

New Delhi-Hanoi Relations Are Put at Embassy Level

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NEW DELHI, Jan. 7—India and North Vietnam upgraded their diplomatic missions from consular to ambassadorial level today, signaling a further deterioration in relations between the United States and India.

The move had been under consideration for a long time by India, but it had also been long and successfully opposed by Washington. There had been no particular clue that the step was imminent, and most diplomatic observers here interpreted it as a clear rebuff to the United States for its pro-Pakistan policy during the recent India-Pakistan war, when the Nixon Administration branded India the aggressor and suspended a large part of American aid.

Indian official sources contended that raising New Delhi's mission in Hanoi to embassy level would not affect its position as chairman—an the only neutral member—of the International Control Commission on Indochina.

[In Washington, the State Department rebuked India for her action, which it said cast doubt on New Delhi's neutral role on the control commission.]

Canada and Poland are the other members of the commission, which was set up in 1954 following the Geneva Conference on Indochina. India, as the neutral member, has until now maintained relations with both North and South Vietnam at the consular level.

Economic aid may have been a factor in India's hesitation until now. In the past, American officials had hinted that

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should India upgrade her relations with North Vietnam without doing the same with South Vietnam. American aid and trade with India might be periled. These officials cited Federal laws that restricted, and sometimes barred, assistance to countries that threatened United States security and to countries that cooperated with those threatening American security.

The official announcement in New Delhi said the mutual upgrading of diplomatic repre-

sentation was being done "in order to strengthen further friendly relations" between India and North Vietnam. The step takes effect immediately, but the respective consul generals will continue to head the missions as *chargés d'affaires* until ambassadors are exchanged. The announcement said the exchange "will take place shortly."

Foreign Ministry sources would not comment on the timing of the decision except to say India felt that "the time has come" to do it.

Some American officials

have regarded India's role on the International Control Commission as not absolutely neutral.

In the nineteen-sixties India was extremely vocal in her denunciation of American policy in Vietnam. But in the last few years she has muted that criticism. Last week, with the resumption of American bombing of North Vietnam, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's government renewed its criticism.

For example, a five-minute commentary last week on the All-India radio, which is a Gov-

ernment operation, called the bombing a "savage attack" on North Vietnam and said the bombs were falling on the civilian population as well as on military targets. The commentary described Washington's policy as "reckless."

Today the Russians hailed New Delhi's decision to upgrade its ties with Hanoi. The Russians gave India arms aid and complete diplomatic support during the India-Pakistan war. The Indian Army forced the Pakistani troops in East Pakistan to surrender, thus helping the Bengali independence

movement set up its new government.

The Bengali regime's foreign minister, Abdus Samad, who is on a four-day visit to New Delhi, spoke there today. In an apparent allusion to the United States and China, who both supported Pakistan, he said:

"We are aware of the machinations of some powers who are trying to strangle our infant state at birth. But our determination and the justice of our cause shall frustrate all their attempts. No power on earth can bring us back within the fold of Pakistan."