



Nehru & Disarmament

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Nehru was not only a freedom fighter, but also a visionary. He had a great sense of history. India's history, her ancient glory and high moral values were much there in his thinking process. He looked back thousand of years, but at the same time looked ahead into the distant future what he did, the foundations of modern India he laid and the future he saw for her, could its impact internationally.

Romesh Bhandari-Jawaharlal Nehru was a very unique man. He was with us also at a very unique period of history-whether you take it nationally or globally. He came at a time when India and indeed the world was entering a new era. We are habituated to the ending of eras. When Gandhiji was assassinated, that was an end of an era. When the Janta Government was by defeated that was an end of an era. When Indiraji became a martyr, that was a end of an era. As such, the ending of eras and the beginning of new ones, is a part of life itself.¹ The Nehru era however was at a time when both the world and India were opening new pages. Internationally, scientific achievement and industrial and economic developments had already transformed the world into a much smaller and more accessible one.

Nehru was a combination of so many things. He was a freedom fighter. Being in the midst of national movement, he was in architected as he had the responsibility to plan India's future. He was a visionary, what he did, the foundations he laid and how he saw the future, could only be the work of a visionary. In this task of Nation building he had a great sense of history. The past history of India was very much there in his thinking processes.

He looked back thousands of years. He also looked that much ahead into the future. He learnt from the past, took into account the circumstances of today and thought of what lay ahead.

The end of the Second World War also marked the opening of a new era both for constructive and destructive purposes. The Second World War ended not with Hitler defeat, but by the use of atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Third World War would henceforth mean that it was not to be a question of how many men would die but whether any one at all would survive. India's independence with Jawaharlal Nehru as our first Prime Minister took place around the same time. It was after the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the nuclear age. There are the two facts of the nuclear age, harnessing energy packed in an atom for peaceful purposes and its unimaginable destructive capability.

Nehru also realized that India's independence would be the beginning of the irreversible process of de-colonization. Our independence was the beginning of a new era, which has to go irreversibly and inevitably the whole way to its logical end. The global economic situation was also very much in Nehru's mind. Over the last 200 years or more almost two third of mankind had been ruthlessly exploited. The western world had gone through its industrial revolution and was a long way ahead. Our so-called third world had remained in slumber and had been plundered. A country, whose riches had once inspired adventurers to come to India in the quest for wealth, had become one of the poorest countries under

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colonial rule. At the time of our independence it was, therefore, clear in Nehru's mind that real independence would be achieved with just the departure of the British. It was only a key to the opening of a door, which would lead us to a hard and arduous journey ahead. Nehru appreciated at once that real freedom meant freedom from hunger, starvation and disease, and full opportunities for employment and education. These were only possible through the optimum utilization of available resources, abilities and skills, it required an atmosphere of peace, cooperation and friendship. It is in the above historical backdrop that Nehru conceived our national and foreign policies. On the national side we have our three pillars—socialism, secularism and democracy. At the International level, a total commitment to a struggle against injustices and inequalities whatever and in whichever form they may exist to work for national and collective self-reliance. He was firm in his conviction that war can find no solutions and peace is the only hope for mankind's survival.

By 1947 the nuclear powers had already embarked upon a hectic arms race with the passage of time, the acquisition of larger and larger arsenals, the development and production of more and more sophisticated weaponry, correspondingly increased the dangers to mankind's survival. The dangers the nuclear age posed to human survival had been realized by Jawaharlal Nehru from the very beginning. It was he, assisted by his lieutenant Krishna Menon, who first raised the call for general and complete disarmament in the United Nations. India maintained that there can be no half-way house. Any step by one nation, for defensive purposes or its security would be met by corresponding steps by the other would meet defensive purposes or its security by the other. Weapons for defensive purposes can also be used for offence. As such arms race has now brought the world to a threshold where there are roughly 50 thousand nuclear warheads in the arsenals of the nuclear powers. According to one estimate, only a thousand nuclear warheads are

enough to destroy the world completely. We therefore, have a capability to destroy mankind fifty times over. What difference it makes whether we have a capacity to destroy the world once, few, twenty or fifty times over? The theory of deterrence or what some call mutually assured destruction (MAD) has been the motivating force in the arms race. It is the belief that the other would not attack if he knows that in retaliation he himself would be destroyed. The net result has been the situation of gross overkill capacity in the arsenals of both sides. The first means to arrest the arms race was to stop the development of new weaponry. It was in this context that in 1954 Jawahar Lal Nehru proposed a nuclear test ban—the placing of a moratorium on all nuclear tests. Unfortunately, tests have continued, yet, the validity of Nehru's proposal has become even more real today. In the six nation initiative the main emphasis is on ban on nuclear tests as the first step.

From 1977 to 1984 US early systems had put out almost 21,000 false alarms. It was only timely human interventions which saved us all from annihilation. Today we have all kinds of nuclear warheads, long range missiles, medium range missiles, strategic missiles, MIRV's etc. Is there any need for greater sophistication? In this situation while all of us are deeply concerned, and have also expressed our views, it is heartening to know that there is now an ongoing dialogue between the two greater nuclear powers. Sometimes their discussions are in public knowledge and a great number of times in secret. The fact that they are talking to each other is itself a positive sign. This process was given a good start by President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev when they met in Geneva. A major decision taken was that as a nuclear war cannot be won it must never be fought. At the same time the two leaders agreed that any proposal or understanding must be such as not to give any superiority to the other. Reykjavik summit was held at Soviet initiative Gorbachev made some very concrete proposals at that meeting. He offered a 50 percent reduc-

tion in all strategic weapons whether they be air based, land based, on the sea surface, under water or in space. The debate on strategic weapons production had become a very complicated exercise due to the nature of weaponry and an impossible task in determining equivalence. As such Gorbachev proposed an across the board reduction of all strategic weapons without having to go into a final details of equivalence. The second proposal related to medium and short range missiles. He suggested that all such missiles, whether Soviet or American, located in Europe should be destroyed. He was prepared not to include in this proposals French and British missiles. He offered that only 1000 missiles be located in Asia. Whatever the results of their research in SDT it would be available to the USSR. But S.D.I is totally unacceptable. The reasons are very-very clear. The S.D.I. or star war as it is called in popular jargon is not going to be a system which is purely defensive.

What is SDI in nutshell? First of all, psychologically it is terrifying that this arms race would be taken into outer space. The Soviets emphasis that if we are going for reduction and de-escalation and by turn of the Century wish to eliminate all nuclear weapons, then why should we go in for SDI. General Secretary Gorbachev asked, "when there is no sword where is the need for shield?" "Why do you want this shield?" Further, at Geneva both had agreed that as no war could be won, no war should be fought. It was a very basic pronouncement. Then why should be fought. It was a very basic pronouncement. Then why should one side insist on SDI system when no war is going to be fought? Another basic understanding reached was that neither side would attempt to gain military superiority over the other. If this is to be honored the SDI programme would be a violation as one side pursuing it would not only change the existing military parity, but also make any moves towards de-escalation mean-

ingless. The Americans argue that if offensive missiles is launched, the laser beam would be a means to destroy the missile before it reaches its target. Therefore, if the enemy knows that his missile would be destroyed before it reaches its target, it would be the best deterrent and defense.

At the same time it is also admitted that SDI would not be a perfect defense. Many missiles would still get through and hit their targets. At the same time this technology can also be highly offensive. Anything developed for defensive, purposes can also be offensive. If a laser beam can be used to destroy offensive missiles it can also be used to hit any stationary or moving target. There is a massive publicity campaign underway regarding SDI. Each side is trying to blame the other programmes of one are used to justify the development of new systems by the other we are opposed to SDI on principle. We appose it on many grounds. First and foremost, it is totally unnecessary. Secondly, it is a further escalation in the arms race. Thirdly, it means introduction of a new dimensions, i.e. taking the arms race into outer space. When Nehru visited Moscow his impressions were that they are very serious about disarmament. He may be wrong he do not think that they are doing this for propaganda purposes. They are very serious and determined to go ahead. The Russians have a very bitter experience of the horrors of war. Nehru is not pessimistic about disarmament. The two sides are meeting and various proposals are under discussion. There is a cautiously optimistic response. In the coming months Nehru hope that there will also be a debate on the implications magnitude, relevance and dangers of SDI. In the end Nehru would submit that regardless of whatever is achieved in arriving at agreements on disarmament's, much will ultimately depend upon the confidence the two super powers have in each other. Without trust and confidence disarmament cannot take place.

REFERENCES

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