

What's at stake in the Assam upheavals

by Uma Zykofsky in New Delhi

Less than two weeks before India hosts the heads of state summit of the Non-Aligned nations, the government and the people of India have been assaulted by the outbreak of violence in the northeastern state of Assam. In the span of one week, from Feb. 11 to Feb. 20, while state elections were under way, hill tribes in that state carried out massacres which have left more than one thousand dead and thousands homeless.

The government of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi has dispatched Indian army troops into the region. On Feb. 20, Mrs. Gandhi went to the stricken areas and warned the perpetrators of the bloodbath that strong action would be taken. "We know who is encouraging the agitation," the Prime Minister said, pointing to "those forces who spread communalism [religious conflict] and caste-ism in every part of the country."

Upon her return from Assam, Mrs. Gandhi told Parliament that the government will not allow anyone "to hold the country to ransom." "The country is superior to any group, party, movement, or individual," the prime minister said. "No party or group can be permitted to block the constitutional process or thwart the development of the country. . . . Who is to benefit if the country is broken into bits?" she asked rhetorically.

Operation Balkanization

The question of "who benefits" from the breakup of India is completely appropriate. In the past months, separatist ac-

tivity has accelerated, from the movement for Sikh autonomy in the Punjab to the emergence of regionalist political movements in southern India, which dealt Mrs. Gandhi's Congress Party defeats in two recent state elections.

Forces outside India, including operations based in London, Switzerland, and the United States, have been found actively encouraging the "Balkanization" of India. British press accounts have consistently linked the Assam events to the growth of separatist movements in the country, speculating on the possible "breakup" of India (see box).

The separatist movements, all of them based outside the country and most of them in London, are designed to undermine the Gandhi government and India's role in world affairs. Well-placed sources in New Delhi see the latest upheavals as aimed at the upcoming Non-Aligned summit, where India is expected to assume leadership of the largest political movement of developing countries.

Mrs. Gandhi warned Parliament that "The country's unity should not be allowed to be disrupted at any cost. The dangers facing it should bind us together. The freedom movement [the movement for independence] had united the country. Let not this unity be disrupted."

The situation in Assam itself is extremely complex, a combination of long-standing economic and social problems with "external" forces that have intervened to transform those problems into a serious crisis. The entire northeastern region of India, a relatively backward area almost cut off from the rest of the country geographically by Bangladesh, has histor-

ically been a cockpit of intrigue by foreign forces. These have included the Chinese, who have trained and armed guerrilla forces of various hill tribes demanding "independence" from India, and Anglo-American intelligence, whose operations have included the deployment of Anglican and Baptist missionaries working with the largely animist hill tribes. It is such tribesmen who carried out these latest massacres.

The Assam tangle

These outside operations have fed upon the tangle of problems in Assam. The latest violence comes after three years of virtual

state by Assamese agitators who have proclaimed that "foreigners"—mostly Bengalis from neighboring Bangladesh as well as people from other parts

illegally into the state, reducing the native population to a minority. The anti-foreigner agitation, spearheaded by the All-Assam Student Union (AASU), has within its fold numerous tribal, ethnic, and outright separatist elements, as well as anti-Moslem Hindu extremists.

Assam is a state of 23 million, small by Indian standards, but very diverse in racial, ethnic, and linguistic characteristics. The 1961 census revealed that about a third of the population was Assamese, 38 percent of Bengali origin, and 13 percent from other parts of India. The rest includes numerous hill tribes, who see both the Assamese of the river valleys and plains and the migrants as economic threats. There is also great religious diversity, with a largely Hindu Assamese population and both Hindu and Muslim Bengalis.

Since 1977 the state has been under siege, with agitators demanding that the government set 1961 as the cutoff date for identification of "foreigners" in the state and their removal from the electoral roles. The government of Mrs. Gandhi, after it came to power in January of 1980, acknowledged that there was a problem of heavy immigration influx into the state, though the numbers are disputed—the agitators claim that several million people are "foreigners." The government has tried to establish a more recent cutoff date for identifying "foreigners."

The government has also maintained that an Indian can settle in any part of the country, and that part of the problem of the Northeast is one of economic development of the entire area to provide more opportunities for all. The problem of Bangladeshi immigrants is a politically sensitive question. Since Assam is relatively thinly populated, covers a relatively large area, is rich in natural resources, and borders states with large populations and meager resources, the migration has reflected the destitution and economic imbalances of the rest of the region.

While negotiations have been ongoing between the central government and the state agitators, the Hindu chauvinist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has involved itself in the state, inciting "Hindu" sentiments against immigrant Bangladeshi

Anglo-American media push to 'Iranize' India

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) fired the opening shots in a press campaign to undermine India's national integrity when, ignoring previously reported facts on the Assam tragedy, the agency proclaimed it a "Hindu versus Muslim communal conflict." BBC set the pace for the rest of the Western editorial gristmills in thus invoking the horror of the 1947 partition and building an atmosphere of inevitability around its alleged repetition today. (It was the BBC, of course, which did so much to bring the ayatollahs to power in Iran.)

The London *Observer* picked up this theme on Feb. 20 with a vicious piece, "Fifty Battalions Fail to Halt Assam Riots," which declared, "If Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi fails in Assam, she may have only the Army to fall back on as the last force able to prevent Sikhs, Nagas, Mizos, Manipuris, Kashmiris, and other Indian nationalities from breaking away and asserting independence."

Lest the point be unclear, the article is accompanied by a caricature of Mahatma Gandhi, head bowed and uttering his famous, "Oh God, no," upon learning of the outbreak of Hindu-Muslim riots in 1947. For all those Westerners with the impression of Sir Richard Attenborough's film *Gandhi* fresh in their mind, this acts to confirm the monstrous lie that movie tells, namely that the carnage of the 1947 Hindu-Muslim riots was the product of some innate Indian tendency toward fratricide, rather than the consciously planned product of Britain's imposition of partition.

The *New York Times* in turn echoed this line in a Feb. 23 editorial: "The Prime Minister is no more directly to blame for the Assam riots than was the great Mahatma for the dreadful bloodletting that attended the nation's birth," the *Times* intones, adding that the Assam problem is insoluble.

Muslims. Muslim fundamentalist elements have also been active. The fear that the BJP has fed since 1979 is that Muslims are out to "overrun" the Northeast if measures to stop the ethnic shift are not undertaken.

Government action

The government found itself in a bind this year. According to the constitution, elections could no longer be postponed unless the government amended the constitution in

Parliament or declared a state of emergency in the state, naming national security as the consideration. The government chose to hold elections, even if the electoral rolls were not completely revised, and to try to bring about a political solution through voter participation. While large parts of the state were reportedly disgusted by the agitation and resulting economic slowdown, the government appears to have underestimated how much trouble the agitators could stir up.

What has occurred is that while the Congress Party is reported, as of this writing, to be winning a majority in the election in areas where the electoral boycott by the agitators was ineffective, the bloody tribal rampage has undermined the effort to resolve the situation. Details of how the mass murders broke out have still not been revealed, but it is known that the violence started in the first stage of election campaigning in late January with acts of terrorism against police officials and candidates and culminated with the carnage perpetrated by the tribalists, first against Assamese villagers and then against Bengali immigrants.

Outside factors

There is no doubt that in the present crisis the government will have to sift out genuine grievances in Assam from those being promoted by foreign interests. Looking at the area, one can say with assurance that two "impact studies" have played a significant part in setting up the Assam problem. The first, made in the 1940s, became known as the infamous "Coupland Plan" to balkanize India. Its author, colonial officer Sir Reginald Coupland, maintained that Assam did not belong in the Indian Union, and provided Viceroy Lord Louis Mountbatten with the regional profiles to inflict partition on the Indian subcontinent as a costly condition for independence.

Coupland's intention was baldly stated: India, Coupland wrote, would be thrown "back to the condition it was in after the breakup of the Moghul Empire, to make it another Balkans. This would negate the development of democracy in India. Partition would also prevent a free India from taking her due place in the world as a great Asiatic power; for it would probably mean disruption into several states, branching from Egypt to Siam."

Tavistock angle

The appearance in Assam recently of a volume by Prof. Myron Weiner of the Massachusetts Institute Technology, which serves as a "little red book" for agitators' demands, leaves little doubt that the Assam problem has been cultivated and fueled from abroad. Weiner spent four years profiling the Assam problem as one of the major case studies in his book *Sons of the Soil*, which assembled the argument against the foreigners for the so-called student movement. The study was published in 1976, and a year later the Assam Pandora's box was opened up. The disruptions have led to virtual shut-down of the state's economy, at an economic cost alone of more than \$1 billion per year to the country.

Behind the attempt to Swiss Nazis' networks,

by Mark Burdman in Wiesbaden
and Susan Brady in New York

A trail of evidence in connection with the violent eruptions in India's strategic Northeast reveals the outlines of a plot by the Swiss banking interests who control the Nazi International and the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS).

The operation against the Indian subcontinent and, in particular, the government of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, has two levels: the first involves active coordination among the various fundamentalist-separatist movements inside and outside of India itself, to transform the crisis in Assam into a catalyst for the dismembering of India and plunging the subcontinent into flames. On the second level, links between this apparatus and the directors and financiers of the organized fascist movement have been established.

An interview by a European journalist with the London-based Sikh secessionist, Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan, provides insight into the destabilization effort. "Assam is only a communal riot between Hindus and Muslims," Chauhan said. "The Hindu fundamentalists, the RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh], are supporting this unrest. It will spread to not only Bangladesh and Bengal, but to the state of Bihar. The communal riots of 1947 started in this region. Then there was a chain reaction which led to all the rest. The chain reaction can start again now. . . ."

Chauhan, titular head of the "Khalistan" secessionist movement to separate the state of Punjab from India, emphasized the direct threat to Mrs. Gandhi in particular. "If Mrs. Gandhi is shot tomorrow, the chain reaction can take place any time. She can have an accident, somebody could shoot her. I am talking about hypothetical possibilities, but could one have imagined that President Reagan and the Pope would have been shot by a lone madman? Things happen, the same may happen to Mrs. Gandhi. . . ."

In the same interview, copies of the transcript of which were provided to *EIR*, Chauhan revealed that he is working with a group in Lausanne, Switzerland, centered around the de Maurex banking family, which made its wealth in investments in coffee plantations in Ethiopia in the era of Emperor Haile Selassie, and one Madeleine Chevallaz, sister of the