

From New Delhi by Susan Maitra

Kapitsa's briefcase full of illusions

Moscow tries to reassure India as it dramatically tilts its Asian policy toward Pakistan and China.

Reports in pro-Soviet press outlets here point to imminent new breakthroughs in the Sino-Soviet rapprochement, and, as has been acknowledged all around, Soviet overtures to Pakistan have been generally well received, with contacts continuing and broadening. It is no secret either that these developments have caused a fair amount of disquiet in New Delhi.

First Pakistan and China have invaded India, occupying territory which is still under dispute, and in other ways maintained a hostile posture toward India. What, then, is to be concluded when the Soviet Union distances itself from India's claim on these vital matters and forges new relations with her adversaries?

One measure of Indian concern is the hyperactivity of the Soviet Union in and around New Delhi since Gorbachov's famous Vladivostok speech of July 1986, including a run-up to the fantastic Gorbachov state visit in December. In Vladivostok, Mr. Gorbachov had re-floated the old "Asian security" theme of Brezhnev that has been rejected by India. An "Asian Helsinki" is the context for the Kremlin's new initiatives toward China and Pakistan.

Two weeks ago (see *EIR*, April 3, 1987), I reported on the spectacular visit of Russian Science Academy chief Guri Marchuk, a top Russian scientist—the most powerful the Soviet Union has ever sent anywhere. He had barely left town, when a 12-man delegation of distinguished experts in

international affairs arrived, headed by Mr. Mikhail Kapitsa, director of the Institute of Oriental Studies (IOS), the father of Moscow's China policy and one of Gorbachov's chief foreign policy aides. The occasion was a seminar co-sponsored by the IOS and India's Institute of Defense Studies.

Hard on Kapitsa's heels, came Deputy Prime Minister V. Kamentsev for a five-day official visit to prepare the next meeting of the Indo-Soviet Joint Commission, scheduled for June in Moscow. Kamentsev discussed joint ventures in the hotel industry—prospective spas in Samarkand, Bukhara, and Tashkent—telecommunications, and postal agreements, and met with the foreign and commerce ministers as well as Rajiv Gandhi.

In the meantime, Soviet Ambassador V.N. Rykov held a high-profile press conference in Madras to announce that the Soviet Union could offer India supercomputers "without any strings attached," and the Indo-Soviet Working Group on Power held a confab in Delhi which produced a protocol for long-term collaboration in the energy field.

The *modus operandi* seems to be to smother any doubts India might have about Soviet intentions or the implications of Soviet shifts for India's own policy. As Kapitsa put it in an interview, "Let me tell you one thing. . . . We will talk with Pakistan. We want to be friends with Pakistan. But India is number-one." On China, Afghanistan, Kampuchea, Japan, the Koreans, the explanations and reassurances

poured forth.

In a public lecture, Kapitsa outlined the Soviet 15- to 20-year strategy to first normalize bilateral relations with the Asian countries (on any available pretext, he emphasized), then resolve conflicts like Afghanistan and Kampuchea, and finally move to multilateral agreements, of which the "nuclear free zones" are exemplary. Kapitsa, a tall hulk of a man with huge hands that gesticulate dramatically as if pacing his halting, restless speech, makes a point of conveying the *inevitability* of it all.

The "full court press" is not a new Soviet approach as such. For some time now, the Indian government has been devoting a significant amount of time and energy to dealing with this or that Soviet delegation, and it is hard to think of an area of Indian affairs in which Moscow does not have a presence. But in the recent period, this approach has been raised to a new level. The considerable range of Indian assets developed by the Kremlin over the years can be seen running about to push the overall effort.

Yet, for all the fuss, the effect is questionable. Most Indians believe that the superpowers are first and foremost concerned with their own rivalry. It is a conviction which was sufficient to unceremoniously burst the balloon Mikhail Kapitsa tried to float.

After his public lecture, a former MP asked why Russia advocated nuclear-free zones when their existence would neither prevent nuclear war, nor save the zones' inhabitants from the ensuing holocaust. Kapitsa hesitated before launching into a passionate soliloquy on the need to help the poor people get some peace that grew more and more feeble, until it finally sputtered to a dismal, whining close with the plea, "Is it bad, even if he has some illusions?"