

Revolution

India on the eve

by Lal Singh

A revolution is coming on the subcontinent. It may take 5, 15, or even 30 years to achieve power. But it will come. Since 1967, all major developments in the region have been concerned, either explicitly or covertly, with that coming thunder.

In a previous article I tried to show how the socioeconomic structure of India developed with the active encouragement of British colonialism: the development of underdevelopment took time and imagination. However, the net result was a country that could not, given the prevailing conditions of the world market, achieve the kind of developmental miracle it needed to secure its independence.

This is one of the hardest facts about India to grasp, with a population so large, with a considerable agricultural and industrial base in absolute terms, with a fairly well-developed state bureaucracy, and with a loud, if impotent voice in world affairs. India since 1947 seems like an independent state. To understand the dynamics of recent development, however, one has to pierce that image and realize that India has been a colonial nation except with indigenous rulers.

The Roots

The roots of the current crisis lie in the 30 year old interplay of shifting foreign dominance and continued domestic stagnation; and of course, the question of socialism vs. capitalism, the central question of our time, must occupy a prominent place in the discussion.

During World War II the Indian Congress Party acquired the rather powerful patronage of the United States. While verbally the romance revolved around the slogans of freedom and democracy, the United States was not exactly the disinterested champion of morality and justice it claimed to be. American policy in India was merely the logical consequence of their drive to break up the sterling area; the tough bargaining with the British government over financial and material aid for the fight against Nazi Germany showed that even in the midst of a crusade, America could do good business. Thus it was not surprising that with Independence, India gained a new friend, ready with the wheat and the dollars, should the need ever arise. As the whole world knows, the need did arise, and quickly.

When Nehru and the Congress Party came to power, there was a lot of rhetoric about socialism which has continued to this day. Congress built up the state sector of the economy and supposedly enacted land reforms, all in the name of the poor.

Indeed, the initial report of the Congress' Agrarian Reforms Committee, published in 1949, was quite a radical

document. It called for land to the tiller and the commuting of rent in kind to cash. However, by the time the actual legislation was passed and then "implemented", rural vested interests had succeeded in diluting it out of existence. Ceilings on the amount of land one person could hold were circumvented by "redistributing" it to several members of a landlord's family. In some areas, landlords actually **increased** the amount of land they held.

Pseudo - Socialism

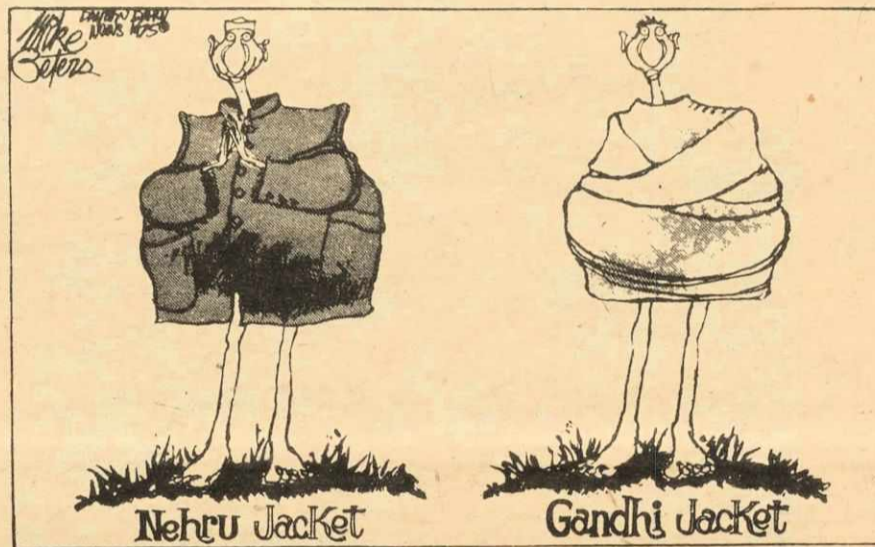
The pseudo-socialism of the Congress can also be seen in their industrial policies. The big Indian industrialists have always had a big say in the formulation of the Five Year Plans. The private sector actually welcomed the large public sector created after Independence; after all, the state generally stepped in only where private enterprise was unwilling to invest, effectively subsidizing the corporations. The net result has been state investment in infrastructural industries, while the private sector has stayed in consumer

deficits that began in the late fifties, India had to turn to foreign "aid". Indian denials to the contrary, foreign private investment had been steadily growing ever since Independence, with American capital gradually displacing the British. Now through the mechanism of government to government aid, the U.S. was able to consolidate its position.

The U.S. was able to step through the door by proffering large amounts of grain as loans. In the early sixties the United States was the Arabia of food production, and, running surpluses of unsold wheat, the were only too glad to buy political influence at such low cost. They "generously" accepted payments for the food in rupees which they deposited in Indian banks. (By the early 70's the U.S. had 40% of India's circulating money supply in their bank account!)

The "Solution"

With the increasing debt, there was a steady erosion of India's bargaining position vis a vis the debtor countries and the Wise Men of the West in the



Peters, Dayton Daily News

goods and enjoyed profit rates among the highest in the world. According to the Reserve Bank of India, gross profits rose by 65% during the first plan, and by 42% and 55% during the second and third plans respectively. On the other hand, wages of factory workers earning less than Rs 200 (\$23) per month showed almost no improvement from 1951-64. It is small wonder that industrial unrest has been increasing as a result of that kind of "socialism."

The result of the failure of land reforms was that the overall growth of the economy began to slow. Agricultural production lagged behind industrial production, savings and investment fell, exports dropped, and the downward cycle of devaluations began.

With the series of balance of payments

International Monetary Fund. Thus, what little foreign exchange was earned went back to the West to service the debt, foreign aid was increasingly tied to specific infrastructural projects, while pressure from the U.S. government and "persuasion" from the World Bank led to a relaxation of many controls on foreign investment for the highly profitable private sector. While the problem was initially one of capital shortages rather than food *per se*, as the economic crisis deepened with the increasing burden of the foreign debt, food did become a problem. By the time the famines started in 1965-66, the U.S. was in a position to dictate its "solution" to the food crisis.

Basic to most analyses of the food question is the assumption that the lag in

aspects of human endeavor.

This, incidentally, meant also the creation of new Jewish farming and working classes. Indeed, it is in "reactionary" Israel rather than among the "salon leftists" that these classes were created as well as the unique forms of cooperative and collective settlements exemplified in the moshav and the kibbutz.

Zionism was and remains among the most humanitarian national movements. From its inception it did not come to the Land of Israel to uproot someone -- there was enough room for both Jews and Arabs alike -- but rather to join together in building. From its inception it desired to reach a compromise with its Arab neighbors and was ready to accept minimalistic programs. Unfortunately, the position of the Arab world for more than 50 years was one of absolute non-recognition of the rights of Zionism and a war to the end against it. Israel's policy since its independence was to attempt to reach peace through discussion with its Arab neighbors on the basis of mutual recognition and to solve all the outstanding problems. The answer was invariably hostility and threats of annihilation.

continued on page 8

agricultural development within the Third World is a product of the unfortunate but inevitable circumstances of population. Due to the seemingly technological nature of the crisis, the West claims that the political duty of nations like India is to emulate the productive techniques and social relations of the advanced sector. That was the whole rationale behind the imposition of the Green Revolution on the Indian peasantry.

However, India's food problem is not a problem of population, as is widely believed. France, for instance, has a ratio of arable land to population similar to India's yet her grain production tripled from 1955-67, far greater than **anyone's** population increase. The reason lies in the heavy use of fertilizers and machinery.

Capitalist Roadblock

The Green Revolution was an attempt by the American and Indian governments to foster just such a form of agriculture. The problem, however, was that while population was not a roadblock capitalist economics is; since the program was capital intensive when India is labour abundant, the net result was an even further penetration of U.S. capital, especially in the petrochemical-fertilizer industries. There were indubitably immense increases in production, but the benefits of these flowed only to a small minority since only large scale farmers could afford the inputs in machinery and supplies. As an example, I remember one highly educated gentleman who had a 100 acre farm, a house in Delhi, house in the Village, and one for the summer in the mountains: because he knew how to talk and to whom, he was receiving a grant from the U.N. to boost production! Not exactly your average starving peasant. On the other hand, thousands of middle peasants have been driven into landlessness. Thus the very people who suffer most from the food crisis and for whom the Green Revolution was supposedly made now don't have the incomes to pay for the food. Grotesquely, while production has increased so too has starvation.

I have not talked about the Soviet Union's penetration of the Indian economy primarily because its presence is much more obvious to the world. Recently it has been growing at a very fast rate, though the U.S. is still the dominant power economically. Politically, however, the U.S.S.R. has a considerable advantage over the U.S. in that their relations with the Indian State are better, primarily because they can offer it a facade of socialism to present to the masses.

In the final analysis, the competition between various foreign powers is a secondary question. The major one is the speed with which the peasantry takes up active resistance against the daily poverty, hunger, humiliation and physical violence of the present order. The capitalist world has tried every strategy possible in order to avoid agrarian. Now the Gandhi regime has even begun the fascistic program of forced sterilization, an equally futile gesture.

A hundred formulas and stratagems from Harvard and MIT and Princeton have had their day and failed. For over 30 years, the Indian ruling classes has grown financially more bloated, politically more cynical, and morally more bankrupt. In the last decade, however, the peasant masses have begun to have their say. Indeed, there are now hundreds of Hunans all over the subcontinent; the Indian people will eventually have their Yenan as well. It is in response to that coming storm that Indira Gandhi declared her martial law.

Part Two of a Series

In the first part of this series the author analysed the roots of the current crisis in India. He attributes the problem to the feudal agricultural system and not population. He questions the actual democracy before Gandhi's declaration of emergency and outlines how the current form of feudalism is reinforced by foreign capitalism. This article describes what will happen to the 4000 year old civilization "on the verge of collapse" - Editors Note.

authors not consider Jewish communities in less enlightened countries? Have they not heard of 3 million Russian Jews whose rights are being denied them and have they not heard of the Jews living in Arab countries who are virtual prisoners? Furthermore, even if there is no longer official anti-Semitism in the enlightened countries, can we honestly say that it does not still exist in one way or another? And does the "struggle against anti-Semitism" solve the problem of the **individual or family** which is effected? The authors' comments can only be received with disdain by the hundreds of thousands of Jews who found in Israel simply a haven from persecution, a chance to start life anew as equal citizens in every way. What are the authors' suggestions to them -- perhaps to return to the countries from which they came and to "struggle" against anti-Semitism?

The view of Zionism as based solely on the solution of the problem of anti-Semitism is also rooted in ignorance. Historically, Zionism was founded simultaneously with other nationalist movements in Europe on the identical desire to create an independent, national

life rooted in a homeland. (Perhaps it would have been better had Zionism been called Jewish nationalism and then we would have been spared much of the current misunderstanding. However, due to the centrality of Zion-Jerusalem in the lives of the Jewish people this name was chosen.) The difference between Zionism and other nationalist movements was perhaps that with the others even if there was no national independence the nations actually occupied their homeland and there was little danger of disappearance. With the Jewish people, dispersed among the nations and threatened not only by anti-Semitism, but by all-out assimilation, the question was simply that of national survival. The survival instinct is as strong in the nation as it is in the individual -- and clearly the Zionist movement offered a relevant solution. I don't know what Judaism means for the non-Zionist Jews, but for many others, Judaism was equated with a strong national-religious identity, worth preserving. Many understood and understand yet that only in a Jewish state is it possible to live a full national life and develop a Jewish culture encompassing all