

Quest Jan / March

What is Wrong with our Foreign Policy

557

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AT the end of the recent debate in the General Assembly of the UN, the Press Trust of India made an analysis of the trends in regard to our dispute with Pakistan. I am quoting from the *Hindustan Times* of 23rd October: The Spokesmen of 63 nations were neutral and did not go beyond appealing for peace. 19 were hostile to India and, of these 19, 11 were Arab States. 3 made passing references, but did not say anything. 25 ignored the issue. Out of 110, not one spoke up for us. This is something that cannot be side-tracked by recording satisfaction at our 'success' in the Security Council. This has left our people bewildered; it has left some of our people rather angry. But it is no good flying into a rage when nobody else can see our point of view. It reminds me of the story of the fond mother who went to see a military parade. At the end of the parade, her comment was, 'Everybody was out of step except my Johnny'. We cannot afford to be Johnny. We are living in a world community, where we must be in step with democratic nations whose friendship we regard. We cannot resign from the Human Race and turn our back on humanity. In a way, let us console ourselves that, since imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, other nations have copied us and remained non-aligned in our dispute. Over the last fifteen years we have often taken the stand that we will not judge what is right or wrong. We should take sportingly the fact that other countries are now giving us back a little of our own medicine!

The important thing is: why did this happen and how do we prevent a recurrence of such isolation? Let us look the facts in the face. Was it only bad public relations, as some of our leaders allege? Was it the fault of our diplomats? It must be said in all fairness that it was not a failure of public relations or diplomacy. I

have been a practitioner of public relations. You cannot sell a product if the product is no good. The first thing in public relations is to have a saleable product. There is no point in blaming our diplomats and ambassadors. We did not give them a product they could successfully sell in the councils of the world.

What was wrong with our foreign policy? It had three basic weaknesses. First of all, it was naive. Our Pancha Sheela pact with Communist China was the most notorious example of our political innocence. The betrayal of Tibet, for which we are now paying, was the result of it. Our naivete in another direction was to believe that, if we only turned our backs on Israel, all the Arab nations would support us against Pakistan. But, as I said just now, eleven of the Arab States spoke against us in the U.N. General Assembly. What is more, at Algiers, President Nasser joined the Chinese Communists in defeating our move to hold the Conference. The second thing from which our foreign policy suffered was its narcissistic character — watching ourselves in the mirror and admiring ourselves, assuming all the while that the rest of the world saw us as we saw ourselves. We have now learnt that the image existed only in our imagination.

The third thing which was wrong was our self-righteousness, the air of moral superiority we adopted towards every body else, teaching them lessons, talking down at them, refusing to judge between right and wrong — whether it was in Berlin or Hungary or Tibet, talking of Peace, when other people were fighting for Freedom and Justice. The latest example was that for the last twelve months, we needled those in Vietnam who were trying to defend that country against the aggression of Communist China and its satellite. We kept on telling them: 'You must not cross the frontier; defence must be on your own territory'. And then, history caught up with us, and we had to cross the frontier our-

* Based on a speech in the Lok Sabha on November 15, 1965.

selves! These are the basic defects of our foreign policy for which we are paying the price of being isolated. That foreign policy has ceased to have any relevance to our present needs. We have to come to terms with reality. As was said before, 'Too long have we lived in an artificial world of our own creation'.

What is the reality? The reality is that the biggest threat to our independence, our way of life and our survival comes from Communist China. The minor threat is the one which comes from its ally, Pakistan. I do not discount the malice of Pakistan; but I do doubt its capability to do us very much harm. Pakistan by itself we have taken the measure of. We have shown that we can put it in its place. But the challenge of Communist China is a more permanent and more fundamental challenge, not only to our survival, but to our democratic way of life. The only choice for us, along with the other countries of this region, is to stand up to Communist China or succumb and become its satellite. Of all the countries of this region, except Japan, ours is the only country that can take the initiative and lead in bringing about arrangements for the security of South and South-East Asia. India, along with Japan, is cast by geopolitics, by her position, by her size, by her democratic institutions, by her maturity, to lead the countries of this region. The question before us is whether we are going to accept this role or become a miserable camp-follower. I have no doubt that the people of India would wish our Government to assume that role.

If that is agreed, then the question arises: what should be our attitude and posture as one of the leaders of Free Asia? If we want to be a Power, we must behave like a Power; just talking like one is not enough. Our obligation is to join with Japan in rallying the countries of South and South-East Asia which lie between us to defend the free way of life which is menaced by Chinese imperialism and its allies. We have to provide that solidarity to

them which we have failed to do in the last fifteen years. We have turned our back on our neighbours. We dealt with China unilaterally; we never consulted Burma, or Pakistan when we signed the Pancha Sheela treaty. Other countries in Asia feel that the Himalayas are not only our frontier, but the frontier of all the South and South-East Asian countries. They will join in its defence if we give them that opportunity.

What is required is a regional security arrangement with all countries within the triangle made by India at one end, Japan at another and Australasia at the third. Let us give up this caste system of judging between non-aligned and aligned nations which we have followed to our disaster so far. We made friends with Indonesia because it was non-aligned. Look how she has treated us! We turned our back upon Japan and Malaysia because they were aligned. And yet it is they who have given us friendship and support.

So far as Pakistan is concerned, we shall have to have two policies: a short term and a long-term policy. In the short-term, our firm posture of resisting any aggression or infiltration must be maintained. This limited objective of the armed conflict with Pakistan in September, as defined by our President and the Prime Minister, has, I think, been fulfilled. The aggressor has been taught a lesson. He has been shown that this country is not prepared to be pushed around any more. I, for one, do not believe that Pakistan has the capability, placed as she is today, to launch any major attack on this country by herself. If that happens, the attempt will be defeated in the same way as it was last time.

Our long-term policy should be to keep the door open to normal friendly relations which are so demonstrably necessary in the interest of both countries. These must be established some day, even if it takes months or years, if the two countries are not to take the wrong path and go down in mutual destruction. Geography has made us intimate neighbours. If I do not like my

neighbour in a house or a flat I can move to another, but a country does not enjoy that luxury of moving away from a neighbour. Sooner or later, therefore — let us hope, sooner rather than later — the two countries have to learn to co-exist. For this to come about, however, there will have to be a change of heart first on the part of the present Government of Pakistan.

So far as Kashmir is concerned, I believe that Pakistan, as a result of its wicked collusion with Communist China and its aggression against us, has lost whatever *locus standi* it had. There can be no concession made to Pakistan in regard to Kashmir which may be misconstrued as a reward for the misdeeds of Pakistan. But surely we will not forget the obligations we have undertaken towards the people of Kashmir. A solution of the problem has, therefore, to be worked out, but this should be done on our own initiative and at the proper time. Whatever the solution, it will have to be mutually acceptable to, and in the interests of, both the people of India and the people of Kashmir. What does this mean? It means that whatever the future status of Kashmir and its relationship with the Indian Union, it can only be one which, as in the case of Nagaland, is acceptable to India, which fits in with our national interests and our national security.

In conditions of infiltration and guerilla warfare, it is wellknown that the goodwill of the civilian population can, in the long run, be decisive. It is, therefore, essential that all steps should be taken to win over those in Kashmir who are as yet uncommitted or who are opposed to that part of the country going to Pakistan. These are the people whom we must consult and with whom we shall have to work out a solution. In some sections of our Press and public opinion there has been an unfortunate failure to make this distinction between those who are pro-Pakistani and those who are opposed to Pakistan whatever else their views may be. If we are to defeat the enemy, we shall have to learn

to make this distinction and we shall have to avoid the folly of saying 'he who is not with me is against me'. In our own national interest, it is essential that a policy of conciliation should be instituted in Kashmir without any further delay.

I come now to a very important point, and that is about our future relations with two great powers — the United States of America and the Soviet Union. If the Chinese and Pakistani combination is to be resisted successfully, I believe that the help of the great powers is essential. Any talk of going it alone in the face of this combination is unrealistic and would be disastrous to our national interest. Both these great powers have in the last few months played a constructive role in bringing about a cease-fire. We need the friendship and goodwill of both these powers. In the changed circumstances, it would be a mistake to think in terms of exclusive friendship, friendship with one as against the other. But the fact has to be faced that both these powers function under certain limitations.

In the case of the United States, its limitation is that it cannot take sides in a dispute between two countries in the non-Communist world. This has happened in many parts of the world. I give the recent example of Cyprus where Turkey and Greece, both its allies, were at loggerheads. The United States did not take sides and tried to reconcile them. This is the role of the leading power in the non-Communist world. It is no good quarrelling with that; it has got to be accepted. 'The USA was on the horns of a dilemma in her relations with Pakistan', as Mr. M. C. Chagla remarked at the time, 'on the one hand there was growing disillusionment about the latter's role in South-East Asia, especially vis-a-vis China, and on the other the fear that any pressure on Pakistan now might only drive her closer to China'.

Nonetheless, we need US help; let us make no bones about it. We need it for three very specific reasons. The first is that today the United States is the only power

which has the capability and willingness to deter Communist China from attacking India, if necessary by force of arms. It is the only power with the capability and willingness to provide us with a nuclear shield against nuclear blackmail by China. That help was readily given in 1962 and it would have been available, if necessary, this year. There can be no system of regional security in South and South-East Asia without the support of the United States.

The second reason why we want US co-operation is food. Thanks to our bad policies and neglect of agriculture, we are not and will not, for a couple of years at least, even if good policies are followed, be in a position to avoid starvation deaths and distress to our people. The only country that can give us the amount of food that we require is the United States. The Soviet Union, unfortunately, has a food deficit and is selling gold very heavily in the world market to buy food for its own people.

Thirdly, this country needs economic aid and foreign capital. Again, while we may accept economic aid from any country we like, and rightly so, there is no country that could give us economic aid of the size that we require except the United States. Let me give some figures. Out of the Third Plan's external assistance, 59 per cent came from the United States and only 8.2 per cent from the Soviet Union. And in the present state of the Soviet economy, which is in a bit of a mess, it is in no condition to help us. An article in *Le Monde*, the well-known neutralist anti-American French newspaper of October 27, says:

'The crisis the Soviet Union is now undergoing in its gold and foreign-currency reserves, in its economy and in its relations with several Communist countries is profoundly changing the balance of forces in the world... Another striking aspect of the crisis of the system is the increasing paralysis of the economy'.

This is no time when Russia, even if it wanted to, could help us economically in a big way.

The interests of the Soviet Union coincide with ours up to a point. We should take full advantage of that identity of interest. Like the United States, the Soviet Union has played a constructive role in the Indo-Pakistan conflict. Strongly opposed to Communism as I am, I for one would unreservedly welcome Mr. Kosygin's mediation in the quarrel between us and Pakistan. I would wish him well and I would hail him as a good friend of this country if he could bring this quarrel to an end and restore friendship between the two countries.

Now, what are the Soviet objectives in this part of the world? I think they are three. The first is to avoid an open clash with China. Though China does not want it, the Soviet Union has kept the door open to a *detente*. In other words, the schism between China and Russia is not irreversible. The second thing is that the Soviet Union wants to keep Communist China and the United States out of the entire region. The third thing is that the Soviet Union wants to stop Pakistan from falling completely into the arms of Communist China.

These are the limitations of the Soviet Union and we must appreciate them, just as we appreciate the limitations of the United States. I say this because it would be disastrous if we let ourselves build another illusion in place of that illusion of 'Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai', which brought us to such a disastrous pass. I say that because there are some signs that that illusion may be replaced by another illusion or hypnosis of the same kind. There is the ridiculous talk by my friend, Mr. Ashok Mehta, of devetailing our economy and planning to the Soviet system of planning which is itself in disarray. The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, went to Moscow recently. While he was speaking to the Russians in Moscow at one of these functions he said: '...I am not in the habit

of speaking in the language of exaggeration. But I wish to tell you that today every corner, every class of India is full of love and affection and gratitude to the Soviet Union which was never seen before. The language of hyperbole is all right at diplomatic functions, but we must not become victims of that language. I shall also quote what he said before going to Russia. Speaking in Delhi, as reported by the *Indian Express* of 19th October, he said: 'The Soviet Union was a hundred per cent true friend of India'. Let me say clearly, what every student of international affairs knows, that there are no hundred per cent true friends for any country. Not even the United States, I will agree quite cheerfully, is a hundred per cent true friend of India. Let me remind the House of what happened in 1962. In 1962, when we were attacked by Communist China, two countries came readily to our assistance, while Mr. Khrushchev was still sitting on the fence, and they were the United States and the United Kingdom. We may be forgiven if in our excitement at that time we described them as a hundred per cent true friends. But what has happened in three years? See how the situation has changed. Therefore, if there is a hundred per cent friend, it is only for the moment, only for the occasion. Countries are not hundred per cent friends. They follow their own national interests and they change their friendships from time to time.

Now, the USSR is neutral and it has been neutral between India and Pakistan in the Kashmir dispute. There has been a shift in its policy, not to our advantage, over Kashmir. We know the Veto is gone, the Veto for which we paid a heavy price for several years. I can quote from article after article in *Pravda*, from statement after statement by Brezhnev and Kosygin, equating us with Pakistan.

It is interesting to recall that when, on 6th September, Mr. Harold Wilson, the British Prime Minister, made a remark disapproving of our crossing the frontier bet-

ween Amritsar and Lahore, we got excited about it, and some M.P.s. even brought a motion to leave the Commonwealth! But it is very interesting that about the same time Mr. Kosygin wrote a letter to our Prime Minister. I have not seen either the letter or the Prime Minister's reply. So, all I can do is to quote, from the *Hindustan Times* of 11th September a UNI message from New Delhi, which was never contradicted. It said, *inter alia*:

In his letter, received by the Prime Minister some days ago, Mr. Kosygin had taken exception to India's crossing of the international border in West Pakistan. He had requested New Delhi to immediately order a ceasefire and withdraw its forces behind the cease-fire line in Jammu and Kashmir and the international border elsewhere.

It is to be noted that Mr. Kosygin said exactly what Mr. Harold Wilson had said, but there was a deafening silence not only from the Communist Party but from those others who are frothing in their rage against the British! If one was to blame, both were to blame. Let us not have these double standards.

The last thing that I would say about the Soviet attitude is that on November 14 the *Patriot* carried a very interesting article from the well-known journal, of the international communist movement, *Problems of Socialism and Peace*:

Following the conflict, both India and Pakistan are increasing their military expenditure at the expense of economic development. The Shastri Government was already taking steps to lower the rate of economic development and increase the tax burden on the working masses... War Hysteria has gripped both countries drawing away the attention of labouring masses from the fight for their vital interests. The new situation considerably lightens the task of reaction to take revenge on the democratic movement.

This is not pointed out in criticism of the USSR. I am asking for sympathetic understanding of its limitations. I am only pointing out that the capacity of the Soviet Union to help us is very much more limited, very much more circumscribed than that of the United States.