

Forces Of Chaos Are On The Move

More than two weeks ago India celebrated its 30th year as a republic, on the date of the promulgation of the Indian Constitution. Certain Indian observers noted on that anniversary that never in its history has the Republic been faced with such a threat to its existence, to the very fabric of national unity and progress on which India's independence was based.

INDIA

The pessimistic assessment of the current state of affairs in India is not unfounded. The historic enemies of India, the Anglo-American descendants of the British East India Company which made India into the raped and looted "jewel" of the British Empire, are once again active. London's policy toward India has not changed from its inception — to wreck the unity of the nation through systematic encouragement of regional and communal balkanization of the country; to impose the genocidal "labor-intensive" policies of enforced ruralization of the Indian population; to take the promising base of Indian industry, which could serve wide spheres of Third World development, and strip it of all loatable value.

The first phase of London's plans has been in progress for several years — the destruction of the institutions of political leadership which represent a clear expression of the national interest of the huge Indian nation. At the top of that hit list is the Congress Party, the party which led the Indian freedom struggle against British imperialism, the party which forged the foundations of Indian industrial and scientific progress and led the developing world under the leadership of former Premier Nehru.

The fate of the Congress now occupies Indian political attentions, following the dramatic exit of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and her followers from the party almost two months ago. The hard indicators of how badly the Congress was hurt by this split will presumably be found in certain crucial state elections scheduled for all but one state where the Congress holds power, at the end of this month. Four crucial states are: Maharashtra in the west the foremost industrial center whose capital is Bombay; the two large southern states of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka; and the strategic northeastern state (near China) of Assam. Two smaller northeastern states are also in the fray. At this moment there are no predictions of clear winners in any of the states where the principal contenders are the Congress Party, the Indira Congress, the ruling hodgepodge Janata

(Peoples) Party, and the two main organizations of the Left, the Communist Party of India (CPI — the pro-Soviet party) and the Communist Party of India-Marxist. (The CPM is the "independent" party that came out of the CPI in the early 1960s.)

Indira: A Wrecker for London

Whatever sympathies one may have held for Indira Gandhi and her often courageous political leadership during the Bangladesh war and other events tend to evaporate completely in the face of her current activities. Indira Gandhi and her supporters have staked out one single goal for their election drive — to prevent Congress reelection. In every state the Indira Congress is making alliances with regional and local interests on an anti-Congress basis, in particular with advocates of greater state "independence" from central government control and of further division of the present states along communalistic and other linguistic lines. This opportunistic collaboration with divisive tendencies is totally opposed to the policies of Indira Gandhi's father, Jawaharla Nehru, who worked all his life for Indian national unity, and even to Gandhi's own efforts along the same lines when she was Premier.

The unfortunate and insidious result is that the Indira Congress is having greater success in wrecking the Congress than the ruling Janata party could ever hope to have. The Janata itself is not strong in the states where the elections are occurring, since its base is mostly in India's northern "Hindi belt." While the Congress is far from destroyed, it is evident that it is foundering, as its present leadership has failed to direct a strong national organizing drive or provide programmatic direction in the current election campaign.

The crisis within the opposition parties will and can be within the ruling Janata Party. Responding to the changes occurring across the political scene, the Janata Party is currently polarized along the following lines.

A progrowth faction composed of Defense Minister Jagjivan Ram, Petroleum Minister Bahaguna, and even Prime Minister Morarji Desai in certain circumstances are watching closely the changes occurring in Parliament. Some observers view Parliament as in the calm before the storm, with these forces ready and willing to jump off the Janata mishmash bandwagon as soon as new political formations gel.

A regroupment is being provoked by two parties within the Janata Party. Home Minister Charan Singh is currently engaging in various political and economic alliances aimed at protecting his base, the rich landlord class, through endorsement of the World Bank's labor-intensive solution for the landless laborer. In short, Singh

proposes that infrastructure for the untaxed wealthy kulak come from the work (paid in goods such as food) of the landless and bonded labor. Singh's efforts are supported for purely factional reasons by a portion of the right-wing Hindu nationalist Jan Sangh (a wing of the Janata Party). The RSS, the Jan Sangh's militia, is deeply divided on this issue, but not divided on the common goal of seizing the organizational apparatus of the Janata in the northern part of the country. For this, the RSS has run a muckraking campaign against Ram and Desai, aimed at discrediting them as national leaders.

The Communist Role

The Indira Congress's role in spreading regionalism and undermining the nationally organized Congress, along with their defacto Janata allies, is paralleled on the left. The chaos prevailing among the major parties, including the factionalized Janata, has led to increased prospects for an expansion of the strength and influence of the Communist parties. So far, the chief beneficiary of the spreading political vacuum has been the CPM, while the pro-Soviet CPI has yet to emerge strongly out of the defeat it suffered as a result of its alliance with Gandhi during the 1975-77 "Emergency" government. The CPM has gained power in the important industrial state of West Bengal, and has added to that, a victory in the small northeastern states of Tripura and Manipur. It hopes to win the state election in the larger northeastern state of Assam this month.

The role of the CPM remains ambiguous due to a severe split in its ranks between segments of the party who are acting as agents of the World Bank by supporting regionalist tendencies and the ruralist anti-industrial outlook of the Bank, and honest party leaders and members. *New Wave*, the Indian weekly, recently identified this division, naming CPM General Secretary

EMS Namboodiripad and the Finance Minister of West Bengal, Ashok Mitra (a former World Bank official), as the leaders of the regionalist prolandlord group. In contrast, *New Wave* pointed out that leaders like B.T. Ranadive, the head of the CPM's trade-union base, who reflect the working-class base of the party, have a realistic approach to the present situation. *New Wave* concluded that the CPM will abdicate all responsibility "if it surrenders to regionalism or falls for an alliance with the rich landowners at the cost of unity with the left and democratic forces, including growth-oriented sections of industrialists."

National Unity Needed

While some in India talk of a merger of the two Communist parties as the basis for creating an alternative to either the Janata or Indira Congress and filling the vacuum created by the disintegrating Congress Party, that prospect is not immediately viable. On one level both the Communist parties are regionally limited in their following, lacking national strength. But, more fundamentally, a merger of the CPI and CPM leaves aside the necessity of unifying the disparate progrowth political tendencies in all the political parties, particularly in the Congress and segments of the Janata.

The Communists, with the CPM under more responsible leadership, can more fruitfully pose themselves as the kernel of an alliance of national unity based on the shared commitment of all patriotic forces for the national economic growth based on science and industry, totally opposed to the World Bank dismantling of the Indian economy. This kind of defense of national interest, given an institutional form, can effectively counter not only the efforts of London to recolonize India, but can join hands against Anglo-American designs in the rest of the developing countries and in the advanced sector.

—Daniel Sneider