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Mr. M. R. Masani

The Indian Attitude to the Soviet Union and the Position
of the Communist Party of India after the Chinese attack

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16 Dunster Street
Cambridge, Mass.

Mr. Masani was introduced by Mr. Fainsod and began by defining the scope of his approach to the subject, which he would divide in two parts:

- 1 - What happened during the attack?
- 2 - What happened since the cease-fire was offered?

Mr. Masani first said that the attack had been a surprise to the general public in India, although such a development had been anticipated by some like himself.

Insofar as the Indian attitude to "outsiders" was concerned, the reactions had been very clear. First, there was a feeling of great appreciation for the rapid and unconditional offer of assistance which had come from the West, particularly from Britain and America. This was reflected in numerous editorials which exclaimed: "Now we know who our friends are." On the contrary, there was disappointment and disgust toward the fence-sitting attitude in which the Colombo Powers seemed to be indulging, and there was bitter comment on the fruits of non-alignment, which was being practised against India for a change.

The attitude of Khrushchev and Soviet Russia had been more complex. The first editorial of Pravda had caused distress. Published October 25, five days after the attack, it gave general support to China and distinguished between "the Chinese who are brothers and the Indians who are friends." A second editorial, dated November 5, showed a slight shift toward a more neutral position. Nehru, whom Mr. Masani had met on November 7th, was greatly appreciative of this shift and shared the opinion of the Home Minister, who gave credit for it to the position taken in the resolution of the National Council of the Communist Party of India on the 1st of November. Mr. Masani had taken the liberty of disagreeing with them on this matter.

Insofar as the position of the Communist Party was concerned, it seemed to start with a secret circular issued by the Central Executive Committee, on October 17, three days before the major attack and in anticipation of a major showdown. Its directive was to follow the Peking line on the Sino-Indian border questions: it was a blank pro-Peking stand.

It is understood that the Politburo of Nine was then divided as follows: 4 on Moscow's side (Nehru's side), 4 on Peking's side one (the General Secretary) abstaining. However, on the 1st of November, there was a shift in the Indian Communist Party's position. The National Council resolution, already mentioned, was passed at a meeting of the National Council, a larger group than the Central Executive Committee, in Delhi. It was carried by 62 votes against 30 and 7 abstentions (the General Secretary included). The majority was led by Mr. Dange, Trade Union leader.

Many explanations, said Mr. Masani, have been given for this sudden shift in the Indian Communist Party's attitude. In his opinion, it was inspired by two motivations: 1) the resolution was mainly tactical and "acted as an umbrella to protect the Party from being banned, outlawed or suppressed altogether. Mr. Masani recalled that the Chief Ministers of the state governments, a few days before, had asked the Federal Government, without success, to outlaw the Party; 2) their second objective, he thought, was that they did not want to make the mistake they had made in 1942, isolating themselves from the rest of the nation. Defense Committees were being set up by the Government; they wanted to have positions in these Committees and to use these positions in due course for their own purposes.

Mr. Masani quoted two remarks made by Lenin, in order to permit a better appreciation of the mainsprings of this resolution which declared for defying India against Chinese aggression. "Marxism," said Lenin, "cannot be reconciled with any nationalism, even the most just, pure, refined and civilised." (Selected Works, Vol. 23, pp. 4-5). "Boycott war is a stupid phrase. Communists must take part even in the most reactionary war." (Collected Works, Vol. 10).

Whatever the motivations of the Indian Communist Party, on the 7th and 21st of November, the state governments acted. Since the Home Minister had not agreed to suppress the Party and had given them option, they exercised their autonomous powers. Within two days, about 50 arrests were made, mostly in Madhya Pradesh and Bombay. By December, about 400 Communists had been detained without trial under the Preventive Detention Act or the Defense of India Rules.

In regard to Defense Committees, different patterns were adopted according to the states. Certain states, under pressure from the Opposition Parties, excluded members of the Communist Party. Others, like Bihar, Madras and Mysore, preferred to see others walk out rather than exclude the Communists from the Committees. The Communist Party, on its part, took the decision to popularize the Prime Minister's statement, which said that the USSR had been unable to help India only because of its preoccupation in Cuba.

To go back to the general picture, on the 7th of November, Mr. K. Menon's resignation was accepted by the Prime Minister, a day before Parliament was to meet. This was done under great pressure from the Executive Committee of the Congress Party which had told Mr. Nehru that it otherwise would be unable to sustain him on the floor of Parliament against Opposition attacks on the following day. Fourteen days later, on the 21st of November, a cease-fire was offered. In spite of all that was said about it, it was accepted by the Indian Government with passive acquiescence, and it became operative on the 30th of November.

There was a great deal of debate in India concerning the motivations and the implications of the cease-fire. Two

explanations, Mr. Masani said, could be given. The first one, military, was that the Chinese had never intended to go that far and were prepared neither for such a campaign nor for the occupation of the plains of Assam. The second, political, was that they had not expected to meet any real opposition. On the contrary, they encountered an upsurge of patriotic feeling. The Indian Government was then under tremendous attack, and the Prime Minister could never have entered into any kind of negotiations.

In any case, the attack stopped. Soon afterwards, Khrushchev made a public statement in which he congratulated the Chinese for stopping in time and avoiding such further consequences as "the loss of one of their best friends in India" (Krishna Menon).

Mr. Masani quoted the leader of his own party, who was asked on the 8th of November if the Russians had had a restraining influence on the Chinese in this particular matter. Mr. C. Rajagopalachari, reflecting the opinion of the majority of the educated people in India at that time - perhaps not now - said that this might appear to be so, but that the promptness of America and Britain to offer their help had done more for them than anything else and that it would be better not to trust the Communist governments in the future.

The cease-fire, offered on the 21st of November, was received with mixed feelings. There was frustration, anger, humiliation and also relief.

As far as the Communist Party was concerned, Dange went to Moscow in December 1962. He came back by London and, at a public meeting, appeared to sit midway between the Indian and Chinese positions. The meeting broke up in pandemonium, as this seemed to be a reversal of the resolution of the 1st of November. Apparently, pressure had been brought on him in Moscow.

From December to February, 1963, Peking invited the Indian Communist Party to revolt against the line that was laid down by the majority of the National Council. Moscow, on the contrary, tried to avert a split - which is still its position as of today. The result was that, on February 12, at its first meeting since November 1, the National Council adopted unanimous resolutions. Emphasis was put on a peaceful settlement of the Sino-Indian dispute. There was definite opposition to any aid from the West (while before they were ready to accept it against repayment).

In March, the pro-Peking element began to talk about adhering to a 5th International forming around the Chinese Communist Party. At this time, the same pro-Peking elements were creating a new organization called C.P.Z. in Bengal. Out

of 17,000 members of the Party in Bengal, 14,000 were then in revolt against the national leadership.

On April 15, the Central Executive Committee met again. There was growing opposition of the pro-Peking element. The political resolution was moved by P. C. Joshi (former General Secretary) who stood midway between the Russian and Chinese positions. Here again, a split was avoided, but the position of Dange seemed to have considerably weakened since November. In May, a similar shift was noticeable in the World Communist Review.

In June, Dange retreated still further and proposed to go back to the Madurai line: "Prepare for a revolt by organizing marches of peasants and workers" with a view to creating an up-surge which would eventually lead them to power. His argument was that if Communists did not exploit the people's discontent, others would do it. From June 26 to July 2, the National Council was held in the middle of chaos and division. The only positive decision taken was to go to Moscow to seek light and guidance. On July 22, Dange went to Prague on his way to Moscow. Nambudupad left for Moscow, then for Peking. On August 19, on the motion of no-confidence in Nehru's Government, the Communist Party stood apart and voted neither for nor against it.

In the meantime, what was happening to the rest of the nation? In February 1963, came the Budget, which increased the discontent of the nation because of the excessive burden of taxation which was imposed on them. The humiliation of the defeat and the economic distress resulted in a landslide in by-elections. Mr. Masani estimated the shift in his own constituency from the Congress Party to his own Party at about one-third within a year.

However, he pointed out that there had been a gradual erosion of the indignation and anger that the Indian people had felt in November. Because popular memories are short, the intrusion of Kashmir in the picture and the Anglo-American insistence on talks being opened between India and Pakistan had contributed to create a new irritation not only with Pakistan, but also toward the Western governments.

On the other hand, the Soviet Union had reaffirmed its dependability in regard to its veto on Kashmir in the Security Council. This, in Mr. Masani's opinion, undoubtedly was one of the reasons which had affected the Indian attitude toward the West and toward the Soviet Union. The attitude of certain people in the West, Mr. Masani said further, had also helped to soften Indian opinion toward Moscow. The publicized changes within the Soviet Union, apparent converging of the Soviet and American foreign policy lines, and the signing of the test-ban treaty made Indian opinion accept the Soviet Union as a genuine friend. A very sharp distinction - sometimes exaggerated into

black and white - was made in India between Soviet and Chinese Communists.

As a matter of fact, India has lately developed friendlier relations with the Soviet Union. On June 10, a trade agreement was signed in Moscow which makes the Soviet Union a major customer of India. In July 1963, a military mission was sent to Moscow to ascertain the possibility of getting military supplies from the Soviet Union. They came back with undefined "token aid".

Indian opinion is divided in regard to all this. Some say that the Soviet Union, in its annoyance with China, wants to arm and encourage India to stand firm. Others think that Moscow wants to stop India from being overdependent on the West. In Mr. Masani's own words, "by giving or offering a little, they want to stop India from getting more." Whatever the reasons may be, the Indian Government has encouraged many manifestations of interest in Moscow's goodwill. On the other hand, the Communists are gradually being released, and Dange goes around preaching anti-government action, while Fernandez, a member of the Socialist Party, is detained for inciting industrial disorder.

Discussing the shift which was on its way within the framework of non-alignment, Mr. Masani later came to the Kamaraj Plan and its implications. Conceived by Mr. K. Kamaraj, Chief Minister of Madras, as a simple proposition intended for his own state, so that the Congress Party could win the next election, the Plan was made a national proposition and created a domestic schism in the Congress Party. As a result of it, six Federal Ministers have already been removed. It is difficult to say as yet if the purge will continue. What will happen in Kashmir might help to answer this question.

Mr. Nehru has succeeded in persuading the Prime Minister of Kashmir to resign and to replace him by G. M. Sadiq, an old time Communist. This, undoubtedly, is a gesture intended to induce Khrushchev to sustain his veto on Kashmir in the Security Council. However, this is a matter of tremendous danger to the security of India. It is too early to say, continued Mr. Masani, how the fight will end. In his opinion, it is a long term problem and no immediate solution should be expected.

In conclusion, Mr. Masani, expressing his personal opinion on the matter, stated that:

- 1 - the Sino-Indian - like the Sino-Soviet - conflict was a long-term conflict which would not be solved in the near future.
- 2 - the Indian Communist Party was not likely to split, even if there were two centers of influence and power within it.
- 3 - there would be no early settlement of the Kashmir dispute, nor resumption of friendly relations between India and Pakistan.

4 - Nehru would not clearly take a stand pro-West and anti-Moscow or vice versa. There seemed to be "a great leap forward" toward Moscow at the present time, but it might be followed by a great leap backward.

DISCUSSION

Mr. Fainsod: Is this disposition not to precipitate split within the Communist Party of India shared on the Peking side? Is the Party looked upon as a field of battle where it hopes to win more supporters?

Mr. Masani: The Chinese would like a split. They know that they will never have the whole Party against Moscow, and they would be satisfied if they had a whole faction for themselves. On the contrary, the Soviets would do everything to avoid a split, which might be the signal for the Party to do the same in other parts of the world.

Mr. Donald: Could you comment a little further on the Kamaraj Plan and the changes in the Cabinet?

Mr. Masani: As of now, it cannot be said that there has been any infiltration of pro-Communist elements into the Cabinet. On the whole, there has been a shift in the direction of what Mr. Nehru - if not his whole party - desired. Apart from the Finance Minister perhaps, the Cabinet seems to be homogeneous and likely to adopt a left of center policy in regard to international affairs, Communism, etc. Mr. Nanda, new Home Minister, who is in open contradiction with his own trade union organization, the INTUC, has been described by a Communist paper as "a truly democratic Home Minister." In any case, there is a danger in this handing over of jobs to people who have somewhat different molds from those removed.

Mr. R. Miller: Do you not feel that these changes reflect, not so much the desire of Nehru to mollify Khrushchev, as a chance offered to him to get rid of people who were not congenial companions in the Cabinet?

Mr. Masani: Yes, this is certainly one of the motives, although it does not apply to the proposed appointment of G. M. Sadiq in Kashmir. However, there are people who think that this is a first step to clear the ground for the succession. Mr. Nehru's daughter, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, might then be a kind of Prime Minister - Ceylon style. This would allow Krishna Menon, whom the Congress Party would not accept as Prime Minister, to have a great deal of influence and power.

Mr. Wandycz: Could you comment on the internal trends of the Communist Party in India? Do you feel that there is an evolution within the Party due to younger people who believe in the possibility of transforming it?

Mr. Masani: I imagine that the younger members in the Party believe that, by taking a pro-Moscow attitude, they will be more in the mainstream of opinion, and will thus be able to play a more active role in national affairs. Also, it is believed that, in order to have civil liberty, opposition must be preserved so that the purge does not get inside the Party.

Mr. Wandycz: To what factors would you ascribe Krishna Menon's political strength?

Mr. Masani: He has no power of his own. But, as Nehru listens to him, he has in fact immense power. The going back on the "Voice of America" agreement, in particular, is believed to have come in great part from him.

Mr. Fainsod: Would there not be some left wing sentiment in the Congress Party which would find its voice in Krishna Menon?

Mr. Masani: No, there is a genuine non-Communist left in the Party which would rather turn to...

Mr. Fainsod: But there is a fellow traveling wing.

Mr. Masani: Yes, there has been considerable infiltration in the last few years. Hundreds of people, in the Punjab and elsewhere, have resigned from the Communist Party to join the Congress Party. They were even given the floor in the last debate in Parliament.

Mr. Pipes: What would you consider a sound Indian policy toward the Soviet Union?

Mr. Masani: It should be a policy of non-irritation, non-provocation, and of normally friendly behaviour. I would accept economic aid, I would keep the maximum possible friendship and I would make them understand that arming for the fight against China did not mean arming against Moscow.

Mr. Pipes: Would you request weapons from the Soviet Union, or would you accept them if offered?

Mr. Masani: No, for the defense of India, I would depend on the Democracies of the world, not on Moscow. I would accept the fullest assistance from the West, and, on account of their own troubles with China, I believe that the Soviets would understand that we would be acting in territorial self-defense.

Mr. Korengold: How do you view the effects on public opinion of the MIGs deal with the Soviet Union?

Dr. Masani: It was at the beginning a matter of public ridicule, because they had come by ships ("Why not by bullock-cart, to make it slower?" people asked.) and had not been flown over. Public opinion was then rather anti-Soviet. Non-alignment has since been taken as a joke. People think that we should talk about it, but not practise it. It is a process of slow public education. People are more interested in their own bread and butter problems. It is the economic issue which decides everything. The ideological orientation does not matter much.

Mr. M. Field: Could you give us some ideas on the economic situation in India. What kind of help the Soviet Union could give you?

Mr. Masani: I shall tell you what we need, not what the Soviet Union could do for us. In industrialization, we have gone pretty far. We would rather need help for our agriculture and infrastructure. We need more investment in land, water supply, fertilizers, ...highways, means of transport. Investing in industry, mostly in heavy industry, is a waste of money. The USSR may not be in a position to help us, but anybody can help us to improve our technical education, electrical power installations...

Mr. Fainsod: You are here giving the platform of your Party, not of the government.

Mr. Masani: Yes, I agree. It is motivated by economic nationalism which is behind investment in heavy industry, while I am speaking of welfare investment which will assure to the nation, within a few years, concrete returns and a better life.

Mr. Fainsod: What is the rate of population increase?

Mr. Masani: It is 8 million a year or 2.5% annual rate of growth of population. The economic rate of growth, on the other hand, has gone down very sharply to 2.2% in the last two years, so that the rate of growth is now slower than the rate of population increase, which is disastrous. Here again, there would be very much to do.

Mr. R. Miller: There is a theory that one of the major reasons for the Chinese attack was precisely this hoped-for shift in the resources plan. Could you comment on that?

Mr. Masani: It is true that the current yearly Budget has been a great victory for Communist China. And this because we were too reluctant to accept assistance from the West.

Mr. Fainsod: What is the relative influence of the Chinese and the Soviet wings in the Congress Party?

Mr. Masani: Geographically, the strongest pro-Peking units are in Bengal (14,000 out of 17,000), Kerala and Andhra. Elsewhere, they are a minority.

Mr. Wandycz: What would be the attraction of a Peking line to an average Communist member?

Mr. Masani: The revolution. A good Marxist-Leninist would say that the Peking line is much closer to the theoretical line than Khrushchev is. Insurrectionary slogans appeal more than the softer revisionist slogans. There is an economic difference between India and the Soviet Union. It is understandable that an Indian, who belongs to a poor country, feels that he is closer to the Chinese. Communists have no power, they want to get into power, and they know that it is impossible by democratic means.