

From New Delhi by Susan Maitra

The Kremlin's 'Kissinger' pays a visit

The stage was set for some good, old-fashioned patronizing, and Dobrynin did not fail to oblige.

On May 27, Anatolii F. Dobrynin and his eight-man delegation concluded a seven-day visit here "fully satisfied." The CPSU Central Committee secretary said talks with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi showed that India and the Soviet Union shared similar, if not identical, views on the major problems of the day. "We attach great importance to the talks we had here and we are sure that Indo-Soviet relations have a great future," Dobrynin said.

A guest of the government and the ruling Congress (I) Party, the high-powered Soviet diplomat was on an official mission to follow up joint programs launched during General Secretary Gorbachov's spectacular November 1986 visit and prepare the ground for Mr. Gandhi's early-July trip to Moscow to inaugurate the Festival of India.

But the ironies surrounding the visit gave it a significance beyond protocol. Rajiv Gandhi had just okayed the next phase of a dubious campaign, championed by the party's pro-Soviet wing, against "foreign destabilization," to regain his government's standing in the wake of a series of debilitating scandals. Rajiv himself launched the campaign with a volley of rhetoric against the imperialists, their accomplices in the neighborhood, and traitors within India. Agitation over the U.S. military relationship with Pakistan—with the alleged bomb and AWACS sales in the forefront—is at a peak here now, and border tensions with China keep bursting into the headlines.

Even as the Rajiv Gandhi govern-

ment puffed up its "anti-imperialist" posture, the great-power designs of the mother of anti-imperialism, the Soviet Union, have led India's great friend to woo both China and Pakistan, the two main accomplices in the recent Congress (I) version of the plot against the country. It is this coincidence, and all it implies, that put a special edge on the Kremlin heavyweights' visit.

Most revealing was Dobrynin's May 22 meeting with the Congress (I) leaders, recounted in one local paper under the headline, "Dobrynin Decries India's Paranoia." Asked to comment on the destabilization issue, Dobrynin reportedly said, "You can only destabilize a country when you are internally not united. If the nation has this unity, no one can destabilize you."

It was not exactly what the Congress anti-imperialists wanted to hear, but according to one report, it was fully coherent with the Kremlin's careful response to the Indian government's recent complaint.

"The Soviet Union is India's friend. It does not anticipate a conflagration," Dobrynin replied to similar queries about China's intentions toward India. Dobrynin explained to the Congress leaders that the Kremlin had also had a problem with China, one that took 15 years of negotiation to begin to resolve.

On Pakistan, another key to the destabilization game, Dobrynin could have been mistaken for a U.S. State Department spokesman. Pakistan does *not* have a nuclear bomb, he stated, and spoke of hopes for peace between the neighbors. "You have a problem.

We had a problem. In the end, Pakistan will have to realize that Pakistan, India, and the Soviet Union are close friends."

If this was all a bit jarring to the ruling party, Dobrynin's meetings with the two Communist parties must have added a further jolt. Conveying the "firm view" that Delhi's policies are against imperialists and friendly to the U.S.S.R., Dobrynin still listened sympathetically to the Communist claims that the government's economic and social policies were "anti-people," cautioning only that the fight against destabilization must not suffer.

Though they have declined to join an opposition front against the government, both Communist parties have been cold to fervent entreaties from the Congress (I) to team up against the "destabilization."

For the rest, the "protocol" side of Dobrynin's visit yielded the expected. Meetings with Indian Foreign Minister N.D. Tiwari and Defense Minister K.C. Pant—significantly, Dobrynin's delegation included a major general of the Soviet Armed Forces—reviewed India's security concerns and the general situation in the region. Indian officials were briefed, in turn, on Soviet perceptions and initiatives, from Afghanistan to the Geneva talks.

Dobrynin affirmed that the Soviet Union would continue to extend cooperation in defense supplies and production technology, and at a dinner speech in Kashmir, where he vacationed for several days, Dobrynin heralded the cooperation in science and technology that would get a new boost with an omnibus agreement to be signed in July.

It was also determined that commercial and economic relations would be diversified to raise the annual \$3.6 billion Indo-Soviet trade two-and-a-half times by 1992.