

## **September 20, 1982**

### **Record of Soviet-Indian Talks**

#### **Citation:**

"Record of Soviet-Indian Talks", September 20, 1982, Wilson Center Digital Archive, RGANI, f. 80, op. 1, d. 631, ll. 1-17. Contributed by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Gary Goldberg. <https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/300538>

#### **Summary:**

Brezhnev tells Gandhi about the Soviet Union's concern with recent American actions in the Middle East and shares his fear of increased nuclear capacity. Gandhi seconds these worries, celebrates the friendship between India and the Soviet Union, and requests Soviet assistance in developing India's economy.

#### **Credits:**

This document was made possible with support from Blavatnik Family Foundation

#### **Original Language:**

Russian

#### **Contents:**

Translation - English

Subject to return to the CPSU CC (General Department, 1st Sector)

Distributed to CPSU CC Politburo Members and Candidate Members and CPSU CC Secretaries

Nº P1597

Secret

RECORD OF SOVIET-INDIAN TALKSx)

\*the record of the negotiations was not reviewed by the participants of the negotiations.

20 September 1982

[The following] took part in the talks: from the Soviet side - L. I. Brezhnev, CPSU CC General Secretary and Chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium; N. A. Tikhonov, Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers; A. A. Gromyko, USSR Minister of Foreign Affairs; D. F. Ustinov, USSR Minister of Defense, I. V. Arkhipov, 1st Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers; N. S. Patolichev, USSR Minister of Foreign Trade; V. F. Mal'tsev, First Deputy USSR Minister of Foreign Affairs; Yu. M. Vorontsov, Soviet Ambassador in India; Ye. M. Samoteykin, personal assistant to the CPSU CC General Secretary; A. I. Val'kov, Chief of the USSR MFA South Asia Department; from the Indian side: I. Gandhi, Prime Minister of India; P. V. Narasimha Rao, Minister of External Affairs of India; J. Parthasarathi, Chief Adviser to the Prime Minister; M. Rasgotra, First Deputy Minister of External Affairs of India; H. Y. Sharada Prasad, Adviser to the Prime Minister for Information Questions; Dr. J. S. Teja, Deputy Minister of External Affairs of India; Dr. A. K. Sengupta, Adviser to the Prime Minister for Economic Questions; V. K. Ahuja, Ambassador of India in the USSR; M. K Mangalmurti, Chief of the East European Department of the Indian MEA; A. Madhavan, Deputy Ambassador of India in the USSR.

L. I. BREZHNEV. Dear Madam Prime Minister.

I am genuinely glad to welcome you in Moscow. We highly value the good relations with India and how much you personally have done for their development. I am convinced that your present visit will still further strengthen the traditional friendship of our countries and their further multi-faceted cooperation.

The gradual development of relations between the USSR and India has truly paramount significance for our countries, for the situation in Asia, and in the world on a whole. The Soviet leadership assesses the cooperation with India in all fields positively. Its spheres are expanding and it is becoming ever deeper in substance and varied in form.

The agreements reached during our meeting in Delhi in 1980 are being put into effect.

The effectiveness of trade, economic, scientific, and technical cooperation between the USSR and India is growing by virtue of the fact that it is being done on a planned basis. The corresponding long-term agreement signed in 1979 will be mainly accomplished by 1990. It seems that we could also look at a more distant perspective for our cooperation, let's say, up to the year 2000.

As I am told, some days ago Indian candidate cosmonauts arrived in our Star City to prepare for a joint Soviet-Indian space flight. A new important chapter in our cooperation is thereby being opened.

Some words about how matters are going with us in the Soviet Union.

The main efforts of the Soviet people are being concentrated right now on the fulfillment of the large-scale program of economic and social development of the country outlined by the 26th Congress of our Party. And much has already been done. A solid growth of industrial production is assured. The production of consumer products is increasing. Work to develop the natural resources of Siberia and the Far East is being done on a broad front.

The USSR Food Program for the period up to 1990 is called upon to provide a serious improvement of agriculture and the industrial sectors associated with it. The work to put it into effect is beginning to bring the first fruits.

So the workers of our country are heading for the 60th anniversary of the formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which we will mark in December of this year

with impressive achievements.

Of course, more could be done, we have minor problems. The tense international situation creates certain difficulties.

This tension is the result of the actions of the US and its allies, who have adopted a course of direct confrontation with the socialist countries and those liberated from colonialism, and the crude use of force and pressure in policy. The "crusade" proclaimed by the President of the US is directed not only against Communism, but against all forces of progress, liberty, and the independence of peoples.

Now in Washington they officially announce that a nuclear war is possible, and in some circumstances even advisable. They speak of preparing for a "protracted" nuclear war and victory in it. This is monstrous and, we'll say frankly, a crazy doctrine which is dangerous for all humanity.

Completely ignoring the realities of our time the US Administration is pursuing a policy directed at occupying first place militarily and dominating in the world.

References to any change in the correlation of forces unfavorable to the US are called upon only to disguise these goals. They are calculated at deceiving the American and other peoples.

The Americans have been forced to resume negotiations with us on nuclear weapons, but they are trying to use them only to hide their military preparations, which are unprecedented in scale, and to for attempts to impose unilateral disarmament on us. I will tell you frankly, Madam Prime Minister: unfortunately right now one cannot speak of any progress in the negotiations with the US either on medium-range nuclear weapons or on strategic [ones]. Although we are doing and will continue to do everything that depends on us to achieve a [present only in the final document: fair] agreement, taking the legitimate interests of both sides into consideration. But Washington's goals are clearly completely different.

In these conditions the active and joint actions of all peace-loving forces are especially important to block the path to war.

A collective rebuff is needed to the policy of pressure and blackmail and, indeed, the direct use of force, to which the US and its allies increasingly resort. It is sufficient to recall the criminal aggression and atrocities of Israel in Lebanon and the colonial plundering of Britain in the South Atlantic. Washington stands behind their backs.

The Reagan Administration is trying to conduct something like a counterattack of imperialism against the liberated countries to restore the dominance of the colonizers over them in one form or another. The US announces that one, then another region of the world as a zone of its "vital interests" as the "basis" for sending American troops there.

But take Washington's attempts to violate the UN Charter to ascribe to itself the "right" to introduce an embargo and impose sanctions on other countries. What is this if not arbitrariness in international relations? And it will be eliminated faster the more vigorously and unitedly all countries that value their sovereignty speak against it.

Such are our [Translator's note: the following words appeared only in the record of the conversation: general, not very comforting] impressions from the policy of the current US Administration. You were recently in Washington on an official visit. Perhaps you have some new information on this matter?

As concerns the Soviet Union we intend, as before, to oppose this policy of Washington's with a constructive approach to a resolution of key international problems. Our foreign policy has been and remains a policy of peace, but everything that we do in the military sphere pursues only a single goal - defense. The Soviet Union does not set itself the task of achieving military superiority, but will not allow Washington's to make challenges [*pretenzii*] to this effect to be accomplished.

We consistently and persistently seek a lessening of international tension. And the situation in the world would be better if the Western powers would accept at least some of our proposals directed at curbing the arms race. Unfortunately, Washington does not even react to the unilateral commitment we made not to use nuclear weapons first, at least not seriously.

We know that India is doing much to dispel the storm clouds of military danger, and

not just in South Asia. It seems that the non-aligned movement, in which India enjoys great and deserved authority, is capable of acting more vigorously in defense of peace and for disarmament.

Part of the US policy of confronting the socialist and developing countries is their militaristic actions in the Indian Ocean. During our meeting with you in Delhi in December 1980 it seemed to me that it had become evident that there is a similar understanding of the danger created by these actions. Apparently you will agree that since that time the situation has become even more complex.

The implementation of the proposal of the coastal countries to turn it into a zone of peace could help lessen military tension in the Indian Ocean. The pivotal question right now is whether an international conference on the Indian Ocean will be able to be convened in the first half of 1983 in accordance with the UN decision. Or will the US, as in 1981, will torpedo it again[?]

But for the time being the Americans are continuing a strategic "development" [*osvoenie*] of this region. We are confident that the obstruction of the US can be broken by the combined efforts of the interested countries. And India's role in this might not be the last, of course.

[Translator's note: the introductory words "As before" in the draft do not appear in the record of the conversation] the situation in the Middle East is very dangerous; in the draft the situation is characterized as "remains explosive", where Israel is pursuing plunder with the direct complicity of the US. The events in Lebanon affect not just the interests of the Arabs. The US and Israel were intent not only on eliminating the Palestinian resistance movement and take over the Middle East, but to also intimidate other peoples defending their independence. Turning Israel into an [the following word in the draft was omitted in this final text: "aggressive"] American bridgehead threatens the vital interests of countries dependent on Middle East oil resources, over which the US is increasingly openly trying to establish its [Translator's note: the following word in the final text was omitted in the draft: "sole"] control.

The Soviet Union has vigorously supported the Lebanese patriots, the Palestine Liberation Movement, and also Syria from the very beginning of Israel's invasion of Lebanon. We have taken practical steps to strengthen the military potential of the forces opposing the aggressor, and to give them moral and political support, including appropriate demarches to the US leadership. From now on we intend to continue to give the Arabs the necessary aid; I want to add that we highly value the position of India on the problems of the Middle East and your support of the Palestinian and Lebanese patriots.

[Translator's note: the following paragraph only appears in the draft document:]

Right now Washington is loudly publicizing the "new" proposals of President Reagan which are passed off as "impartial" and even almost "pro-Arab". In fact they have a clearly anti-Arab nature. Enough of with what cynicism it rejects the very idea of the creation of an independent Palestinian state. The Palestinians are offered the same "administrative autonomy" thought up in Camp David, supplemented by some association with Jordan.

As before we are convinced that the convening of an international conference could become an effect method of solving the Middle East problem. [Translator's note: At this point in the draft document the remaining text dealing with the Middle East is omitted, and only the following summation is given: It is possible, if the Arab countries actively speak out in this question from united positions. And indeed on the whole the elimination of the disunity of the Arab countries, which Israel and the US adroitly use, is increasingly becoming an urgent task.]

[The following text in the record of the conversation is absent in the draft: In my speech last week I laid out our settlement plan in which the main principles are presented; this problem cannot be solved without taking them into account and implementing them.

Our position is clear and balanced; it is defined by a sincere desire to establish a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, and we will actively work to achieve this goal.

The Arabs have acted correctly in having finally adopted their own all-Arab settlement plan at the conference in Fez. Its main points coincide with those which the Soviet Union has always advocated. Therefore we are pleased to support this plan.

But I should say frankly: it has one substantial defect: The Arab plans avoid the question of where and in what forum the settlement they propose should be worked out – at a conference involving all interested parties or by private methods, which the Americans and their lackeys are pushing for.

This is a question of principle. I think that the Arab countries can more broadly use those opportunities which the Soviet proposal of a conference opens to them in order to restrain the anti-Arab machinations of the US and Israel.]

The tension around Afghanistan remains, although the situation in the country itself, as you know, is gradually stabilizing. Progress here could be more perceptible if the Afghan government did not have to divert considerable men and equipment to fight the [in the record of the conversation: “bands”; in the draft, “interventionists”] which, as before, are being infiltrated into the country from outside, predominantly from Pakistan.

The intervention against Afghanistan, as before, is being organized, directed, and financed by the US and China. They are interested in maintaining the tension around Afghanistan in order to increase the American military presence in the Indian Ocean and to poison the political climate in the world. Halting the armed interference from outside has been and remains the pivotal question of a settlement.

The start of Afghan-Pakistani contacts, although indirect, is an undoubtedly positive fact. For the time being it is hard to say how things will end. As far as we know the Afghan side intends to continue to take a constructive and flexible position. The future will show how Pakistan behaves. The opponents of a political settlement are increasing pressure on Islamabad. It is necessary for us and you to continue to exert influence Pakistan to prompt it toward direct negotiations with Afghanistan in order to speed up a settlement. This would considerably improve the situation in Southwest Asia. In any event, it would be more difficult for Washington to justify its policy of arming Pakistan.

In Southeast Asia Washington and Peking are trying in every possible way to push the ASEAN countries toward a confrontation with the countries of Indochina. The so-called “coalition government of Democratic Kampuchea” was created by them in the expectation of further complicating the situation and not permitting a dialog between the countries of Indochina and ASEAN, the only realistic way to normalize their relations. In our opinion the proposals of Vietnam, Laos, and Kampuchea to turn Southeast Asia into a zone of peace and stability create a good basis for such dialog. We consider the development of relations with the countries of Indochina by India an important factor in strengthening peace in Asia. And it seems to me that the importance of this factor is constantly growing.

The partnership of the US and China in questions of foreign policy (although we also see differences between them) has a negative effect on the entire situation in Asia. Peking assists the US in the achievement of its global goals, but to some degree the West (although also cautiously) helps China in its attempt to become the dominant military force on the Asian continent.

[While] assisting the strengthening of the military and economic potential of China the Western powers count on increasing pressure on the Soviet Union. Of course, arming China is a dangerous matter [Translator’s note: the following words in the record of the conversation were absent in the draft: with the current policy of its leaders]. But dangerous not so much for the Soviet Union, which can take care of itself both in the West and in the East, as for the other neighbors of China.

We have no prejudices against China. New evidence of this are our proposals about the normalization of relations with the PRC presented in my speech in Tashkent on 24 March of this year. And we will continue attempts to achieve some reasonable normalization of relations with China, although in no event at the expense of the interests of third countries and our relations with them. Especially such countries friendly to us as, let’s say, India, Vietnam, Mongolia, and others.

However, today we cannot ignore the fact that with all the changes which have occurred in China in recent years, the basis of the foreign policy of its leadership continues to remain ambitions of hegemony in Asia, and not only in Asia. Although right now Peking maneuvers more often, its general line of undermining detente and the creation of conflict situations in the world is not changing. It is also not

abandoning territorial claims - and moreover significant ones - against all neighboring countries.

As concerns the goals of Peking in South Asia, the situation is more apparent to you, of course. It seems to us that they have not changed.

It seems like Pakistan has adopted the same tactic. In words it is for an improvement of relations with India. In fact, as it seems to us, the current Pakistani leadership plays the role of a champion of others' interests. Pakistan would like, what it is called, to legalize the receipt of military aid from the US, especially to remove India's objection to this. As we understand, this is the main sense of the Pakistani proposal to conclude a non-aggression pact.

We share India's fears with respect to the policy of Pakistan. More than once it has led to wars in South Asia in the past and is now distinguished by dangerous adventurism. The nuclear ambitions of Pakistan, actually encouraged by the US and China, are especially dangerous.

I want to stress, Madam Prime Minister, that the Soviet Union highly values the active role of India in the non-aligned movement, and in the strengthening of its resistance to the actions of imperialism and colonialism which are dangerous to peoples. We hope that India, as one of the founders and recognized leaders of the movement, and indeed as the host of the upcoming conference of the leaders of the non-aligned countries, and also you personally as the future chairwoman of the non-aligned movement, will make the necessary efforts to rally it around the struggle for peace [the following words in record of the conversation were absent in the draft: and for the sovereign rights of peoples].

In conclusion allow [me] to express the firm conviction that the friendship and cooperation between the USSR and India will continue to grow and strengthen.

We see that, as in the past, the Indian government you head exhibits the wisdom and farsightedness inherent to it in the recognition of the maneuvers of those who are inclined to view India as a tool to achieve their narrow ends. It also firmly and consistently upholds the interests of its own country. The further deepening of the cooperation between our countries will be a fitting response to the maneuvers of the enemies of Soviet-Indian friendship.

In the current complex situation in the world our cooperation in questions of defense takes on special importance. We are ready to continue to facilitate the strengthening of the defense capability of friendly India, and its creation of a reliable shield capable of protecting the country from intrusions from the outside.

Now, Madam Prime Minister, I am ready to listen to you. [Translator's note; the text of the draft document ends at this point; the following text was present only in the record of the 20 September conversation].

I. GANDHI. First of all allow me to thank you, Mr. General Secretary, for the invitation to visit your country and for that warm reception which we were given. We are very appreciative of the very clear and deep analysis of important events in the life of the USSR and in the international arena which was contained in your speech.

Permit me to express our high appreciation for the policy of the Soviet Union in the international arena and to pay tribute to you for the great personal contribution which you make in strengthening peace on Earth, in strengthening Indian-Soviet relations which are developing on the basis of equality, respect for sovereignty, and non-interference in one another's internal affairs.

Indian-Soviet relations are a model of the fruitful and mutually-advantageous ties between countries with different sociopolitical systems. We are deeply convinced that the further development of our relations is necessary to strengthen peace in Asia and in the entire world, and attach great importance to the 1971 Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation between the USSR and India.

Economic cooperation between our countries has been considerably expanded. This especially concerns collaboration in the development of India's industry. We are quite thankful to the Soviet Union for the assistance in the industrialization of our country, and for that aid which you have given us and are giving in the development of machine building, metallurgy, and a number of other fields. This has substantially helped India solve problems connected with its achievement of self-sufficiency.

It seems useful to us to henceforth devote special attention to the development of collaboration in such fields as the steel industry, atomic energy, the mining of coal, and ferrous metallurgy. The intensive development of these sectors is dictated by the needs of our economy and has vital importance for the country's progress.

It would also be useful if the Soviet Union informed us of the possible amounts of its prospective aid, which would not only help us in drawing up long-range economic development plans, but also to clearly demonstrate to the entire world the expansion of the scale of Indian-Soviet cooperation.

We are quite grateful to you for helping India on preferential conditions, and hope that these conditions are also maintained in the future. In international forums India invariably holds up the terms of cooperation with the Soviet Union as an example to other countries.

In our opinion it would be advisable for Indian-Soviet cooperation to more fully take into consideration the high level of development achieved by our economy. Up to now the main part of India's imports from the Soviet Union has been technology and equipment. However, the cost of the equipment is only an insignificant part of the cost of an industrial facility. Owing to a shortage of the resources in our country needed for industrial construction we would be interested in an increase of financial aid from your side so that this aid, even if in part, could cover the cost of the construction of facilities as a whole.

Mr. General Secretary, I would like to share my assessments of the current domestic political situation of India. This situation is characterized on the whole by political stability and an improvement of matters in the economy. Nevertheless, we are also experiencing difficulties, primarily as a result of the international situation, which has become more complex.

We are guided by democratic principles and are striving to achieve economic self-sufficiency. We have already had successes in this path. We have managed to raise the standard of living of a great number of people above the "poverty line". Nevertheless, many still remain below this line.

We think that the main challenge to our ways and gains comes from right-wing reactionary forces, primarily the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), created on the basis of the religious and communal Jan Sangh party represents a real threat to our foundations. The BJP has recently managed to expand and strengthen its positions in the country.

We have no doubt that the rightists enjoy foreign support. They are setting a goal of destabilizing the situation in India and undermining our economy and the positions of our government,

In this situation the fact that the so-called left-wing forces act together with them instead of supporting us causes special regret.

At the present time we are encountering an energizing of various separatist forces in the country which are supported by opposition parties.

The situation in the country is also aggravated in connection with strikes, disturbances, and so-called popular protests. All this makes getting foreign aid difficult for us. Some time ago there was a lengthy strike in defense industry enterprises. It caused not only significant financial damage but also had a negative effect on our defense capability.

Opposition parties are also giving support to various regional forces.

Such actions of the opposition do not at all demonstrate their democratic aspirations. They are directed at destabilizing the situation in the country, for if the positions of our party and our government are undermined this would also have a negative effect on the country as a whole.

And all this is occurring at a time when pressure is being put on us from the United States of America and a number of other countries, and when the number of incursions into our territory from Pakistan and China are increasing.

A few words about the situation in the world. I would like to stress that we are quite concerned by the situation of confrontation in the Middle East. We mainly agree with your assessments of the situation in this region. We have categorically condemned the attack of Israel on Lebanon.

We share your concern and worry in connection with the situation which has developed in the area of nuclear weapons. We agree with you that serious difficulties exist in the path to limiting the nuclear arms race. This is actually so. But we are pleased that negotiations on these questions have begun, and however difficult they turn out to be, negotiations are always better.

The situation in the Indian Ocean does not please us. You well know the position of India with respect to turning the Indian Ocean into a zone of peace, and on the question of Diego Garcia and the other islands in this region.

I want to again return to the situation in the Middle East. It causes us regret that the Arab countries have not displayed the necessary unity and have not given the proper support to the victims of aggression. But the positions of the Arabs have ended up even weaker in connection with the evacuation of the forces of the Palestinian resistance from Lebanon.

The bloody carnage in Beirut deeply disgusts us. There is information that Israel has broadly resorted to the torture of prisoners of war, and we think that it is necessary to raise this question in international forums.

Mr. General Secretary, you have mentioned my recent visit to the US. I undertook this visit in response to the repeated invitations of President Reagan. The main task of this visit was to explain the goals and nature of our policy in the political and broad public circles of the US. I confirmed to the Americans the commitment of India to a policy of non-alignment and frankly told President Reagan my fears with respect to US foreign policy. In my statement at a press conference I said that the President of the US has exhibited insufficient activity in restraining Israel. I also pointed to the fact that India will henceforth develop friendly relations with the Soviet Union. On the question of Afghanistan I noted that any aid to the Afghan rebels from the outside is interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. I also confirmed the need for a political solution of the Afghan problem.

For our part India is giving economic aid to Afghanistan. We are sending our specialists there and are developing relations with Afghanistan through trade channels.

Mr. General Secretary, returning to the domestic situation of India, I want to cite a curious fact: in the run-up to the recent elections in the state of Kerala many members of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) have left the Party and joined the RSS [Translator's note: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, an organization of Hindu nationalists] organization. This organization is considered religious and communal, however, in reality it is essentially a fascist organization.

I have touched on individual aspects of the domestic political situation of India and the international situation and I hope to continue the exchange of opinions during our meeting tomorrow.

L. I. BREZHNEV. Dear Madam Prime Minister! In your statement you touched on the question of soft loans [*I'gotnoe kreditovanie*] for facilities. Possibly it would be advisable for us to entrust the Soviet-Indian Intergovernmental Commission on Economic, Scientific, and Technical Cooperation with carefully studying this question and submitting their view to the governments of both countries.

I. GANDHI. Replied with agreement.

In conclusion L. I. Brezhnev presented I. Gandhi with the first copy of a collection of his speeches and statements in Russian on questions of the foreign policy of India published by the Progress publishing house.

The talks were recorded by:

Counsellor of the South Asia, Department of the Soviet MFA

V. N. Yegorov

First Secretary of the South Asia, Department of the Soviet MFA

V. V. Gaponenko