Union. Or, perhaps, the difference between the Polish welcome and the Soviet welcome indicated a difference between Western

and Eastern temperaments. Poland, despite its present ideology, belong to the West, while the Soviet Union belongs as much to the East as to the West. And, on the occasion of a great Easterner's visit, Eastern sentimentality and pride found unrestrained expression in the Soviet Union.

Envious Westerners, baffled by the phenomenal welcome given to our Prime Minister by the Soviet people, seemed to be seeking for some explanation. Some would say that the people had been so long and so rigidly shut in by the "Iron Curtain" that when a loophole appeared and a strange figure emerged before their eyes, they were carried off their feet by the very novelty of the spectacle. Others would say that the people were merely following their masters' fiat; the word must have gone round to every town, village and factory that the inmates should turn up to welcome the Prime Minister. Such persons would say that the rejoicing on the occasion of the Prime Minister's visit merely denoted the strength of the Party Organisation.

Organisation, in a sense, there undoubtedly was. For many months the ground had been prepared sedulously for the Prime Minister's visit, though his itinerary and even the actual time of his arrival were, for reasons of security, kept a close secret until the last day. All important statements, made by the Prime Minister, used to be published in the Soviet papers. "Ogn'yok", a weekly, carried a sketch of his life, together with a full page photo. An exhibition of Indian art and culture was inaugurated in Moscow three days before the Prime Minister's arrival. The Russian translation of the Prime Minister's book

"Discovery of India", was published just before his arrival and was eagerly snatched by the public. On the whole, 'Nehru' had become a household word even before he set his foot in the Soviet Union.

It would, however, be wrong to attribute the success of the Prime Minister's visit merely to the efficiency of the Party machine. The reasons lie deeper. India has always had a quaint appeal to Russia. Even in Stalin's days, I used to observe that when an Indian appeared in Sadko, a national opera, and sang a plaintive song, a hush always fell upon the audience. India's appeal has been greatly enhanced during the last two years by the visit of our artists, singers, musicians and film stars. One can hear Russian children in the streets singing "Main Avara Hun". A statue was recently erected in Kalinin for Afnasi Nikitin, a Russian trader, who went to India in the middle of the 15th century and left interesting records of his stay in the Bahmani Kingdom. I attended the unveiling of the statue in Kalinin, some 200 kilometres from Moscow; and the enthusiasm shown by the people was, as I then reported to the Government, "a foretaste of the welcome which awaited the Prime Minister".

All these events had made the Soviet people India-minded. Nevertheless, the secret of the great welcome given to the Prime Minister lies in the fact that the Soviet people regard him as the architect of Indian independence. To them, steeped in the philosophy of materialism, Mahatma Gandhi is a holy puzzle; Jawaharlal Nehru is easier for them to understand. What they admire most in him is that he not merely won India's independence, but that he is determined

to protect it against all threats and blandishments. During the first few months of my stay in the Soviet Union, the name, Nehru, evoked no special response. Those were the days when the Soviet Government viewed the world in terms of black and white, Communist and non-Communist. Now they recognise that the world is multi-coloured, that grey, too, has a virtue of its own, and that to attempt to force the whole world Red might, in this atomic age, be to destroy it. The unprecedented welcome, given to a non-Communist statesman, is the most spectacular affirmation, yet made by the Soviet Government, of their belief in co-existence.

Yet another, and equally important, reason for the welcome given to the Prime Minister is that in Soviet eyes he stands for peace. If Soviet policy has changed during the last two years, our own policy has, by the impact of the events, developed. As Bulganin's speech at the banquet, given in the Kremlin in honour of the Prime Minister, showed, the Soviet Government is aware of the vital, though unobtrusive, part played by India in securing peace in Korea and Indo-China. It is not too much to say that in a world, ridden by fear, our Prime Minister struck the common man as a harbinger of peace.

K. P. S. MENON.

Moscow;

July 6, 1955.