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Material for a Conversation with I. Gandhi

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Summary:

Material from P. Kutsobin outlining information reviewed by B. N. Ponomarev to be used in a conversation with I. Gandhi. Topics for the conversation include the dangers of the arms race, Israeli aggression in the Middle East, and Soviet build up in Afghanistan. Special attention is given to how questions related to the Communist Party of India should be addressed.

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Russian

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Andrey Mikhaylovich!

In accordance with an instruction of Cde. B. N. Ponomarev I am sending you material that has been reviewed and edited by him for a conversation with I. Gandhi.

With respect, [signature] (P. Kutsobin)

[handwritten 30 August 1982]

[page break]

Secret

MATERIAL FOR A CONVERSATION WITH I. GANDHI

Dear Madam Indira Gandhi!

The two of us are meeting and I would like to express some views to you on a strictly confidential basis.

First of all, concerning the military danger which has grown and its primary causes. Who bears responsibility for the situation which has been created? Let's look at the facts.

Discussions of the Reagan Administration that the US needs "to get additional weapons" since the USSR has allegedly "pulled ahead" - are groundless. Assertions that the Soviet Union has superiority in weapons absolutely do not correspond to reality. It has been repeatedly shown, including by prominent American government and military leaders, that an approximate balance of weaponry exists, including nuclear [weapons]. Nevertheless the US is striving to achieve strategic superiority over the USSR. The publishing house of our Ministry of Defense recently published a book "Whence the Threat to Peace". This book objectively gives a picture of the correlation of the armed forces of the USSR and the US on the basis of incontestable facts. It would be advisable to familiarize oneself with this book.

The entire foreign policy of the USSR is directed against an arms race and for strengthening peace. Judge for yourself. The Soviet Union has declared to the whole world about [its] renunciation of the first use nuclear weapons. And how did the US Administration react to this? It openly spoke about the possibility of a preventing nuclear strike, local nuclear wars, etc. This is a monstrous doctrine harboring a threat to the life itself on Earth.

Current US leaders would like to not only halt the gradual progress of history, but also turn it back. They would like to remake everything to their liking. They declare that socialism and Communism should be buried in their lifetimes. And this is not simply political rhetoric. A new "crusade" against the Soviet Union and the other countries of socialism has been proclaimed. They are trying to impose a struggle onus along an entire front, not stopping at gross interference in the internal affairs of the socialist countries. Poland is a clear example of this.

The US is striving to put the responsibility on the Soviet Union for any progressive changes in the world under whatever flag they originate - under a red or even a green Islamic [flag]. The facts of real life demonstrate that it is not the USSR, but the US itself that is inflaming dangerous conflicts and creating crisis situations in various parts of the world.

Relying on force in international affairs ever more crudely and blatantly [Translator's note: an arrow at this point suggests the following paragraph is to be inserted at this point], the US has declared practically all the regions of the world as a zone of its "vital interests". In particular, the events in the Middle East and the continuing increase of military, including nuclear, might of the US in the Indian Ocean and other regions of the world, are confirmation of its imperial ambitions.

With the aid of Israel the US strives to turn the Middle East into its strategic military bridgehead, a potential threat for the vital interests of many countries, including the peoples of Asia and the Indian Ocean basin. It strives to establish its control over the oil resources of the Middle East and the sea routes across the Indian Ocean.

I completely share that alarm which you have expressed in your letter to me about the aggressive actions of Israel in the Middle East. We perceive the efforts of India in support of the just cause of the Arab people of Palestine and its active and positive role in the non-aligned movement with great pleasure.

I can tell you that we have not halted aid to the victims of the Israeli-American aggression for a minute, including supplies of modern weapons.

Now, concerning the events in Afghanistan. We are not supporters of royal and monarchical regimes. But the revolution in Afghanistan was not "intrigues of Moscow". It came to fruition on an ethnic [*national'naya*] and, frankly speaking, was the same surprise for us as it apparently was for you, too.

When the revolution began to be a fait accompli, our sympathies were naturally on its side. But this was chiefly moral and political support, and there was no interference from our side.

But from the very beginning the US has done everything to stifle this revolution. Hence their support to the forces of counterrevolution and turning Pakistan into the main bridgehead for fighting revolutionary Afghanistan. Along with other goals the American militarists have tried to compensate for the loss of its positions in Iran by an approach to the southern borders of the Soviet Union through the territory of Afghanistan. Armed actions increase against the new regime of Afghanistan with each day, mainly from Pakistan. In these conditions the government of Afghanistan has turned to the USSR with a request to introduce a small military contingent, which we did.

The introduction of a limited military contingent of Soviet troops into Afghanistan was a step compelled from our side in order to safeguard 2500 km of our southern borders. Our troops are in Afghanistan temporarily, and we would be glad to withdraw them even tomorrow and not bear the additional economic burden. But the appropriate conditions are needed to do this, as you recently declared: "If the organized outside interference is halted, primarily the arming of the rebels, then there will be no reasons for the further presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan".

But let's imagine what would occur in this country if we pulled out troops from there right now. A regime hostile to the Soviet Union and India would probably be imposed on the Afghan people. In this event not only Pakistan, but also Afghanistan could be actively used by the US and China to achieve their global ends to the detriment of the interests of both our as well as your country. A new hotbed of quite dangerous tension would be created.

Dear Madam Indira Gandhi!

I would like to especially stress that the Soviet Union is sincerely interested in India playing an ever-increasing role in solving the important and complex problems of modern times on the side of peace and progress. It is absolutely obvious that India can play such a role more successfully the more powerful it is economically and militarily. For our part we are ready to assist this to the best of our ability and in the spirit of [our] traditional friendship and cooperation.

Madam Prime Minister, we completely agree that such a great, complex, diverse country as India needs a strong and authoritative central leadership. And we in the Soviet Union are deeply satisfied that you are at the head of a government of India friendly to us and are exercising effective leadership of your country.

However, as you yourself have told us, there are forces both outside as well as in side your country which would like to undermine your prestige and thereby weaken India and its unity.

As concerns the foreign enemies of India, I hope that you agree with me that these are first of all your neighbors: to the north, China, and to the west- Pakistan, which are actively striving to secure for themselves the support of a patron across the ocean, the American Administration.

We also agree with you that the extreme right-wing religious and communal forces and their political parties, which express the interests of conservative strata of Indian society, represent a great danger for India.

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IF I. GANDHI TOUCHES ON THE QUESTION OF THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA, SHE COULD BE TOLD THE FOLLOWING:

We understand the entire importance of normal relations between the government you head and the Communist Party. We agree with you that right now these relations

leave much to be desired.

As concerns our relations with the Communist Party of India we can assure you that in conversations with the CPI (R. Rao, N. K. Krishnan, Indrajit Gupta, etc.) we unswervingly stress that the complex problems of the socioeconomic development of such an enormous country as India can be successfully solved only by the efforts of the entire people, on the basis of the cooperation of all democratic, genuinely patriotic forces. We directed their attention this connection to the fact that the main obstacle to the development of India on the path of democracy and progress was the right-wing reactionary forces headed by the Bharatiya Janata Party. In doing so we stressed that it is these forces which represent the main danger to your democratic government and to the Indian Communists themselves.

I expressed these views to the leaders of the Communist Party of India during my visit to your country in December 1980.

As concerns our relations with you as head of the government of India, Madam Prime Minister, I said to them directly that in our opinion, there is no other national leaders who could provide effective leadership of the country, and rally together all the healthy forces of the nation. Your role in the fight against the right-wing danger and separatist tendencies, in pursuing a progressive foreign policy directed at ensuring the peace and security of peoples, and for the development of productive relations of friendship and cooperation between India and the Soviet Union was noted.

A meeting was recently held in the CPSU CC in Moscow with R. Rao, the General Secretary of the CPI National Council. By agreement with me Cdes. Yu. V. Andropov and B. N. Ponomarev again confirmed our point of view on these questions. The need for cooperation between the Communist Party and the National Congress [Party] in the struggle for peace and against the threat of war was stressed. The great positive role which India plays in the international arena under your leadership in the current complex situation was especially noted.

We invariably direct the attention of the leadership of the Communist Party to the need to achieve mutual understanding and cooperation between the National Congress [Party] and the Communist Party in the interests of the country and its people. I want to frankly say that the actions of the leadership of the Communist Party do not always coincide with our understanding of the situation. In particular, the recent collaboration between the Communist Party and all the opposition forces on the question of nominating a candidate for the post of President of India as a counterbalance to the candidate of the National Congress [Party] might serve as an example. We don't understand such actions but you know that at the present time there is nothing like the Communist International, and that in modern conditions no one can give directives from any headquarters [*tsentr*] to a particular foreign Communist Party. But we are trying to convince the leadership of the Communist Party of India of the need to collaborate with you and your government in the common interests of the popular masses of India and the cause of peace.

As concerns the Communist Party of India (Marxist) we have no official relations with it. We know that it forms blocs, often openly, with all opposition parties, including the extreme right-wing ones. We do not excuse such a position.

Returning again to the question of Soviet-Indian relations, I can tell you definitely that the Soviet Union will always be with you in the tightest turnabouts of the history of independent India and our relations with it, and we also firmly intend to keep to this position in the future. You can completely rely on us in this.

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