ARBiT
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World Techno Day

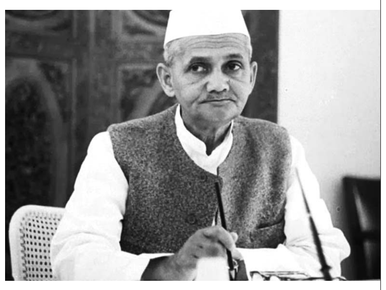
Celebrated every year on December 9, World Techno Day honours the evolution of electronic music and the global cultural movement it inspired. The day pays tribute to techno's pioneers from Detroit, whose innovative beats reshaped dance floors and influenced modern soundscapes worldwide. More than just a genre, techno represents creativity, connection, and the fusion of music with technology. On this day, artists, DJs, and fans come together through festivals, online events, and performances to celebrate the rhythm of progress and innovation, reminding us how technology continues to redefine art and human expression in the digital age.

राष्ट्रदूत
TUESDAY
09 December 2025
A-B

#INTERVIEW

Lal Bahadur Shastri On BBC

Lal Bahadur Shastri's 1964 BBC Interview from his first visit to the UK



A few months after taking office, Lal Bahadur Shastri, India's second PM, made a state visit to the UK. In his interview, he talked about his background, India's development and its policy on nuclear weapons.

Question: You, perhaps with your humble origins and your dedication to poverty, find this a positive advantage as a leader of the people, compared with Pandit Nehru's very cosmopolitan, upper-class English education.

Answer: It would be correct to say that I belong to the category of common men and common man. And I do find it easy to fight the battle of the common man, to think of taking measures to give relief to him.

Question: Pandit Nehru himself ranged far and wide in his travels and his interests. But this is only the second time that you yourself have ever been outside India. Does this mean that you are going to concentrate more on Indian affairs than on world affairs?

Answer: Well, I would very much like to concentrate on the home front, but some of the international problems are so interlinked with national issues that it would be difficult for me to confine myself to national problems only. I am here today in spite of the Indian Parliament being in session. Similarly, the Chinese aggression, although it was confined to India, yet it has had a great international impact. So, I shall continue- I shall have to take interest in international problems and issues also.

Question: Now, on the home front, the position you have inherited in India is very serious, indeed. There is famine and soaring food prices, soaring population and serious unemployment. Now, much of this situation was inherited, but there also have been charges of maladministration making the famine worse. Is there any justification in these charges?

Answer: Well, it is not actually famine, but it is true that there has been shortage of foodgrains, which we have been able to meet with the help of imports from foreign countries, especially from the United States. However, we are trying to tackle the soaring prices and we are bent upon taking measures to increase our food production. Maladministration? I don't say that our administration is perfect. Yet, barring some countries, I think we are not worse off as compared to other countries.

Question: Now, there is considerable agitation within India and even within your own Congress party that India should develop its own nuclear bomb. So far, you have refused to allow this yourself. But if the relations with China get worse, can you hold out for long against developing a nuclear armoury?

Answer: Well, I have made the position of our government quite clear in this matter. And in the present context of things, it would be exceedingly difficult for India in terms of making an Atom Bomb. Our policy of not manufacturing atom bomb stands, and I have every hope that we will be able to rouse the world conscience against it.

Love, Marriage, But Masalas Missing

Soviet Communists celebrate the 55th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1972 at the Red Square in Moscow.

The embassy also marked the first anniversary of the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Peace and Cooperation, signed on August 9, 1971, with a series of cultural events. Indian artists performed across the USSR, and a film delegation, including Hrishikesh Mukherjee, Nargis and Sunil Dutt, and Simi Grewal, visited from India. The embassy's cultural hall, which screened Hindi films without Russian dubbing, became a vital space for the Indian community. Given the limited seating, screenings were repeated to accommodate as many people as possible.

● **Bulbul Joshi**

The VI World Festival of Youth and Students, held in Moscow in 1957, was the starting point for building youth cooperation, the activities of the International Youth Tourism Bureau 'Sputnik,' and the first tourist trips of Soviet students to India.

By 1972, Indo-Soviet relations were at a high point. Just a year earlier, the two countries had signed a 20-year Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation. This agreement proved invaluable when India went to war with Pakistan in 1971, with critical Soviet support including diplomatic cover at the United Nations and the dispatch of Moscow's Pacific Fleet to the Indian Ocean.

This strong diplomatic bond also fostered goodwill for India among the Soviet public, who had a well-known fondness for Hindi cinema. In 1972, Indian missions in the USSR issued 40% more visas, although strict Soviet rules on foreign travel meant that the majority of the 3,000-plus visitors to India were part of government-related programmes.

Despite this warmth in relations, Communist USSR was not considered a potential immigration destination for very many Indians. At the time, Moscow was home to only about 150 Indian families. The student community was relatively larger, numbering a few thousand and spread across cities like Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), Kyiv, Volgograd, Odessa and Tashkent. Most of them were enrolled in long-term engineering or science and technology programmes.

In an era when phone calls required an operator and postal services could take months, these Indians were intensely disconnected from life back home. This isolation often forced the newcomers to become fluent in Russian and integrate into a society where they were viewed as exotic.

Indian delegation to U.S.S.R. in 1952.

Friendship of peoples

Diplomats in Moscow and Odessa, where India had a consulate, were acutely aware of the isolation felt by Indian students and their growing distance from the homeland. First Secretary JN Saksena wrote in his 1972 annual report to the Indian External Affairs Ministry about their assimilation into local culture:

"According to the nature of their studies, they are required to stay here continuously for a period of four to six years or even more... It is but natural that some of the students develop closer friendships with their companions, especially of the opposite sex, and ultimately decide to strengthen it further by entering into the bond of marriage."

Students frequently applied to the Indian government for permission to marry Soviet citizens, a mandate by the USSR to ensure the foreign students were not already married back home. Such marriages were generally accepted by Soviet society, which promoted the concept of 'brotherhood of nations' and 'friendship of peoples.'

It wasn't just students who found love in the USSR during the 1970s. Indian nationals working for entities like the Indian language services at Moscow Radio and Progress Publishers, as well as some diplomats, also married local women. In the case of diplomats, spouses were required to accept Indian citizenship.

Domestic staff

The diplomatic staff at the Indian embassy would often complain about their domestic help, who they were permitted to bring from India. Saksena wrote in his annual report that repatriation of domestic workers was a challenge for the embassy.

"Their term of contract is usually for a minimum period of three years," he noted in the annual report. "However, owing to the tremendous hardship involved on account of climatic conditions, non-availability of daily requirements and such other matters, sometimes, the servants get fed up and develop a headstrong attitude towards their masters. In this mood, there is a danger that they might present some security problems."

The embassy unsurprisingly blamed the domestic staff whenever there was a dispute. In 1972, three servants were repatriated for their 'misconduct.'

Many Indians living in Moscow were homesick, and to help alleviate this, the embassy established two clubs to organise cultural programmes. "The Embassy club and the Ladies' club do their best to bring all the Indians together for social intercourse," Saksena wrote.

In 1972, the clubs held 'melas' for Diwali and Holi, as well as celebrations for New Year's Eve, Women's Day and Children's Day. Meanwhile, the 503rd birth anniversary of Guru Nanak was commemorated by the embassy with lectures from Soviet Indologists, a langar (community meal) and sermons from local Sikhs.

Saksena remarked that these events were organised 'in perfect Indian style' and so well that even visitors felt as though they were in one of India's famous gurdwaras.

"Such functions always prove to be a source of profound joy and happiness, especially to a very large number of Indian students in Moscow since it is so rare to them," the first secretary said, noting that some Russians also took part. "This naturally helped to strengthen the already good relations existing between the two countries."

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Despite these cultural events, many in the Indian community found the USSR challenging.

"Life in the USSR is very hard," Saksena wrote. "Spices, pulses, masalas and pickles, which form an integral part of any Indian diet, are locally not available. Indians stationed in Moscow have time and again appealed to the embassy for making some arrangement such as opening of a cooperative store of such goods, but so far no tangible result is produced."

Another common complaint was the slow and unreliable postal service. Saksena noted that the embassy had a mailbag system for official correspondence, which was available for use by some students but not by the non-diplomatic Indians working for institutions like Radio Moscow or Progress Publishers. This group, numbering about 50, felt unduly discriminated against, especially 'whenever their post via normal postal channels was unduly delayed or lost.'

No visa on arrival

A particularly vexing issue for the embassy was the regular arrival of Indian citizens in Moscow without a visa. "This involves tremendous hardship not only to the visitor but also to the embassy staff since it is very difficult to obtain a visa on arrival here," Saksena wrote. "The procedure is that the visitor's passport and photographs are to be presented to the Soviet Foreign Office, along with the embassy's note of request."

Once the visa was granted, it had to be sent back to the passenger at the airport, before they could clear immigration and customs. "The airport is 45 kms from the town," Saksena noted. "Timings of planes are odd and it becomes absolutely impossible to get the visa immediately. The result is that the person has to stay at the airport overnight and the embassy staff has to suffer a lot in visiting the airport twice, apart from the fact that it causes so much embarrassment to the embassy and the Soviet officers concerned."

Despite these challenges, the embassy managed to prevent any deportations that year. The Indian consulate in Odessa also regularly helped stranded seamen return home, ensuring they received financial compensation from the Shipping Corporation of India.

Most Indians living in the USSR understood that their stay would be temporary, and while some, particularly those married to Russians, remained after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the majority returned home. Many of those who came back spoke nostalgically of the Russian winters, the local culture and the people. Clearly, not everything about their time in the Soviet Union was harsh.

rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com

Order of Red Star for Indian Soldiers.

#ABROAD

Indian cinema arrived in U.S.S.R.

#OKO SYSTEM

How Lt. Col. Stanislav Petrov Saved the World

That morning, the Oko system began to send alarm signals indicating that five U.S. missiles had been launched towards the Soviet Union

On the morning of September 26, 1983, the world came perilously close to the brink of nuclear war, and it was not a world leader or military commander who prevented it, but a Soviet lieutenant colonel in the middle of his routine shift. Lt. Col. Stanislav Petrov, a little-known officer at the time, made a decision that likely saved humanity from a catastrophic nuclear conflict. This is the story of how Petrov's cool-headed judgment prevented the launch of Soviet nuclear missiles in response to a false alarm, an act that could have led to global annihilation.

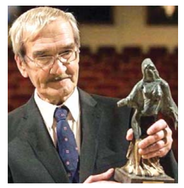
The Cold War Context

During the Cold War, tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union were at an all-time high, with both sides maintaining massive nuclear arsenals. The nuclear arms race created an atmosphere of mistrust, and any sign of aggression, whether real or perceived, could have triggered an all-out nuclear war.

In this high-stakes environment, the Soviet Union had set up an early-warning system known as the Oko system (meaning 'eye' in Russian). This system was designed to detect incoming ballistic missiles from the United States and give Soviet leaders enough time to retaliate, should an attack occur. However, the technology was far from perfect, and on the morning of September 26, 1983, the Oko system would malfunction, triggering a false alarm that could have led to catastrophic consequences.

The False Alarm

Lt. Col. Petrov was on duty at the Serpukhov-15 command center, a top-secret Soviet facility located just outside Moscow. Petrov's role was to monitor the Oko system and report any signs of a missile attack. That morning, the Oko system began to send alarm signals indicating that five U.S. missiles had been launched towards the Soviet Union.



The automated system showed a small number of missiles (five, to be exact), which immediately raised suspicion. According to standard procedure, Petrov was supposed to report the alarm to his superiors, which would have likely led to an immediate retaliatory strike by the Soviet Union. In the tense, high-alert atmosphere of the Cold War, the Soviet military doctrine was based on the assumption that a nuclear attack would be preceded by a first strike with multiple missiles, which was expected to come in waves.

However, Petrov noticed something unusual. A strike with only five missiles seemed highly implausible, if the U.S. were to attack, it would likely send hundreds of missiles, not just a handful.

The Decision

At the moment of crisis, Petrov had a critical decision to make. The stakes could not have been higher: if he ignored the alarm and was wrong, he would be responsible for the deaths of millions of people, and potentially the end of civilization as it was known. If he reported the alarm and it was accurate, the Soviets would likely have launched a counterattack, triggering a full-scale nuclear war.

Despite the pressure, Petrov decided to not immediately report the alarm. Instead, he opted to wait, reasoning that if the U.S. had truly launched a missile strike, there would likely be a more substantial second wave of missiles to follow. The minutes that followed were some of the most agonizing of his life.

After several tense moments, the Oko system's alarm stopped, and no further missile launches were detected.

The Aftermath

It wasn't until later that it was revealed the alarm had been triggered by a sunlight reflection off the clouds, which was interpreted by the satellite sensors as missile launches. This was just one of the system's flaws, and Petrov's decision to trust his instincts had proven correct.

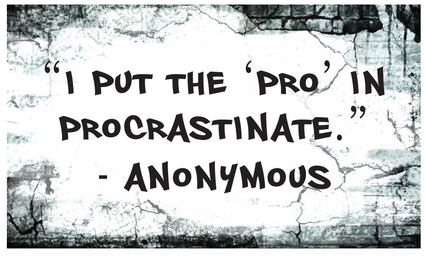
Petrov was never publicly praised for his actions. In fact, he was reprimanded by his superiors for failing to follow protocol. But in the years that followed, it became clear that his decision had likely prevented an unprecedented global disaster.

A Hero in the Shadows

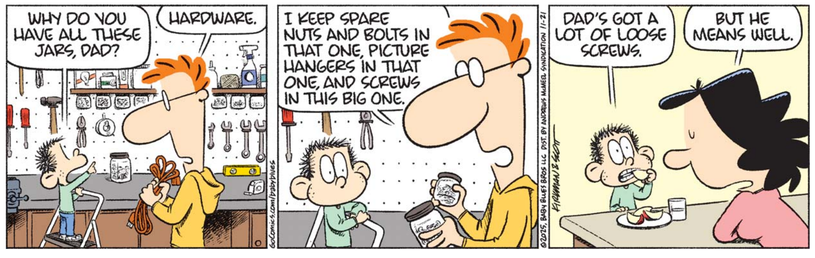
For many years, Petrov's role in preventing the nuclear catastrophe was unknown to the general public. He never sought fame or recognition, and his actions were largely overlooked. However, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Petrov began to receive recognition from the international community.

In 2004, the United Nations Association of the United Kingdom awarded Petrov with the Red Cross Peace Prize, acknowledging his crucial role in averting a global disaster. Over time, documentaries and interviews have shed light on Petrov's heroic actions, making him an unlikely yet vital figure in the history of the Cold War.

THE WALL



BABY BLUES By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott



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