Telegram from the British Ambassador in Moscow, Sir M. Peterson, to the Foreign Office, London, on Soviet policy towards Asia, 6 June 1947

FROM MOSCOW TO FOREIGN OFFICE

Sir M. Peterson.

No. 1284.

Repeated to U.K. high commissioner New Delhi.

Washington, Saving.

IMPORTANT.

LIGHT.

INDIA.

 2. Further evidence of Soviet views on India was provided by a lecture on June 4th by Zhukov,[[1]](#footnote-1) a member of the Academy of Sciences and one of the recent Soviet visitors to the inter-Asian conference.[[2]](#footnote-2) He referred to the Prime Minister’s offer of Dominion status, which although overdue, was even now “aimed at postponing the grant of independence”. In view of the successful post-war struggle for independence pf the “colonial” peoples in North East Asia and of the development of a working class movement in India, Britain had been compelled to find a new form of relationship to cover continued domination by British capitalists. In answer to a number of questions, Zhukov concluded that the British attitude to India had not changed. The Labour Government had promised independence “knowing they could turn it into a fiction”. Although British forces were being nominally removed, the principalities were being turned into British bases whence British domination of India would be maintained by force.

 4. Zhukov then gives the following definition of Communist policy towards India, which is new to me. He states that the Indian Communist party wished to see the country divided into independent States, with the right of self-determination and social and cultural development, economic unity, and the right to join or remain outside an all-Indian union. This was the only correct way to grant true independence to difference communities. In reply to a question contrasting the Socialists and Communists in India, Zhukov replied that the former were as little help to the working class as their western European counter-parts. The Communists played a leading part in all working class and trade union movements and in the anti-British struggle. He did not know the party membership.

 5. Zhukov concluded with references to the high prestige of the Soviet Union in India and to the sympathy shown at the inter-Asian conference at Delhi for Soviet nationality policy, with the central Asiatic republics as an example of a successful fusion of East and West.

[TNA, FO 371/76090 (8)]

Keywords: post-war Asia, India, inter-allied relations

1. Zhukov, Yevgeny Mikhailovich (1907–1980) - Soviet historian and Japanese specialist, academic. Director of the Pacific Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR (1943–1950), Member of the editorial board of the Pravda newspaper (1946–1949), Deputy Director of the Institute of Oriental Studies of Academy of Sciences of the USSR (1950–1953), Deputy Director of the Historical Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR (1953–1957), Director of the Institute of World History of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR (1968–1979). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Asian Relations Conference which brought together representatives from 26 countries took place in Delhi in March 1947. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)