

Letter from Moscow**Played His Cards Well****Samar Sen**

May 16

AN exciting, anxious fortnight. Indignation swept through Russia and the people, their rising expectations about America shattered by Herter and Eisenhower, demanded stern action against future provocation. All over the country numerous protest meetings were held. Thousands of people in Moscow visited the Gorki Park of Rest and Recreation where the remnants of the 'bandit' plane were on view. Some people even thought that the Summit talks would not come off. The prestige of the American President sank low, so low indeed that Khrushchev confessed he did not know how he could ask his people to welcome him to Russia in June.

Every one knows that there is a thing called espionage, that it is a common practice, that it has been in practice for centuries. But the American liming was bad, to say the least. And the detailed official lie made it worse and gave Khrushchev a rare chance to turn the tables on the State Department. The whole affair began to look outrageous and sombre when Herter and Eisenhower defended the right to probe and penetrate alien skies. This hardened the decision of the Russians to hit back, if such acts were repeated. When Khrushchev warned the countries in the U S military bloc, prolonged, tremendous applause greeted him in the Supreme Soviet. The warning was repeated by Malinovsky and Gromyko; it was stressed again by Khrushchev at the Gorki Park and conveyed officially to the countries concerned. There is no mistaking the mood of the Russian people and Government: They mean business.

There is no denying that the Russians were somewhat alarmed. The photographs taken by the Lockheed U-2 from a height of 20,000 metres, were detailed and accurate. Such successful probes might bare the defence deployment of a country and prepare the stage for a surprise attack. With foreign bases all around her, Russia cannot afford to be complacent. And maybe, the post-Summit climate will be harsh rather than relaxed. Every-

thing depends on whether the Big Powers decide on a new status for West Berlin. If they do not, if the Russians sign a separate peace treaty with East Germany and the Western Powers thereafter try force, the chances of an armed conflict cannot be ruled out. Russia is too committed to back out.

There is, however, no panic in this country. On the contrary, the peopled confidence got a tremendous boost on the eve of the Summit when the news of the cosmic ship was announced. That ship has cleared the air—there is much less brooding now over provocation in the air. Unlike the Americans, the Russians have a perfect sense of timing. And they know that time is on their side.

Members of the USSR Science Academy are saying that the time is quite near when the problem of returning to Earth from Space will be solved.

Meanwhile, the world must beware of miscalculations and adventurism. In the last fortnight, Khrushchev has proved that he knows not only the pulse of his own people but also of many people abroad. He is a tough and brilliant man; he can take risks for bold ventures. Perhaps he is convinced that the* people of the West will not go to war for Adenauer and Krupp. And perhaps he is also aware that peace or war does not always depend on the people—the balance of terror is so precarious.

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Summer holidays are around the corner. An incredible green is spreading. The days are so long that sometimes one frets. Light breaks through the window about four in the morning and is reluctant to take leave even at 9 p.m. Streets and parks are crowded. Besides the American 'exhibition' at the Gorki Park, two other exhibitions—Finnish and Czechoslovak—are on. At the Pushkin Museum, paintings by Svyatoslav Roerich are on view. On the opening day, the Soviet Minister of Culture, Madam Furtseva, was present. At the Indian Embassy reception to the painter,

Mr Gromyko turned up rather unexpected.

This year a large number of tourists are expected. The season has already started and at the Ukraina Hotel one hears a babel of voices. Service in restaurants, once agonisingly slow, has improved. But a word of warning to people who want to visit the Soviet Union: If they have friends in Moscow or elsewhere, they should not bank on them. The Soviet idea of tourism is such that only the rich can come, buying tourist vouchers before they start. And these vouchers cost about £11 a day. Luxuries are provided—two rooms and a bath (even the very rich can do with one when on tour), a full-time interpreter and a huge car. Without such expensive vouchers, it is almost impossible to get a visa. Things were different last year when persons coming with a transit visa were sometimes allowed to slay on with their friends. This year one must be prepared to pay all the way.

What I have just said applies to tourists, not to delegations. Delegations belong to a privileged class—Nothing is spared for them.

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Khrushchev has appealed to retired generals and other ex-officers to work on collective farms. One or two have already responded to the call.

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Postscript: The news has just come through as I was going to the Post Office: The Summit has toppled. The curtain rose, and then came down with a bang.

Khrushchev has played his cards very well. It is clear that his appeal is to the peace-loving people of the world.

Another thing can be guessed: West Berlin may not come to the fore, or the front, for the time being. Perhaps it will await another meeting of Heads of State, after the Western rulers have had enough lime for heart-searching and repentance, prodded, of course, by militant public opinion.

