

February 1, 1989

**Ciphered Telegram No. 19, Embassy of Hungary in
the Soviet Union to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry**

Citation:

"Ciphered Telegram No. 19, Embassy of Hungary in the Soviet Union to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry", February 1, 1989, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Hungarian National Archives (Magyar Országos Levéltár, MOL). XIX-J-1-j India, 1989, 38. doboz, 60-13, 00742/1989. Obtained and translated for NPIHP by Balazs Szalontai.
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Summary:

Lengthy report on India's current domestic and foreign policies. Includes discussion of India's upcoming parliamentary elections and preparations by Rajiv Gandhi and the Congress Party. Foreign relations in Asia with countries such as China, Cambodia, and Afghanistan are discussed, as well as India's involvement in disarmament talks through the Six Nation Five Continent Peace Initiative. Lastly, India's relationship with the Soviet Union in foreign policy and trade is described.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY)

Original Language:

Hungarian

Contents:

Translation - English

At our request, on January 30th E.P. Ivanov, the head of the Indian Department of the MID [Ministry of Foreign Affairs], provided us with an evaluation *about India's current domestic and foreign policies and their bilateral relations* [with India] [emphasis in the original].

At present, the most important task Rajiv Gandhi faces is to make thorough preparations for the *parliamentary elections* [emphasis in the original] and ensure the victory of the Congress Party. The defeat they suffered in Tamil Nadu is an uncomfortable development, all the more so because the Premier was also personally involved [in the campaign]. Nevertheless, it would be erroneous to draw conclusions from this case for the whole country, for this state never constituted a stronghold of the Congress, and the development of the Tamil question and the Sri Lankan situation also played a role in it. According to the Soviet evaluation, R. Gandhi and his followers were "chilled" just in time, because this shock made them realize that they would not be able to win the national elections unless they had a carefully prepared electoral program, strategy, and tactics. As early as last November, during M.S. Gorbachev's visit in India, the Soviets felt that the utterances of Rajiv Gandhi reflected excessive self-confidence, which has now brought its own punishment. R. Gandhi will certainly draw the necessary political and organizational conclusions from this defeat.

In its electoral campaign, the Congress Party will concentrate its forces primarily in the northern region, where it must win by all means. It seems that R. Gandhi will not resort to the method of holding elections at an earlier date, and thus they will take place at the end of the year or early in 1990. The Soviet side expects that the Premier and his party will surely win, but its victory will be much more marginal than the latest one was.

Punjab, where stabilizing the situation appears to be extremely difficult, is still one of the most neuralgic points in Indian politics. Matters are greatly complicated by the fact that the Sikh separatists enjoy the support of Pakistan. Among others, this is why India is worried about the prospect that following the settlement in Afghanistan, Pakistan, according to all indications, will redeploy a substantial part of the troops currently stationed along the Afghan border in the direction of India. According to the Soviet evaluation, one cannot expect any significant change *in the Indian-Pakistani relationship* [emphasis in the original] in the near future.

All in all, one can regard *R. Gandhi's visit to Beijing* [emphasis in the original] as successful. This was a delicate mission from the perspective of domestic politics, too, but in the end the Premier gained more than he lost, and he can even make some political capital of it. Before the visit, the Soviets made it unambiguously known to the Indian side that they had a stake in the improvement of Indian-Chinese relations. During his current visit to Beijing, Foreign Minister Shevardnadze will tell the Chinese, too, that the Soviet Union supports the Sino-Indian rapprochement.

According to the Soviet evaluation, India plays a positive role in the *Cambodian* [emphasis in the original] settlement, in which its good relationship with Vietnam constitutes an important element. Indonesia and other ASEAN countries watch India's activities with a certain anxiety and jealousy, because they are not interested in the growth of Indian influence in Southeast Asia.

The Soviets greatly appreciate India's policy toward *Afghanistan* [emphasis in the original]. India supports the establishment of a broadly based coalition government, in which the PDPA [People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan] and personally Najibullah would also participate, in Afghanistan. The Soviet side urges the Indians to get actively involved in the development of the Afghan economy. The Indian side maintains extensive contacts with the Pashtun tribes, and they also have persons of influence in Pakistan. The Soviet side expects that concerning the developments in

Afghanistan, it will be possible to take advantage of these opportunities in the future, too.

On the issues of the *Middle Eastern* [emphasis in the original] settlement, India adopts a position which is practically identical with that of the Soviet Union. It pursues a constructive policy with regard to the Namibian affairs.

In the questions of *disarmament* [emphasis in the original], there are many common characteristics in the approach of the Soviet Union and India, but there are also certain different elements. For the purpose of expressing the Soviet standpoint in detail, the Soviets are planning to send Deputy Foreign Minister V.P. Karpov to India in early February.

The Soviet side intends to draw the Indians' attention to the fact that, in their opinion, the activity of the "Six" has considerably lost momentum, and it is in decline. To their knowledge, the Greeks are also worried about that. The Soviet side will induce India to take the initiative in making the "Six" more active. According to the plans, the Soviet Union, once it completes its withdrawal from Afghanistan, will also call upon the "Six" to facilitate a political settlement there.

From the perspective of the Soviet Union's Asia policy, India continues to be a country of crucial importance. Motivated by their own national and international interests, both sides strive to maintain and reinforce the existing system of relations. At the same time, the overall picture also includes the fact that *not every concrete manifestation of the new Soviet foreign policy thinking is given a clearly positive reception by the Indian side* [emphasis in the original]. Particularly in the case of Asia, they have certain anxieties, reservations, and occasionally even different concrete interests, and they are anxious about their current special status in Soviet policy. As far as possible, the Soviet side maximally takes into consideration India's sensitivities, special interests, and even some of its regional ambitions. This is why they do not support, for instance, certain Pakistani or Nepali proposals concerning the [South Asian] region which would otherwise be in accordance with Soviet foreign policy.

In the field of foreign policy, India, apart from maintaining its stable relationship with the Soviet Union, makes efforts to intensify cooperation with the United States, Japan, and Western Europe, and within the latter region, particularly with the EC countries. The smaller European socialist countries, on an individual basis, do not belong to the regions to which [India] attributes particular importance.

In 1988, the volume of *Soviet-Indian trade* [emphasis in the original] reached 6 billion rubles. It is known that at the highest level, the two sides set themselves the task to increase the volume 2.5 times by 1993. To achieve this aim, it would be necessary to increase the volume of trade by 30 percent per annum, which appears hardly possible for the time being. Previously, shipments of crude oil constituted 90 percent of the value of Soviet exports. One could hardly increase the current volume of crude oil shipments, which is 3.5 million metric tons, to a significant extent, though it might be possible to increase it to 4 million tons. They would like to achieve a breakthrough primarily in the export of machinery and equipment, but this will not be easy. They are planning to establish a new form of cooperation in the manufacture of civilian aircraft. They would jointly produce Tu-300b passenger planes, for which India would manufacture Rolls-Royce engines produced under license. They are planning to establish joint enterprises in biotechnology, electronics, and in the construction of a nuclear power plant.

The next session of the intergovernmental commission for economic, technical and scientific cooperation, at which the Soviet delegation will be headed by Deputy Premier [Vladimir M.] Kamentsev, will be held in Delhi between 9-15 March 1989. It is possible that Comrade Shevardnadze will visit India before that date, but the PB has

not made yet a decision on that issue.

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