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Cooperation Between the USSR and India in the 1950–1960s: The First Youth and Student Visits

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Abstract. In the 21st century, the Russian Federation and the Republic of India have great scientific and educational potential. The particularly privileged strategic partnership between the two states is aimed, among other things, at the development and innovations of scientific and educational cooperation, which has stable traditions laid down in the second half of the last century. It was during this period that the first connections were established between students and youth of the two countries. The VI World Festival of Youth and Students, held in Moscow in 1957, was the starting point for building youth cooperation, the activities of the International Youth Tourism Bureau “Sputnik,” and the first tourist trips of Soviet students to India. The relevance of the article is determined by the appeal of the interuniversity team of authors of the RUDN University, MGIMO University and Lipetsk State Pedagogical P. P. Semenov-Tyan-Shansky University to the topic that had not previously been the subject of comprehensive research either in Russia or in India. The purpose of this study is to analyze the goals, forms of organization and significance of the Soviet-Indian youth and student partnership in the late 1950s — early 1960s on the basis of materials from the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History that were not involved in scientific circulation. The authors use a constructivist approach demonstrating the connection between society and politics and revealing the impact of international cooperation on the institutionalization, development of scientific and educational partnership between the USSR and India at the interstate and interinstitutional levels. The Khrushchev “thaw” period laid the foundations for Soviet-Indian cooperation between the two states in the field of higher education, youth and student academic exchange and tourism. In the 21st century, the experience of the world festivals of youth and students, the work of the “Sputnik” bureau is relevant, since the Republic of India is one of the important and priority partners for the Russian Federation. Students of Modern Russia also face the task of establishing and developing academic and cultural ties with India, increasing the prestige of the country in the eyes of Indians and the whole world.

Key words: Soviet Union, festival, Sputnik, tourism, cultural delegation

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Сотрудничество между СССР и Индией в 1950–1960-е гг.: первые визиты молодежи и студентов

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Аннотация. В XXI в. Российская Федерация и Республика Индия обладают большим научным и образовательным потенциалом. Особо привилегированное стратегическое партнерство двух государств направлено в том числе на развитие и новации научного и образовательного сотрудничества, имеющего устойчивые традиции, заложенные во второй половине прошлого столетия. Именно в этот период устанавливались первые связи между студентами и молодежью двух стран. VI Всемирный фестиваль молодежи и студентов, проходивший в Москве в 1957 г., явился отправной точкой построения молодежного сотрудничества, деятельности Бюро международного молодежного туризма «Спутник», первых туристических поездок советских студентов в Индию. Актуальность темы определяется обращением междуниверситетского авторского коллектива РУДН, МГИМО (У) и ЛГПУ имени П.П. Семенова-Тян-Шанского к теме, ранее не становившейся предметом комплексных исследований ни в России, ни в Индии. Цель исследования – на основе материалов Российского государственного архива социально-политической истории (РГАСПИ), не введенных ранее в научный оборот, проанализировать цели, формы организации и значение советско-индийского молодежного и студенческого партнерства в конце 1950-х — начале 1960-х гг. Использован конструктивистский подход, демонстрирующий связь социума и политики и раскрывающий влияние международного сотрудничества на институционализацию, развитие научного и образовательного партнерства СССР и Индии на межгосударственном и межинституциональном уровнях. Период хрущевской «оттепели» заложил основы советско-индийского сотрудничества двух государств в сфере высшего образования, молодежного и студенческого академического обмена и туризма. В XXI в. опыт проведения всемирных фестивалей молодежи и студентов, работы бюро «Спутник» является актуальным, поскольку Республика Индия является одним из важных и приоритетных партнеров для Российской Федерации. Перед студентами современной России также стоит задача налаживать и развивать академические и культурные связи с Индией, повышать престиж страны в глазах индийцев и всего мира.

Ключевые слова: Советский Союз, фестиваль, Спутник, туризм, культурная делегация

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Introduction

During the Khrushchev “thaw” the importance of establishing contacts with the youth of various countries for the USSR increased. The policy of promoting a positive image of the Soviet Union among the younger generations was ensured by strengthening cultural and scientific ties. At this time, tourism began to play a special role, which, among other things, was part of the mechanism of spreading the Soviet ideology (Shkarubo, 2022, p. 19; Orlov, 2014, p. 3; Amanzholova & Mashkova, 2016, p. 111). During the Khrushchev period, the USSR joined the global competition to provide a “good life” for its citizens, which led to the transformation of tourism into a Cold War battlefield (Pedersen & Noack, 2019, p. 1). As noted by tourism specialist Peter Burns, in a political sense, tourism was used to promote the image of the Soviet Union abroad (Burns, 1998, p. 557). At the same time, one of the tasks was to ensure youth exchange between countries, including the development of tourism with developing countries. The Republic of India has become one of the important partners.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the government of the Soviet Union sought to bring economic, cultural and scientific ties with India to a new level.¹ Since 1955, the exchange of visits of scientists, artists and literature began to be established, art exhibitions were organized (Zagorodnikova, Kashin & Shaumyan, 2020, p. 301). During the same period, there was an exchange of creative teams (Sokolova, 2022). Visits to the Soviet Union were also carried out within the framework of the activities of the All-Indian Society for Cultural Relations with Abroad (1925–1958), and later — the

Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (1958–1992) (Zagorodnikova, Kashin & Shaumyan, 2020, p. 296).

The beginning of youth and student tourism was largely due to the VI World Festival of Youth and Students in Moscow, held in 1957, when the “iron curtain” was slightly opened for delegations from many countries (Gorlov, 2021, p. 88). A year later, on June 24, 1958, the Secretariat of the Komsomol Central Committee adopted a resolution “On the organization of tourist exchanges with foreign youth organizations” (Putrik, 2018, p. 73). The Sputnik Bureau of International Youth Tourism began to cooperate with youth organizations. If in 1963 Sputnik cooperated with 70 organizations from 30 countries, then in the 1980s — already with 500 organizations from 80 countries (Orlov, 2014, p. 22). By the 1980s, the Bureau had become the largest youth tourism organization not only in the Soviet Union, but also in the world (Putrik, 2018, p. 74).

One of the main goals of Sputnik was to expand the geography of outbound tourism by developing relations with countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America (Amanzholova & Mashkova, 2016, p. 113). The first visits of Soviet students and youth to India within the framework of tourist and cultural exchanges were carried out precisely through Sputnik. Despite the short period of stay in India, Soviet students and representatives of various youth groups were able to communicate with many officials, political and public figures studying at schools, colleges and universities. These trips helped to improve relations between the peoples of the two countries, allowed students to get acquainted with the culture of the Soviet Union and India, visit many tourist places and tell about the achievements of the USSR itself.

¹ For more information on Soviet-Indian relations, see: (Thakur, 1991; Mastny, 2010).

VI World Festival of Youth and Students in Moscow

The Festival of Youth and Students was held in Moscow from July 28 to August 11, 1957, and became one of the largest events in the international youth movement. It was an important tool for promoting the renewed image of the USSR and for finding new supporters and friends among participants from developed countries and third world countries (Koivunen, 2016, p. 224; Tsvetkov, 2017, p. 108). Already at that time, youth festivals became a force that shaped public opinion and influenced attitudes towards the most important problems of international relations and their solutions (Mozhayeva, 2015, p. 149).

More than 34 thousand youth representatives from 131 countries gathered in the capital of the Soviet Union, and 22 international organizations supported the festival.² The student program of the festival included numerous concerts, excursions, sports festivals, seminars, meetings and discussions.³ During these weeks, the delegations carried out more than 7 thousand excursions to factories, collective farms, schools, institutes, scientific and social institutions; at the end of the festival, the delegates visited other cities of the Soviet Union.⁴

It is interesting to note that during the festival there was a meeting of young deputies of parliaments, which was attended by 150 people, including 100 parliamentarians from foreign countries: France, China, India, Brazil, and Greece, etc.⁵ Regional youth meetings were also held in Europe, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, Africa and the Baltic Sea basin countries. As noted in the report on the results of the

² Russian State Archives of Socio-Political History (RSASPH). Fund M-3. Reg. 15. File 83. P. 2. Reports on the Results of the Festival, Information about the Progress and Results of the Festival and Bibliographic Information “Foreign Countries Participating in the VI World Festival of Youth and Students.” June 1957 — October 1957. (In Russian).

³ Ibid. P. 17.

⁴ Ibid. P. 9.

VI World Festival of Youth and Students for Peace and Friendship, these meetings were political in nature. At the same time, there were about 500 meetings between different delegations, initiated by the delegations themselves, which gave the youth the opportunity to establish new contacts and relationships.⁶

The Moscow State University hosted an International Student Club throughout the festival.⁷ The club’s program included meetings with prominent figures of Soviet science and culture, innovators of production, as well as discussions and concerts. The Student Council under the Committee of Youth Organizations of the USSR, in its resolution of August 28, 1957, noted the successful holding of a large program of events for students at the festival.⁸ About 100 thousand people participated in the events of the International Student Club, international seminars, and student meetings.⁹

The Indian delegation consisted of more than 400 people,¹⁰ including at least 40 students.¹¹ Indians have got a positive impression of their visit to the Soviet Union.¹²

⁵ Ibid. P. 18.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ RSASPH. Fund M-3. Reg. 15. File 152. P. 16–19. Materials on the preparation and work of the international student club (commission decisions, plans, programs, correspondence, lists of persons recommended for discussions in the club, texts of speeches, annotations on films, etc.). June — August 1957. (In Russian). For more information about the participation of students and teachers of Lomonosov Moscow State University in the Youth Festival, see: (Gerasimova, 2005).

⁸ RSASPH. Fund M-3. Reg. 15. File 152. P. 7–8. Materials on the preparation and work of the international student club (commission decisions, plans, programs, correspondence, lists of persons recommended for discussions in the club, texts of speeches, annotations on films, etc.). June — August 1957. (In Russian).

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ RSASPH. Fund M-3. Reg. 15. File 217. P. 24–30. Lists of participants of the VI World Festival from Asia and New Zealand, vol. XI. 1957.

¹¹ Ibid. P. 63–84.

¹² Despite the positive results of the festival, researchers expressed other points of view on the success of creating a positive image of the USSR among Indian citizens. See more: (Wishon, 2016).

On the Soviet radio, in the section “The delegates of the festival speak,” the Secretary General of the Student Federation, Krishna Chandra Dube, in his speech said: “I can say with certainty that the Soviet people are very good and friendly people. When I return to my homeland, it will take me several months to tell about everything I have seen.”¹³

During a radio broadcast at a round table with leaders of youth organizations and Indian delegates, the head of the Federation of Indian Youth Group, Shandil, noted: “I believe that the festival will help strengthen the youth movement and strengthen youth organizations. As a result of the festival, peace and brotherhood among the peoples of the whole world will be significantly strengthened. It is with these thoughts that we are going to India. We will hold rallies dedicated to the Festival in our country, and just like after previous Festivals, we will bring the ideas of the festival — the ideas of peace and brotherhood to every village, every small town, every city.”¹⁴ In a radio interview, Kapil Varma, an observer from the youth organizations Bharat Yuvak Samaj and Bharat Sevak Samaj, commented that “The Moscow Festival is very useful as there is an exchange of views.”¹⁵

The Moscow Festival has become an important stage for enhancing cooperation between students from various countries, including India and the USSR. Thanks to the wave of enthusiasm that arose in connection with the strengthening of the Komsomol movement, tourist trips of young people to India became possible, which were organized by the Sputnik Bureau. Due to their cultural and educational character, these trips went beyond the definition

of tourism and played an important role in establishing contacts between the younger generations of the two countries.

The First Tourist Trip

The first trips to India were made in 1962 and allowed Soviet students and youth representatives to get acquainted with distant India. Thanks to the cooperation with one of the Indian organizations — the Organization of International Cultural Exchange (International cultural exchange organization),¹⁶ the Soviet tourists managed to visit not only many attractions, but also to communicate with politicians, prominent public figures, as well as to get acquainted with the university community of India.

The first group of Soviet youth arrived in India in February 1962. Since it was supposed to establish contacts primarily with the younger generation, the tourists visited colleges and universities: in the first days, the group entered one of the colleges in Delhi, where they met with

¹⁶ In the first report, the name of the organization was translated differently — Organization for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. In the following reports, the host organization is called the International Cultural Exchange Organization. In the report of the second tourist group, the Indian organization was described as follows: “The organization for international cultural exchange is relatively young. The organization is headed by the President, Mr. Redi, a Member of Parliament from Mysore State (since 1973 — Karnataka State. — *Authors’ note*). The governing council of the ‘Organization’ includes, in addition to Mr. Ready, several other members of Parliament <...> The headquarters of the organization is located in the capital of Mysore — Bangalore. In Delhi, the organization does not have its own branch, which certainly complicates the solution of some organizational issues <...> It is clear from the conversations that the volume of work of the organization is not very large. Until now, these were mainly tourist links with Burma, Ceylon, and Indonesia. Contacts and exchange of groups with Sputnik were the first outing of the Organization to European countries” (RSASPH. Fund M-5. Reg. 1. File 160. P. 36–37. Reports from the leaders of groups of Soviet tourists about their trips to Belgium, Holland, India, Morocco, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. 1962–1964. (In Russian).

¹³ RSASPH. Fund M-3. Reg. 16. File 264. P. 122. Collection of the Main Directorate of Radio Broadcasting of basic materials transmitted by radio to foreign countries in connection with the VI World Festival of Youth and Students in Moscow. Vol. VI (countries of Asia and the Middle East). July 28, 1957 — August 11, 1957. (In Russian).

¹⁴ RSASPH. Fund M-3. Reg. 16. File 264. P. 133.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* P. 135.

students and teaching staff.¹⁷ Soviet citizens were received at a very high level, and they were even able to communicate with the rector. The report on the trip also described in details the structure of the college: it was emphasized that previously only Muslims had studied there, but later such a restriction was lifted and Hindus, among others, were able to receive education at this institution. Visiting such educational institutions the young tourists could communicate with future specialists in the field of school education — it was in this specialty that many students of the college were trained. During the trip to Delhi, the Soviet youth also talked with students of another college (the names of the educational institutions are not mentioned in the report), where specialists in natural sciences and humanities were trained.¹⁸

It is really interesting that in the report on the first trip, unlike the subsequent ones, a lot of attention was paid to the description of the institutions that the delegation visited. It was emphasized that the college on the outskirts of Delhi was 90% funded by the government. There was a student union that united all students according to their interests, and it was subordinate to the organization of the University that took care of this college. Due to the presence of such information in the report, it can be assumed that the first group of Soviet tourists was really interested in getting acquainted with university life in India and the peculiarities of internal management. The young people asked questions about the activities of the college and about the life of the students.¹⁹ It is curious that even during the first trip the tourists already had to face tricky questions from the representatives of the host country. For example, the report cites the following questions: “Do newspapers (especially

youth ones) in the USSR criticize their government?”, “Why doesn’t the Soviet government publish reports on nuclear weapons testing in advance?”²⁰

In addition to meetings with students, Soviet tourists also communicated with representatives of various youth organizations. For example, with “Derigan Yus lee,”²¹ which was not a political organization and dealt only with cultural issues: organized concerts, debates, arranged meetings of young people with ambassadors, ministers, etc. In general, the Indian side has often stressed that youth cooperation with the USSR was of a cultural nature, not a political one.

The Soviet youth visited Bombay (now Mumbai), the cities of Karnataka, Madras and Agra. In Bangalore, the group was able to visit one of the oldest law colleges in Bangalore.²² The reception was organized by the National Vallabhbhai Patel Memorial Society of Bangalore, where the former mayor of the city, a member of this society, Mr. Hanumanthaia,²³ made a speech.

In Agra, the Soviet group was able to attend a reception organized by the Society for the Organization of Correspondence with Foreign Friends.²⁴ The head of the group noted in the report that “I invited a group of Indian youth to visit the Soviet Union and expressed our wish to organize more meetings for foreign youth groups

²⁰ RSASPH. Fund M-5. Reg. 1. File 160. P. 53. Reports from the leaders of groups of Soviet tourists about their trips to Belgium, Holland, India, Morocco, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. 1962–1964. (In Russian).

²¹ The article uses the title given in the report of the head of the first group.

²² RSASPH. Fund M-5. Reg. 1. File 160. P. 59. Reports from the leaders of groups of Soviet tourists about their trips to Belgium, Holland, India, Morocco, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. 1962–1964. (In Russian).

²³ Most likely, the report was about this mayor. See: Bengaluru Mayors List // Open City. Urban Data Portal. URL: <https://data.opencity.in/dataset/bengaluru-mayors-list/resource/bengaluru-mayors-list> (accessed: 19.11.2023).

²⁴ RSASPH. Fund M-5. Reg. 1. File 160. P. 60. Reports from the leaders of groups of Soviet tourists about their trips to Belgium, Holland, India, Morocco, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. 1962–1964. (In Russian).

¹⁷ RSASPH. Fund M-5. Reg. 1. File 160. P. 53. Reports from the leaders of groups of Soviet tourists about their trips to Belgium, Holland, India, Morocco, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. 1962–1964. (In Russian).

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ RSASPH. Fund M-5. Reg. 1. File 160. P. 54.

with youth organizations in India... I also said that the CYO (Committee of Youth Organizations. — *Authors' note*) of the USSR, the Bureau of International Youth Tourism Sputnik is doing everything possible to expand tourist exchanges with other countries, especially with the youth of the Republic of India. At the same time, we express our hope that the Indian side will step up its efforts. To do this, first of all, the activities of the 'Organization for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries,' headed by Mr. Ram, should be encouraged."²⁵

After the trip, the head of the group emphasized that the people of India were still not very familiar with the Soviet Union, so such a cultural exchange between states is very useful and it was necessary to increase the number of tourist groups traveling to the country. Despite further attempts to increase the number of tourist groups, only one trip per year was organized to India in the following years.

The first meeting marked a new stage in establishing the relations between young people, especially students. Although the group visited many tourist sites, the organizers sought to hold meetings with representatives of students and faculty of colleges and universities, to allow the younger generations to talk about current topics, share their experience of learning and participating in public activities. Thanks to this and further trips, Soviet youth could participate in the dissemination of knowledge and information about the USSR, contribute to the creation of a favorable image of both their people and the country as a whole.

The Second Tourist Trip

The second and third trips of Soviet tourist groups took place in the period of intensification of the border conflict between India and China.²⁶ Dissatisfaction with the situation and the tense atmosphere led to changes in the topics of discussion during the tourists' visits to

²⁵ Ibid. P. 61.

²⁶ For more information about the conflict, see: (Garver, 2001; Gupta & Lüthi, 2019; Stein, 1967).

educational institutions. In this regard, the Soviet youth faced a difficult task to competently and impartially answer questions of the Indian side, as the leaders of the groups wrote more than once.

The second trip took place in January-February 1963. The group consisted of only fourteen people and traveled along a route similar to that of the first delegation: Delhi — Agra — Madras — Bangalore — Mysore — Bombay — Delhi.²⁷

Despite the small size of the group, it represented young people belonging to various categories of Soviet youth and living in different geographical areas of the USSR. As in the previous year, the second group was hosted by the Executive Director, Mr. Ram. It is interesting to note that this report mentioned the special status of tourist groups, including those coming from the Soviet Union: "The Government of India is extremely unfavorable towards tourist exchange. The departure of Indian tourist groups to other countries is especially discouraged, as this is associated with the withdrawal of currency. In this regard, the 'Organization' (although its relationship with the Sputnik Bureau of International Youth Tourism is based on a non-monetary basis) conducts all its activities (essentially tourism) under the brand of 'cultural exchange.' This puts a special imprint on the stay of our tourist groups in India. Our group was accepted as a 'cultural delegation,' and the representatives of the 'Organization' who worked with us emphasized this everywhere, especially when meeting with government officials and journalists."²⁸

Such an attitude towards Soviet tourists allowed the group, first of all, to get acquainted with the internal situation in the country, to meet with influential figures and representatives of various professions. Thus, youth tourism went beyond just a useful pastime among cultural

²⁷ RSASPH. Fund M-5. Reg. 1. File 160. P. 35. Reports from the leaders of groups of Soviet tourists about their trips to Belgium, Holland, India, Morocco, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. 1962–1964. (In Russian).

²⁸ Ibid.

attractions, and provided an opportunity for students and young professionals to learn more about life in India. The head of the group noted that in a number of locations (especially in Delhi, Bangalore and Bombay), they mostly met with government officials, various associations, journalists, youth organizations, students and college students, while events of a purely tourist nature receded into the background.²⁹ The report emphasized that “This, of course, increased the possibility of contacts with the population, the opportunity to promote the ideas of socialism, to familiarize the Indian youth with the life of our country, our people.”³⁰ Interestingly, there were often no such opportunities on the Intourist line.

Due to his extensive experience working with Indians, during the second trip the head made a well-founded proposal on the need for a more thorough approach to the selection of youth representatives. Since numerous official meetings, press conferences, conversations with young people, and question-answering sessions were organized directly from the presidium in front of a large audience, it was necessary to have one or two experienced journalists and two or three trained students in each group.³¹ This was largely due to the fact that the vast majority of meetings with young people were with students and college students. In this respect, the tourist group could well be considered as a cultural delegation. For example, thanks to the personal connections of the Indian organization, the second group was also met by high-ranking officials: “Meetings were arranged with a member of Parliament, ex-Minister of Defense Mr. Krishna Menon, Minister of Health of Mysore State Dr. Olver, Prime Minister of Bombay State Mr. Kanavera,³² by the Governor of Bombay State, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit (Mrs. Nehru) and other government officials, President

of the All India Society of Indo-Soviet Friendship and Vice-President of the same Society.”³³

In addition to sightseeing and meetings with officials, the Soviet youth met with students of Delhi and Bombay Universities, students of the Technical College in Bangalore and the Journalism College in Bombay, with a group of Bangalore youth studying Russian at the Patiala Society for the Study of Foreign Languages as well as with journalists.³⁴ In addition, rallies and receptions were organized: in Delhi — by the host organization, in Bangalore — by the local branch of the Indo-Soviet Friendship Society and the local branch of the Organization for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, in Bombay — by the local branch of the Indo-Soviet Friendship Society, the Committee for the Organization of the Meeting of the Delegation and the Council of Student Organizations of Bombay.³⁵

At meetings with students, the Soviet group was asked questions about the assessment of the international situation and domestic political life in the Soviet Union. As in the previous trip, the tourists had to answer difficult questions, including those related to India — China relations: “How do you personally assess China’s position in the Indo-Chinese conflict? <...> Why don’t you have the right to criticize your government? <...> Why is tourism forbidden in the USSR?”³⁶ Such issues required a high level of awareness and responsibility from the group, as they affected the trilateral relations between the countries. Since the Soviet youth and students were not just tourists but cultural representatives of their country, they had to be well prepared for discussions and provocative questions from Indian students and journalists.

According to the results of conversations with the Indian side, the head of the Soviet

²⁹ RSASPH. Fund M-5. Reg. 1. File 160. P. 35.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² This probably refers to Marotrao Shambshio Kannamwar, who was the Chief Minister of Maharashtra State in 1962–1963.

³³ RSASPH. Fund M-5. Reg. 1. File 160. P. 37. Reports from the leaders of groups of Soviet tourists about their trips to Belgium, Holland, India, Morocco, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. 1962–1964. (In Russian).

³⁴ *Ibid.* P. 38.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

group, as well as the participants of the first group of tourists, concluded that Indians know little about the Soviet Union: they reported that they can rarely watch a Soviet film or read books.³⁷ At the same time, the tourists saw Information Centers of the USA and England in every city. This, in turn, demonstrated the high level of interest of these countries in promoting their positive image in India. During the Cold War, there was an active struggle for the minds and hearts of people around the world (Pedersen & Noack, 2019, p. 1). But then the Soviet Union was just beginning to work on establishing cultural and scientific cooperation with the Indian Republic, so it is not surprising that many representatives of the host country were not aware of life in the USSR. It is worth noting that, according to the report, at that time, tourists faced a negative attitude from right-wing groups,³⁸ but in general, they were treated “very warmly and friendly,”³⁹ despite the difficult domestic political situation related to the law on the state of emergency. The Indians were also satisfied⁴⁰ with the position of the USSR in the Indo-Chinese conflict.⁴¹ At the same time, the

Soviet government’s support for India became one of the factors in the escalation of tensions between the Soviet Union and China in the 1960s.

The difficult internal political situation, the border conflict, and the dissatisfaction of some right-wing groups with the Soviet side made it difficult for Soviet youth to go to India, but at the same time they allowed them to get to know the current situation in the country better and not only to enjoy the beauty of Indian culture.

The Third Tourist Trip

The next trip took place in 1964. It was attended by representatives of the youth of the RSFSR (including Leningrad), socialist republics of Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Georgia.⁴² The group was hosted by the Vice President of India Zakir Hussain, the Deputy Foreign Minister Dinesh Singh, the Governors of Maharashtra and Rajasthan. According to the report of the head of the group, they spoke highly of the peaceful policy of the Soviet government, welcomed the Soviet position on the Kashmir issue.⁴³ The tourists were again able to visit different educational institutions of the country: Bombay and Delhi Universities, Teachers College and Women’s High School in Jaipur.⁴⁴

The head of the group positively assessed the youth’s trip to India: “The national composition, wide geographical representation, and professions of the group members have consistently aroused increased interest among Indians, and contributed to a large number of questions about various aspects of the life of Soviet people. Questions were asked everywhere about the possibilities of developing national languages, culture, the Constitutional structure of the Union republics, and the prospects for economic development in our country. Here, for example, are some of the questions asked at the

³⁷ RSASPH. Fund M-5. Reg. 1. File 160. P. 39.

³⁸ For more information about the politics and ideology of right-wing organizations in India, see: (Andersen & Damle, 1987; Sagar, 2019, pp. 229–253; Lounev, 2017, p. 37).

³⁹ RSASPH. Fund M-5. Reg. 1. File 160. P. 39. Reports from the leaders of groups of Soviet tourists about their trips to Belgium, Holland, India, Morocco, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. 1962–1964. (In Russian).

⁴⁰ The report, as an “exception,” provides a summary of the speech of the Minister of Health of Mysore State, Dr. Olver, at a rally with the Bangalore branch of the Indo-Soviet Friendship Society: “He devoted his speech not so much to the tasks of strengthening Indo-Soviet friendship, as <...> hints that ‘the USSR could not in words, but on to prove their friendly attitude towards India without delaying the delivery of the promised MIGs’” (RSASPH. Fund M-5. Reg. 1. File 160. P. 39. Reports from the leaders of groups of Soviet tourists about their trips to Belgium, Holland, India, Morocco, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. 1962–1964. (In Russian)).

⁴¹ RSASPH. Fund M-5. Reg. 1. File 160. P. 39. Reports from the leaders of groups of Soviet tourists about their trips to Belgium, Holland, India, Morocco, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. 1962–1964. (In Russian).

⁴² RSASPH. Fund M-5. Reg. 1. File 202. P. 1. Reports from group leaders on the trip of Soviet youth to India and Cyprus. (In Russian).

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

meeting at Bombay University: about the work of the University named after P. Lumumba, on freedom of religion, the development of modern art, how students combine social work with study”.⁴⁵

In turn, the members of the group actively talked about the successes of communist construction in the USSR, about the international policy of their country, about Soviet assistance in the development of the Indian economy. They were also able to meet with Indians who worked at the Bhilai Metallurgical Plant and other enterprises being built with the help of the Soviet Union,⁴⁶ who talked about Soviet specialists, joint rest and work.

The Indian side also asked the members of the group about their work, social activities, cultural leisure time of young people, and also asked what difficulties graduates of educational institutions face. However, even the third Soviet group of tourists also could not avoid questions about the Sino-Indian conflict. For example, the most frequently asked question was: “How do the Soviet people feel about China’s aggressive position in the Indo-Chinese border dispute?”⁴⁷ At the same time, tourists could familiarize themselves with numerous posters, brochures, and magazines that promoted the strengthening of the country’s defense capability.

At the same time, as in the report of the previous tourist group, it was noted that there are many information centers of England and America in the country, a large amount of Western literature is printed and sold.⁴⁸ Special attention was paid to the strengthening of propaganda on the achievements in space exploration. As an example of the limited knowledge of the Soviet Union, even among Indian students, the information is provided that

in the library of the Agricultural College in Aari (a suburb of Bombay), the only book about the USSR was the book “Russia” published in America, the main place, however, is occupied by American special and socio-political journals.⁴⁹

Unlike the Soviet Union, Western countries had more opportunities to promote their ideas and establish stronger cultural and scientific ties with India. From the reports of the group leaders, it can be concluded that the Soviet side recognized the fact that the country’s cultural influence on India was still too small, which led to the general mass of the population being unaware of life in the USSR and its politics.

The topics of the dissertations of the University of Bombay graduate students who worked in the field of social sciences also aroused interest among Soviet youth. So, the following topics are given as examples: the study of the differences between the constitutions of the USSR and the USA, the history of the development of politics from Rousseau to Marx, the mechanism of public administration, ways to quickly build socialism in India without a revolution, the elimination of castes, the impact of industrial development on the development of Indian society, and others.⁵⁰

The topics of these dissertations show that in the Indian academic environment attention was paid not only to internal problems, but also to issues related in one way or another to socialism and the Soviet Union.

The head of the third group, like his predecessors, also stressed the importance of selecting delegation members, the necessity of their political training and setting tasks for the group.⁵¹ Thanks to the information about the discussions in educational institutions and at various meetings, it can be understood that the delegations really faced a really difficult task to adhere to the diplomatic line of the USSR in their answers, to think over their words and to

⁴⁵ RSASPH. Fund M-5. Reg. 1. File 202. P. 2.

⁴⁶ For more information about the Soviet Union’s assistance, see: (Pradhan, 2019; Engerman, 2018).

⁴⁷ RSASPH. Fund M-5. Reg. 1. File 202. P. 3. Reports from group leaders on the trip of Soviet youth to India and Cyprus. (In Russian).

⁴⁸ Ibid. P. 6.

⁴⁹ Ibid. P. 7.

⁵⁰ Ibid. P. 8.

⁵¹ Ibid. P. 9.

treat with understanding many cultural peculiarities of the visited country. Since tourist groups were not perceived as tourists, but as cultural delegations, this imposed additional obligations on them and required them to be aware of the general situation in the world, of the country they were visiting, and of the foreign policy of their own state. The reports under consideration also emphasized the importance of knowing English language skills for Soviet youth traveling to India, and always spoke with gratitude about the members of the group who knew Hindi and Urdu.

Conclusion

The period of Khrushchev's "thaw" laid the foundation for relations between the USSR and India. At the same time, attention began to be

paid to the work of establishing contacts between students and youth from different countries. In the 21st century, Sputnik's experience may be useful again, as the Republic of India is one of the important and priority partners for the Russian Federation. Like the first Soviet youth delegations once faced, our students are now facing the important task of establishing academic and cultural ties with India. In recent years, much attention has been paid to student internships and trips to conferences, which, in turn, requires additional training of the youth of modern Russia. Through discussions with Indian students and meetings with their colleagues, Russian students and young people can contribute to the establishment of relations between our countries, as well as increase the prestige of Russia in the eyes of Indians.

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