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Background Information USSR

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INDIA AS SEEN FROM MOSCOW AND PEKING

At the end of the visit of the Indian Parliamentary delegation to the USSR, a joint communiqué was signed in Moscow (Radio Moscow, 9 October 1962) which deserves more than passing attention. The Indians had spent 19 days in the USSR, and their delegation, which was led by the Speaker of the People's Chamber, was received by Brezhnev, who as the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet is the nominal head of State. The important passage in the communiqué reads as follows:

"Talks between representatives of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and members of the delegation confirmed the community of attitudes on the important aspects of the vital problem of general and complete disarmament. They expressed identical views on the increased role and responsibility of the parliaments for the maintenance and consolidation of peace, and stressed the insistent need for the liquidation without delay of colonialism in all its forms and manifestations.

"The members of parliament noted with satisfaction the development and consolidation of Soviet-Indian cooperation.

"The head of the delegation, Sardar Hukam Singh, on behalf of Parliament, invited the Supreme Soviet USSR to send a delegation to India. This invitation was gratefully accepted."

These three paragraphs contain three separate themes which are likely to raise blood pressures in Peking: the emphasis on disarmament as a policy, not merely a tactical manoeuvre (even though the Indians clearly did not agree with their Soviet hosts on all aspects of the problem), the importance of Parliaments and in this particular case a bourgeois Parliament to the peace campaign, and the development of cooperation between Moscow and New Delhi.

The tangible nature of the latter, translated into terms of military ironmongery, is best exemplified by the Financial Times report (9 October 1962) that the first batch of 6 Mig 21 supersonic jets for India are expected to arrive in December, and that the agreement for the manufacture of Migs in India has now been finalized.

While the Indian-Soviet communiqué was being published, the editors of the People's Daily in Peking were writing an article for to-day's issue (10th October) accusing India of blackmail in the border dispute and of attacking Chinese frontier guards" on an ever larger scale". The People's Daily says:

"In the past few days Prime Minister Nehru has taken the lead in openly calling for the use of armed force against China... These facts show that 'peaceful talk' on the lips of the Indian ruling group headed by Nehru is nothing but a smoke-screen to hoodwink the Indian people."

Yet it is members of this same "ruling group" who have been fêted by Moscow for more than 2 weeks and who have agreed with the USSR on a communiqué which, at such a time, may well be regarded by Peking as provocation second only to that of the Brezhnev-Tito visit in magnitude.

The latest outburst in Peking follows a period during which the Chinese have been "continually strengthening their position on the Indian side of the Tangla Ridge", as the Indian note put it on October 6th. India refuses to negotiate on the border issue until the Chinese withdraw from positions south of the MacMahon line, and consequently the period of diplomatic negotiation seems to be over. In fact the usually unexcitable London Times wrote on October 8th:

"The last diplomatic hand appears to have been played, and the two biggest powers in Asia stand at the brink of a border war."

If this development occurs, the Soviet-Indian communiqué of October 9th 1962 and the reported delivery of Migs to India in two months time leave little room for doubt as to where Soviet sympathies in fact lie, no matter how carefully Moscow may avoid following Lord Home's recent example<sup>1</sup> in pronouncing on the historical merits of the Indian case.

r.r.g.

<sup>1</sup>Chen Yi, Chinese Foreign Minister, remarked of Lord Home's statement to the UN: "it exactly proves that the Indian reactionaries and British imperialists are jackals of the same lair" (Hsinhua 6 October 1962)