

It is necessary to note that Russia's War Ministry was also showing interest in establishing a Russian Mission in India. Later it was sent to "the highest" level, and Tsar Nicholas who, as the Crown Prince, had made a journey round the world, including India, wrote by his own hand a resolution to the effect that he attached greatest importance to the establishment of Consulates in major cities of India.

Lord Curzon's letter to London of April 15, 1900 was not delivered on time - and Tsar Nicholas II's decree appointing Consul-General in Bombay had been issued ten days before. Even before V. O. von Klemm arrived in India it was clear in what difficult conditions he would have to work in Bombay. The first Russian Consulate was hampered by many obstacles mostly created by Lord Curzon who was a well known Russophobe and an overzealous exponent of the so-called "offensive" or "forward" policies of Britain towards Russia.

The Consulate began functioning on November 22, 1900. On the same day, the Russian Consul-General V.O von Klemm sent a letter to N.G Gartvig, the Vice-Director of the First Department of the Foreign Ministry in St. Petersburg informing him about the inauguration of the Consulate. On November 28, 1900 by his letter to the External Affairs Department of the Bombay Presidency Klemm notified the authorities about his arrival and the establishment of the Russian Imperial Consulate.

Talking to foreigners and Indians, Klemm heard the view that prevailed here that allegedly "Russians were going to invade the country". "All my first impressions I have to verify thoroughly and will keep you informed in due course... about all I find out in detail", -these were the last words of Klemm's first cable.

The Consul had instructions to inform Petersburg about real situation in India, especially "of the general public mood in Indostan, their attitude to British-Indian Government" and to "vigilantly monitor the internal situation in the country".

In spite of all obstacles by the British administration Klemm came out with honour from this situation by establishing close friendship with the representatives of broad strata of the Indian society.

A major part in Klemm's reports dealt with the russophobic policy of British authorities. He reported that the colonial media was purposefully spreading lies about Russia as well as the "Russian bogey". In May 1902 Klemm wrote: "During my recent tour with the Grand Duke Boris Vladimirovich I constantly took notice that we Russians were attracting curious attention".

In those circumstances Klemm did a lot to familiarize the cream of Indian society with Russia counteracting Britain's anti-Russian propaganda in India. Time after time in his reports we see facts testifying to the affection towards Russia by various strata of Indian society. It was especially important during the Russian-Japanese war or 1904-1905. In this context rather important were Klemm's documents sent to the First Division of Russia's MEA regarding the attitude of India to Japan and Russia on the eve of hostilities, about donations for the Russian Red Cross, maneuvers of Russian, Japanese and British warships.

Klemm's reports contain a great deal of interesting observations on the core of British policy as well as provide rather objective information about the situation in India. After a number of tours across the country he underlined the "awakening of

national self-consciousness of local intelligentsia and manifestation of people's hatred" towards British rules and their traditions in India. Based on his experience the Consul forecast several times the growth of resistance to the British regime, since it had deep social roots and objective reasons.

A very important aspect of the activities of the Russian Consulate was the establishment of trade ties between two countries. Klemm devoted much time to developing contact with Indian trade companies and tried to stimulate interest among Russian business community towards business opportunities of extending trade with India. In many of his reports one can see the assessment of the then state of Russian-India trade. In 1902 with the assistance of the Russian Consulate, two steamship lines were put in operation, which became important arteries for Russian-Indian trade. Branches of Russian Trade Houses were opened in India. In particular, the trading house "Leon Mantashev" supplied kerosene to entire Western India in the beginning of the century, delivering it from Baku through Batumi.

Russian tea-traders, such as "Gubkin & Kouznetsov", Ass. Made large purchases of Indian tea. Before the First World War Russia was one of the largest buyers of Indian tea, being second only to England.

The most essential economic reviews by Klemm were published periodically in "Collected Consular Reports" in St. Petersburg.

Besides, Klemm contributed a lot to the development of cultural ties between the two countries. While working in Bombay, he managed to get into contact and establish useful relations with many scientists and cultural workers of India, including the outstanding leader of the Indian National Congress and freedom fighter Bal Gangadhar Tilak. They met several times and during talks discussed the internal political situation in India and the issue of establishing direct business relations between Indian entrepreneurs and Russian commercial and industrial elite with the purpose of diminishing the dependence of Indian industrialists on England and supporting the struggle of Indians for political independence. In this connection, Tilak took keen interest in the possibility for Indian youth "to enter Russian military educational institutions of different combat arms and to get complete education of an officer", so that they could form the main body of the Indian liberation army.

The Consulate of Russia in Bombay rendered assistance in organizing the visits of Russian scientists, engineers and cultural workers to India. In some dispatches to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Klemm proved the necessity of establishing a Russian Government's printshop in India.

The analysis of the five years work of Vasily Oskarovich von Klemm as the Russian Consul in Bombay gives every reason to believe that the many-sided activities of the Russian Consulate during that period promoted not only broader Russian-Indian ties in trade and culture but also created favourable conditions and traditions which would later contribute to the birth and further development of friendship between the peoples of Russia and India.

Late 19th-early 20th century was an important stage in the evolution of Russian-Indian ties. The activities of the Russian diplomatic representative in Bombay who

was in close touch with St. Petersburg, particularly his important political and military information helped the Russian Imperial Court in molding its foreign policy towards England and the regions adjacent to India. Foundation has been laid for multifaceted economic cooperation. Numerous trade inquiries of the Russian and Indian merchants are preserved in the Consular documents which indicate great interest of businessmen of the two countries in establishing stronger or business contacts.

With the establishment of the Russian Consulate in Bombay the procedure of humanitarian exchanges between our two countries was simplified. It is well-known that people from Russia and India were always eager to study the culture and spiritual legacy of each other. The correspondence between Count Leo Tolstoy and Mahatma Gandhi served as a graphic evidence of this. Scientific contacts of Russia and India as well as the achievements of Russian Indology were further cemented in early 20th century.