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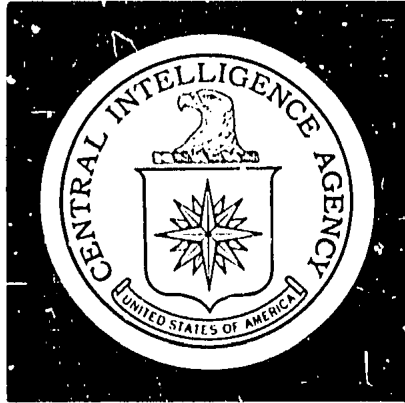
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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

Moscow Again Plays The Peacemaker in South Asia

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
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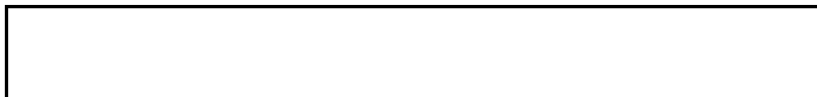
INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Moscow Again Plays the Peacemaker in South Asia

Introduction

Moscow's attitude toward the present trouble in Pakistan is a logical outgrowth of the Soviet position in the Indo-Pakistani crisis of 1965-1966. The Tashkent Conference in January 1966 marked the end of the USSR's one-sided support for India in the Kashmir dispute and the debut of the USSR in the role of peacemaker on the subcontinent. Premier Kosygin personally met with Indian and Pakistani leaders at Tashkent and succeeded in getting them to agree to withdraw their troops to positions held prior to the outbreak of the fighting in August 1965, to repatriate their prisoners of war, and to work toward improving their cultural and economic ties. The USSR committed its prestige to such a venture because it wanted to see stability restored on its southern flank and to deny the Chinese the chance to exploit the conflict between the two countries.

Note: This memorandum was prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence and coordinated within CIA.




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Soviet Stakes in India and Pakistan

1. The same considerations that prompted Moscow to act in 1965-1966 continue to affect Soviet policy toward the subcontinent. Moscow has worked to maintain its "special relationship" with India, to improve its relations with the Pakistanis, and to prevent both the US and the Chinese from expanding their influence. A close relationship with India continues to be the cornerstone of Soviet policy in South Asia. India, one of the USSR's largest aid clients in the underdeveloped world, has received a total of about \$1.5 billion in Soviet economic and military assistance since 1954. The USSR has an extensive presence in India, and the leaders of the two countries consult frequently on a wide variety of issues.

2. Moscow's preoccupation with India, however, has not prevented it from courting Pakistan in order to increase its leverage there and, in particular, to check the growth of Chinese influence. Since 1966, the USSR has agreed to provide Pakistan with some \$172 million in economic assistance and in April 1968 signed its first military aid agreement with Pakistan. The provision of Soviet arms did not succeed in significantly limiting Chinese or US influence in Pakistan, however, and it did cause serious strains in the USSR's relations with India. Consequently, Moscow suspended these arms deliveries in early 1969. Last June, the Soviets agreed to help in the construction of the steel mill that Pakistan has long been seeking, a decision that will cost the USSR an estimated \$200 million in new economic aid.

3. Moscow has generally tried to maintain an impartial position on contentious issues in Indo-Pakistani relations and has encouraged the two sides to seek a step-by-step resolution of their outstanding differences. In April 1966 and again in August 1967, when the Soviets apparently were concerned that Indo-Pakistani relations were deteriorating, Kosygin personally interceded with the leaders of both countries to urge moderation.

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Moscow Slow to Recognize Crisis

4. Although the Soviets were apparently slow to realize the dangers inherent in the latest Pakistani crisis, they finally did make attempts to defuse the situation. Though their efforts to moderate West Pakistani actions in the East failed they were probably successful in moderating to some degree Indian reaction to Pakistani developments.

5. [redacted] the Soviets viewed the results of the Pakistani elections last December with mixed feelings. They took some satisfaction in the victory of "progressive" forces, but they were disturbed by the good showing of former foreign minister Bhutto's party in West Pakistan. As the self-proclaimed architect of Pakistan's policy of rapprochement with China, Bhutto has long been one of the USSR's least favorite personalities on the Pakistani political scene. Moscow seems not to have fully appreciated, however, the depth of frustration among the East Pakistanis and their determination to ensure that discrimination against them would not be perpetuated in the new government that was to be established.

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6. The first evidence of serious Soviet concern came in mid-February during a conversation in Islamabad between the Soviet deputy chief of mission and his US counterpart. The Soviet official expressed surprise and disappointment at East Pakistani leader Mujibur Rahman's inflexibility regarding autonomy for East Pakistan while he commended President Yahya's "statesmanlike" effort to bring East and West Pakistani civilian leaders to some form of accommodation. He said that the USSR favored the continuing existence of a unified Pakistan and indicated considerable concern that the Chinese might be given an opportunity to exploit the unrest in East Pakistan

7. For a long time Moscow has maintained fairly cordial relations with the men most likely to emerge as leaders of an independent East Pakistan. Some Soviets may, therefore, have argued that the USSR would initially be off to a good start if Pakistan were divided; but probably the general conclusion was that the longer term prospects for the USSR in East Pakistan

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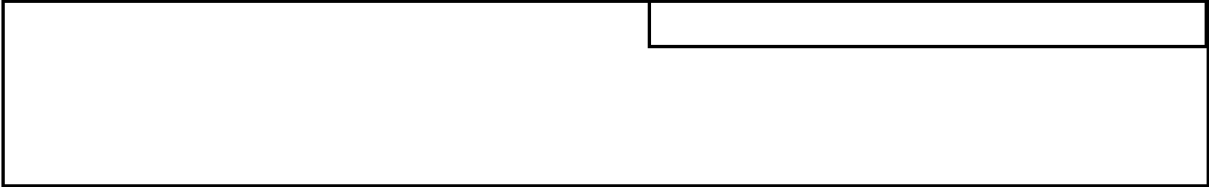
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were not bright. An independent East Pakistan would face virtually insoluble social and economic problems, and the Soviets probably feared that the Chinese might ultimately find fertile ground for expanding their influence among the minority extremist groups there.

Fighting Prompts Action; Soviets Intercede with Yahya

8. Moscow, however, did not actually intercede until fighting appeared imminent.

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9. Once the fighting began, the Soviets lost no time in trying to get it stopped.

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On 3 April, TASS published the text of an appeal from President Podgorny that was strongly critical of Yahya's resort to arms. In the message, Podgorny called for "the most urgent measures to stop the bloodshed and repressions" against the people of East Pakistan. He asserted that the crisis must be solved politically, without the use of force.

10. Among the chief reasons for the publication of the appeal were Moscow's wish to appear responsive to Indian requests that the USSR speak out and a genuine Soviet desire to bring additional pressures on the West Pakistanis to stop the fighting. The obvious sympathy for the plight of the East Pakistanis that was conveyed by the message suggests it was worded with an eye to the East Pakistanis as well as the Indians. Podgorny expressed concern over the "arrests and persecution" of Mujib and other leaders, and gratuitously reminded Yahya that these men had received the support of the "overwhelming majority of the population of East Pakistan."

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11. The West Pakistanis, not surprisingly, were incensed by Podgorny's intervention. Their response to the message, however, was tempered by their desire to avoid driving Moscow further toward New Delhi in the current dispute and their interest in keeping Soviet aid coming. In his reply, Yahya rebutted the points made by Podgorny, but he did so politely and in a tone that suggested sorrow more than anger.

12. The Soviets have made no further gestures of support for the East Pakistanis. In fact, as it became increasingly clear that the military situation was going in favor of the West Pakistanis, Moscow has sought to relax the strains its public appeal had put on Soviet - West Pakistani relations.

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[Redacted]

This line was further espoused in Soviet propaganda, which denied any intention of interfering in Pakistan's internal affairs.

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13. Since the Podgorny appeal, the USSR has confined itself to a continuing series of high-level private efforts to defuse the crisis.

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[Redacted]

Soviets Keep Close Tabs on Indian Reaction

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14. From the outset Moscow has probably coordinated most of its moves with the Indian Government, apparently counseling it against a precipitate reaction to the Pakistani crisis. The Indians confirm that they have been talking regularly to the Soviets about Pakistani developments.

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Prospects

15. The outcome of the current crisis is at present uncertain and depends upon factors over which the USSR has little control. Moscow, nonetheless, can be expected to continue its efforts to prevent a deterioration to the level of the Indo-Pakistani hostilities during the Kashmir dispute in 1965. In the event of an imminent threat of war between India and Pakistan, the Soviets might once again intervene in dramatic fashion. For the present, however, the Soviets will probably continue to move cautiously, behind the scenes, and will do what they can to nurture and preserve good relations with all parties to the dispute. At the same time, they will be trying to anticipate and counter any Chinese actions.

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