

# Letter from NEW DELHI

## An Indo-Soviet Diary

NEW DELHI, November 18th. The postman arrived with my mail this morning on a bicycle adorned with two neat paper flags, crossed, of the tricolour and the hammer-and-sickle with a star. I had little doubt where the flags came from, but asked all the same. They were, of course, supplied by his office.

Last night I saw the circular park in Connaught Place, the capital's shopping centre, turned by the Public Works Department into a little forest of fairy lights. For weeks now an army of carpenters, masons, and gardeners have been busy erecting welcome arches and flagpoles along the principal streets, white-washing housefronts, fertilising the grass lawns, levelling the sidewalks with red gravel, and putting fresh paint on lamp-posts. Not on any Republic anniversary, not even on the day the British transferred power in 1947, has New Delhi worn so gay a look with so many flags. Greetings in exotic Russian alternate with slogans in Hindi on the buntings in the city, and all along the road to Palam where the Soviet leaders are to land in the afternoon. An informal holiday has been declared in all offices, schools, and colleges. Forty thousand school children have been mobilised to line the twelve-mile route of the State drive from the airport to the President's House.

These are the embellishments Nehru has learnt from his trips to China and Russia since he first organised a mass welcome as a deliberate political act. That was in August 1953, when Mohammed Ali, then Prime Minister of Pakistan, hurried here for talks with Nehru on the sensational arrest and deposition of Premier Sheikh Abdullah in Kashmir. The strongest backer of Kashmir's

union with India having turned hostile, Nehru was morally on the defensive. He was anxious to assure Mohammed Ali that Abdullah's arrest did not mean the end of the pledge to let the people of Kashmir decide their own future. Wishing to demonstrate India's sincerity and goodwill towards Pakistan, Nehru made an unprecedented public appeal for a fitting welcome to the visitor. The Delhi unit of the Congress Party chartered buses and trucks to carry thousands on a free ride to Palam, where Mohammed Ali received a bigger welcome than any given till then to a foreign statesman.

Few liked to admit at that time that the goodwill demonstration was the result of Nehru's appeal. In the present case the hurt reactions to Western press comments on the State-ordained welcome given to Nehru in Russia last June have strengthened the reluctance to admit official preparations—though such preparations cannot compare in effectiveness with like measures in a totalitarian country. Yesterday, when a columnist in the *Times of India* wrote, "Here, too, there will be spontaneous demonstrations carefully organised," a fellow journalist called it the slander of an American stooge.

Though the welcome for Bulganin and Khrushchev has been prepared on a much vaster scale than for Mohammed Ali, there is the big difference that today it is no self-conscious demonstration by politically embarrassed citizens. To the educated, the arrival of the Soviet leaders on the first goodwill visit ever paid by them to a non-Communist country looks like the most significant development of the post-Stalin era. Moscow has long since abandoned the attacks on Nehru as a tool of Western im-

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perialism. It now praises our independent foreign policy of peace and subscribes to the Panch Shila principles of non-interference and co-existence. The contract already made for the erection of a Soviet steel plant and the negotiations under way for technical aid in developing our coal and oil production seem to presage fruitful economic dealings in the coming years, when the accent in Indian planning will be on industrialisation. Why should we not be proud to welcome a friendly visit by the highest leaders of one of the world's two great powers?

As for the common people, the colourful preparations of welcome have been enough to attract them in thousands. As I took the road to Palam, the crowds on either side were exactly like those at any religious festival or fair. There was the same music, side-shows, and the brisk trade in groundnuts and sweetmeats. The only novelties were the ubiquitous flags and the uniformed children shepherded by schoolmistresses.

**A**FTERNOON. At the airport I stand sheltered on the tarmac with diplomats, ministers, and prominent Communist invitees, including Stalin peace-prize-winner Kitchlew. The iron railings threaten to give way under the weight of the surging crowd outside. Suddenly, finding Nehru behind me, perched on a stool to survey the gathering, I asked him: "Does this compare pretty well, sir, with the reception you got in Moscow?" He smiled with satisfaction: "This is only the beginning."

When the Soviet leaders finally arrived, the contrast between them was striking. Bulganin looked every inch the Prime Minister of a great country—dignified and impressive without being stiff, polite and friendly without being familiar. With his steady and penetrating blue eyes he seemed to size up each person to whom he was introduced. When he waved to the crowd it was the greeting of a dignitary, not a politician or salesman.

Khrushchev looked somewhat pathetic as he shadowed Bulganin to the saluting-base and passed the guard of honour. But once the formalities were over, it was Khrushchev who won the heart of the crowd by learning to pronounce "*namaste*" and greeting them with folded hands in the Indian fashion. He discarded no garlands, smiled and bowed

profusely, and, when he shook hands, used both arms with the vigour of an intimate who has found a long-lost friend. If the people kept shouting more welcomes for Bulganin, it was only because the name was easier.

The next three days were rather dull, the visitors dividing their time between a tourist round of Moghul monuments and innocuous speeches pledging friendship, economic aid, and co-operation in the fight for peace. It was only in their long, prepared addresses to members of Parliament on the eve of their departure on a ten-day tour of the country that the Soviet leaders first exchanged amiability for the controversies of the cold war. Bulganin squarely blamed the West for the failure of the Geneva meeting of Foreign Ministers and for the stalemate on disarmament, while Khrushchev said: "We never compelled anybody and are not compelling any to accept our ideas of the reconstruction of society. One may wonder who is fabricating this lie about the Soviet Union." Shriman Narayan, general secretary of the Congress Party, commented: "We do not know how far this is true of the past. But we do believe that the U.S.S.R. has now given up the policy of exporting Communism to other countries."

**N**ANGAL, November 22nd. An air-conditioned, luxuriously appointed special train brought the Soviet leaders overnight from Delhi to the site of Punjab's Bhakra dam, which will be the second highest in the world and is the pride of India's first five-year plan. Khrushchev notes with satisfaction that the dam will be bomb-proof (nobody could see how), asks the American chief engineer, Slocum, to "demolish the iron wall round your country," and hopes that Indian engineers will be able one day to do without foreign technical help.

I and my colleagues of the press party discover painfully in the afternoon that the Soviet leaders are on no sight-seeing tour. We had gone ahead to the power house at Ganguwal, downstream of the Bhakra dam site, which Bulganin and Khrushchev were due to visit. On returning puzzled to Nangal, we found that they had dropped the visit and made speeches instead at the State Governor's luncheon. Bulganin had confined



himself to thanks for the welcome and praise for the industrious Punjabis. Khrushchev, in his first extempore address, offered to "share the last piece of bread with you."

At night we leave Nangal for Ambala airport to take our planes for the rest of the tour which is to be all by air. The Russians are using their own Ilyushins. The crew of the press party's Indian Dakota are glad that this is so, and tell us stories about the fantastic security measures on board the Indian aircraft which Chou En-lai used on his visit last year.

The pattern of speeches at Nangal was to be repeated wherever we went. Except at Madras, where he condemned Portuguese colonialism in Goa, Bulganin made no controversial speeches. He combined grateful expression of thanks for the welcome with lavish praise of the special qualities of his hosts. He lauded the martial valour of the Maharashtrians at Poona, the cultural heritage of South Indians at Bangalore and Madras, and the patriotism of the Bengalis at Calcutta. After these preliminaries Khrushchev would launch on his racy polemics larded with homely metaphor. Both of them readily responded to Indian ways of greeting. They cheerfully wore the welcome mark of the vermilion *tilak* on their foreheads, and donned Gandhi caps, Rajasthani turbans, and the South Indian *angavasthrum* (gold-laced scarves) as they were offered.

Critical audiences and questions were strictly avoided. Not for them the Indian Council of World Affairs, an address before which has been a routine item in the programme of most other visiting statesmen. The only non-official banquet they accepted was by the Indo-Soviet Cultural Society at Bombay. They cancelled the scheduled reception by the Bombay Press Guild, the only occasion where there might have been questions and answers. Western correspondents pleaded in vain with Indian liaison officials for permission to interview the Soviet leaders.

The response from mass audiences made Khrushchev grow daily bolder in tone. At Bombay, our first major halt after Nangal, he traced Hitler's attack on Russia to the same forces which intervened and sought to suppress the first proletarian State. Greeting India's adoption of the socialist objective ("though our conception of socialism is a

little bit different from yours"), he linked the defence of India's freedom and chosen way of life with that of Soviet Communism.

I was struck by the immense popularity of Khrushchev's polemics. Knowing that anti-colonialism is the deepest political urge of Indians, he made this his central theme. The identification of colonialism exclusively with the West was received without scepticism by people who have directly experienced Western rule but have heard little about the Soviet empire in far-away Eastern Europe. The political education of the average Indian on world affairs is derived almost entirely from Nehru, and he has never once spoken of any imperialism other than of the West. So with the theme of peace. Indians remember more vividly the dangerous crossing of the 38th Parallel by United Nations forces in Korea, against which Nehru repeatedly warned, than the start of the war in Korea when India quietly voted in favour of the U.N. resolution charging the Communist North with aggression. Nehru has tirelessly condemned NATO, SEATO, and other Western-sponsored military alliances as threats to peace, but has never explicitly deplored the actual disturbance of peace by the Communist camp in Korea or its menacing actions elsewhere. We have seen terrible pictures and read frightful accounts, in films and newspapers, of the test explosions of nuclear weapons conducted by the U.S., but never of similar explosions by Russia. When Khrushchev, at Bangalore, admitted the latest Soviet test with the hydrogen bomb and claimed for it the explosive power of several million tons of T.N.T., it evoked little of the fear caused by the visual publicity given to American explosions in the Pacific. On the contrary, I sensed among the audience something of the vicarious pride at non-Western power and achievement which was felt in India at the early military successes of Japan during the last war.

CALCUTTA, November 29th. The reception here has beaten the record of all other cities. As our vehicle inched its way through the three million people who have turned out to greet the Soviet leaders on their last halt before leaving for Burma, I remembered Nehru's words at Palam. This is certainly a fitting climax to the beginning of the welcome at Palam.

But the best reception turned into the worst as, under the pressure of the milling crowds and with the clutch burnt out from repeated stopping and starting, the open Mercedes-Benz carrying Bulganin and Khrushchev broke down half way from Dum Dum airport to the Governor's House. Hustled into the nearest vehicle, they completed the journey in a closed police van, hidden from the view of hundreds of thousands who had waited for hours to see them. All the day's engagements were cancelled on account of the choked roads. Were the people to blame? They had been exhorted for over a week by their leaders, from the Chief Minister to the Communist Party, to give the visitors a welcome worthy of Calcutta. They did. But the streets were too narrow to hold them.

Nehru has joined the Soviet leaders here, and I wondered what he would say at tomorrow's public meeting after the un-neutral but popular speeches of Khrushchev. Did they embarrass him?

At the civic reception next evening I found from the advance notes of Nehru's speech that he intended, at this first opportunity, to reaffirm India's policy of non-alignment: "The great welcome that our guests have had in India has alarmed some of our friends in other countries who cannot help thinking in terms of rival camps and military alliances. I have often said that we do not propose to join any camp or alliance. That is our basic policy. But we wish to co-operate with all in the quest of peace and security and human betterment. . . . This (Indo-Soviet) friendship and co-operation is not aimed against any nation or people."

But Nehru had not intended to refer to Goa (despite Bulganin's declaration of support for India on this issue), and was forced to do so because Khrushchev brought up the question again—likening Portugal and other colonial powers to leeches which clung to the human body and sucked blood. After this Nehru could not but speak about Goa. He welcomed the Soviet leaders' support for Goan freedom, and asked why other countries remained silent. But he once again ruled

out the use of force to make the Portuguese quit.

NEW DELHI, December 11th. Events have moved rapidly since I returned from Calcutta. As if in reply to Nehru's question why some countries have remained silent on Goa, the U.S. Secretary of State has issued a joint statement with the Portuguese Foreign Minister describing Goa as "a province of Portugal" in the Far East, stressing the "inter-dependence" of Africa and the Western world, and deploring the Soviet leaders' remarks on Goa as "an effort to foment hatred between East and West and to divide peoples who need to feel the sense of unity and fellowship for peace and mutual welfare."

The Indian reaction to this has been one of fury. The statement is seen as a blatant affirmation of American support for colonialism in Asia and Africa.

Meanwhile Bulganin and Khrushchev have returned from Burma and are in Kashmir. The day before yesterday Bulganin indirectly expressed Soviet acceptance of India's claim to this disputed territory by referring to Kashmir as the "northern part of India." Yesterday Khrushchev explicitly said at Srinagar, capital of the State, that "the question of Kashmir as one of the States of the Republic of India has been decided by the people of Kashmir themselves."

Russia has thus become the first major power to recognise Kashmir as a part of the Indian Union even in advance of the ascertainment through democratic process (to which Nehru is still committed) of the choice of the State's predominantly Moslem population between accession to India or Pakistan.

Khrushchev's support for the Indian claim to Kashmir is frankly on the ground that "the Republic of India is our ally in fighting for peace" while "the present Government of Pakistan frankly publicises that it is close to American monopolist circles." Even if Indians do not like the conversion of Kashmir into a cold-war issue, their gratitude for Soviet support can be easily imagined.

G. N. S. Raghavan



# Men and Ideas

## *Erich Heller:* ERNST JÜNGER

THAT the time is out of joint is by now common European knowledge; the idea that the damage might be cured through cursed spite is a German variation on the Hamlet theme. From time to time some German romantics whistled this tune to frighten their fright away on their lone wanderings through the dark forest. In Nietzsche the theme gained depth and clarity. Spengler scored it for all civilisations the earth has known, and joined their voices in a *finale* that sounded jubilant although it meant death. Ernst Jünger discovered it for himself in the First World War; it spoke to him with a loud, large voice through the "storm of steel," as he called his war book. He brought the music home and became its intellectual pied piper, followed by many who would have followed Hitler, had Hitler been more literate and less vulgar; and often did follow him in spite of it.

What, then, is this Germanic *leit-motif* and perversity of the spirit? Theologically speaking, the doctrine that Beelzebub is the devil's only serious adversary: sin can only be redeemed by sin; morally, that wrong can be put right only by conquering the prejudice that it is wrong; and aesthetically, that if the habitual exposure to the loathsome horrors of the age has robbed us of the power of feeling and left us with nothing to admire, we must learn to admire this Nothing, discover the hidden beauty in that which is loathsome, and raise unfeeling itself to a dizzy pitch of ecstasy.

Yet Ernst Jünger is a serious writer, or at least a writer who, with some justification, has been taken very seriously by his numer-

ous German readers over the last thirty years. His place in literature cannot be defined in the conventional terms of literary history. He has written no poems, no dramas, and—although some of his books tell a story—no novels. Nor is he simply a "man of letters." He is, or until recently was, one of the few genuine examples of what in the dim past of a decade ago some French intellectuals used to call *littérature engagée*. The early Ernst Jünger did not just write; he took up the pen. He did not describe, invent, or make poems; he sounded, diagnosed, and performed operations. He did not discuss, he committed himself, arranged for breakthroughs and decided issues. His main contribution to literature proper is a paradoxical literary experiment: to forge a style of writing which would authentically convey the fact that this is no time for style, writing, or literature. It may well be that, in attempting this, Ernst Jünger merely joined in a not uncommon pursuit of modern artists. We do have sculpture which expresses the conviction that there is nothing left to give form and shape to, except form and shape; paintings which suggest that all things have lost their outlines and colours, except outlines and colours; music and poetry whose theme is the impossibility of themes, the intractability of meaning in sounds and words.

HOWEVER, Jünger's is an experiment with a difference. He is not preoccupied with the possibilities of exhaustion of his medium, which is literature. It is not literature which is his professed concern, but the things he writes about. This seems simple enough.