

# A confident Chinese general visits India

by Ramtanu Maitra and Susan B. Maitra

The chief of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, Gen. Fu Quanyou, completed a six-day visit to India on April 30. The visit, the first ever by General Fu, was marked by "free and frank" talks between the two sides on matters related to the security concerns of both nations.

General Fu's visit to India is significant in light of his high-profile visits to Myanmar, Vietnam, and the United States during the past nine months. In the United States, General Fu met with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and U.S. Secretary of Defense William Cohen, and visited the U.S. Pacific Command headquarters in Hawaii. General Fu is a member of the Central Military Commission nominated by Chairman Jiang Zemin at the Ninth National People's Congress in March 1997. He has been identified as one who is vocally critical of the concept of a large military, and

has urged China's military establishment not to depend on imported weaponry, but to develop indigenous high-technology weapons of its own.

## Security concerns

While in India, General Fu, who is also the commander of the Strategic Nuclear Missile Forces, met with Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, Defense Minister George Fernandes, and the Indian Army Chief of Staff. It is with the Indian Defense Minister and the Army chief that General Fu had extensive discussions on such wide-ranging security matters as the demarcation of borders between the two countries, and China's alleged supply of missile know-how to Pakistan. Defense Minister Fernandes, who is highly critical of India's official policy on Tibet, urged General Fu to take up the demarcation of borders at an early date. General Fu, who called the talks "very fruitful," agreed to take up the border demarcation issue, and assured New Delhi that China would "make special efforts to safeguard regional stability."

Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee called for resolution in a "friendly atmosphere" of "some problems" along the Line of Actual Control. "Improvement of relations between the two countries should be based on the recognition and respect of each other's concerns," he said.

General Fu's visit took place a few days after a U.S. delegation, led by the U.S. Ambassador to the UN Bill Richardson, had left India. The U.S. team was here as part of an ongoing strategic dialogue with India, and, significantly, had for the first time made it clear that Washington acknowledges New Delhi's security concerns caused by the expanding Chinese nuclear arsenal. At the same time, the U.S. team did not endorse India's latent desire to keep its own nuclear option open.

## Talks overdue

In the wake of these talks, it was widely expected that the newly installed Vajpayee government would take the opportunity to discuss India's security concerns candidly with General Fu. With the advent of a moderate and friendly regime in Beijing under Prime Minister Zhu Rongji, there appears to be a new understanding in New Delhi that to push India-China relations ahead substantively, such basic issues as security and border demarcation can no longer be sidestepped. According to most Indian analysts, such talks were overdue and should not be read as having been caused by any ill will on either side, despite some speculation to the contrary in the Indian media.

Since 1993, when India and China signed an agreement to maintain "peace and tranquility" along the Line of Actual Control, the border dispute which gave birth to the Sino-Indian military clash of 1962 has been deliberately kept off the agenda during a series of meetings and talks to improve relations. Moreover, New Delhi has never officially expressed to Beijing its concern about China's nuclear weapons

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development program.

However, a section of the Indian media critical of China's Tibet policy played up the noisy demonstrations organized by Tibetan refugees based in New Delhi and abroad, to undermine General Fu's visit. The very day the Chinese General arrived, one senior Tibetan activist tried to immolate himself, to protest the Indian authorities' forcible termination of their fast unto death. The activist later died in the hospital. There were some noisy demonstrations in front of the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi organized by the Tibetan Youth Congress, an international outfit formed in 1970 in Japan by Tibetan migrants seeking an independent Tibet.

There are indications that Beijing did not like the way New Delhi handled the Tibetan demonstrations during the General's visit, but remained hopeful that the Indian government would stick to its policy of not allowing the Dalai Lama, who is based in Dharamsala, India, to carry out anti-China activities on Indian soil. One New Delhi-based news daily reported that Beijing sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, made it clear that Tibet is a closed issue, but that China is willing to speak directly to the Dalai Lama, provided he gives up his demand for the "so-called independence of Tibet." These sources acknowledged that although Tibet is one of the main issues that will determine future relations between India and China, "the common interest between the two countries will prove bigger than the differences."

While the Vajpayee government, with the sole exception of the Defense Minister, repeatedly assured Beijing that there will be no change in India's long-standing policy vis-à-vis Tibet, New Delhi has expressed serious concern to Beijing on its alleged transfer of missile technology to Pakistan. The Indian Defense Minister had earlier accused China of being the "mother" of Ghauri, the intermediate ballistic missile recently test-fired by Pakistan. The issue was brought up at length during the talks with General Fu.

It is evident that New Delhi is not ready to bury the missile issue. Indian Foreign Secretary K. Raghunath, who was recently in Washington to participate in the ongoing strategic dialogue with the United States, told U.S. officials that the test-firing of Ghauri by Pakistan is part of a "long-standing, clandestine program for developing missile capability aimed at primarily one country — India."

During his Washington visit, Foreign Secretary Raghunath met with National Security Adviser Sandy Berger, Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, Undersecretary of State Thomas Pickering, and Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency John Holum. Raghunath emphasized to the U.S. authorities that Pakistan's missile capability was "not an indigenous one," and that Pakistan has used "covert means" to attain this capability. He also singled out the U.S. firm Holmes and Nerver for its involvement in Pakistan's covert nuclear weapons program.



*Dr. Natalya Vitrenko, co-initiator, with Helga Zepp-LaRouche, of the Appeal to President Clinton to Convene a New Bretton Woods Conference.*

## Ukrainian judge rules to reinstate Vitrenko

In a preliminary decision on May 6, the deputy chairman of the Supreme Court of Ukraine has overruled the invalidation by the Konotop Municipal Court (Sumy Province), of parliamentary election results for that region. The Konotop court's decision, announced on April 17, tried to cancel the landslide election victory of Dr. Natalya Vitrenko, pushing the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine (PSPU), which she chairs, below the 4% threshold for representation in the Verkhovna Rada, or Parliament, as a bloc. According to a PSPU spokesman in Kiev, the final outcome depends on the preliminary decision being confirmed by the Civil Affairs Collegium of the Supreme Court, which, as we went to press, was scheduled to meet on May 11. The Verkhovna Rada opens its new session on May 12. If the March 29 election results are upheld, the PSPU will be present with a bloc of 17 deputies.

Dr. Vitrenko, co-initiator of the Appeal to President Clinton to Convene a New Bretton Woods Conference, ran as a vigorous foe of the International Monetary Fund's destruction of the economy of Ukraine.

The PSPU spokesman also reported that a Sumy Province prosecutor, V. Sukhonos, is attempting to overturn the election of PSPU leader Volodymyr Marchenko. Despite the fact that Marchenko outpolled Sukhonos by 31,000 votes, court hearings have been going on for two days in the town of Lebedino.