

ARTICLE OF THE WEEK

THE BORDER DISPUTE

TURNING POINT FOR INDIA

by PHILIP SHERMAN
(The Michigan Daily)

Madras—A month ago it looked like just another ugly turn in the drawn out Sino-Indian bickering over common frontiers.

With winter approaching, the Chinese followed their usual custom and stepped up military action. Then, as he got on a plane for Ceylon, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru casually averred his troops had been ordered to drive the Chinese out. A week later, the Reds replied with a major offensive, including attacks in the relatively quiet but critical Northeast Frontier Agency. Then the India government hit the alarm bell.

IN CLOSE ORDER:
Nehru made a war broadcast to the nation, which, if lacking in specifics, clearly summoned all Indians to the defense of the violated motherland. Sounding tired, disillusioned and perhaps quietly bitter as he spoke first in English then in Hindi, Nehru admitted significantly: "We are living in an artificial atmosphere of our own creation and we have been shaken out of it." He was anticipating a major policy shift.

A concerted government propaganda campaign was thus begun which has aroused the nation as nothing since the early days of Independence and Partition. The continuing theme: it is not a border incident, but a full scale invasion—a wartime response is needed. With even a confused Communist party lining up behind the government, a major committee on "national integration," one of India's most pressing problems, suspended its deliberations as unnecessary.

All efforts were made to strengthen India's out-manned and out-gunned border forces. Politicians and economists agreed the Third Five Year Plan would have to be retailored in khaki.

PRESIDENT S. Radakrishnan, who had been insisting all along that the Chinese were a serious menace, gave Nehru War-time authority by declaring a national emergency. This gave the government broad though temporary special powers. Already, special plans have been made in northern border regions to train men with rifles and special local defense councils established. All students will be given some military training.

Nehru sent out feelers both East and West. Although apparently softening its stand now, at that moment the Soviet Union found it had to support China. The West, glad at Panditji's change of heart, was only too happy to help on his terms.

American and British arms began rapidly to arrive in India, to be paid for later on easy terms. More are coming. It is a mild form of aid only and nothing more.

Nehru bowed to immense pressure by demoting Defense Minister V. K. Krishna Menon, supposed architect of the border policy. Later Menon completely resigned. The change made everyone west of Suez very happy and apparently most Indians too.

The Chinese underlined all these points by continuing their drive into NEFA, capturing the important town of Towang and threatening to go all the way down to the Assam Plain. But stiffening Indian resistance, the mountain winter and lengthening lines of communication were apparently slowing the Chinese down, and relative quiet eventually fell over the front.

WHAT HAPPENED?

"The artificial atmosphere of our own creation," India's post-Independence foreign policy, has virtually collapsed. Building on a similar but definitely different foundation, the government is now trying to erect a new and sounder structure.

The major casualty so far is the weakest beam in the old policy, trust and friendship for China. India has many reasons for conciliating China and admittedly some were quite sound.

Though developing India was and is markedly weaker than bigger China. Her army is at best one quarter as large and hardly as well equipped. The industrial base is smaller and cannot be so easily diverted to war production. The military action that in-

dia had hoped to prevent would have been exceptionally costly in terms of national development. The price was too high so it was to be avoided.

INDIA'S ANALYSIS of China was markedly different from America's. Viewing the Mao regime as the fulfillment of the anti-imperialist struggle, Indians tended to minimize its communism and expansionism, to see it as a fellow "Asian" power, to trust its protestations of peaceful and honorable intentions. "Co-existence" was taken at its face value and in any case the Soviet Union was expected to exercise a restraining hand.

Nehru said there seemed to be no possibility any other nation would be interested in invading India, as he now says China is doing. Invasion simply wouldn't be profitable, he thought. And there was an unspoken feeling and hope that China might go away if not unduly provoked.

Finally, in the interests of peace and therefore internal development, India wanted to keep the Cold War far away, hence was willing to talk.

IN ALL THIS hope and solid analysis mixed, and India left her northern frontier weak even as the Chinese were building the bases that undergird her present success. India downplayed the danger and lulled herself almost to sleep.

Although the scale of the recent fighting was small—the Chinese are estimated to have but 50,000 troops on the border—India finally realized this sort of thinking was incompatible with national security. After years of skirmishing and tolerant diplomatic exchange she scuttled her China policy.

It was high time. On a wider-scale, a two-fold diplomatic setback has meant that India had to move strongly because supposed friends did not line up at her side.

It's said the trigger for the emergency declaration was a private warning the Soviet Union would have to stand by China. After that, Pravda endorsed the unacceptable Chinese truce offer: talks after each side withdraws 12.5 miles from the line of effective control.

India had counted on Russia. But Mao disliked Soviet friendship and aid to his major Asian rival. Maintaining that the Communist bloc must stick together, he apparently forced Khrushchev's hand. Reported recent modifications in the Soviet stand cannot conceal the initial attitude, and India knows it. Nehru now hopes the Soviets will remain neutral. It's all he can ask.

(Basically, the high altitude war is a battle between Asia's giants for continental supremacy with the allegiance of half the world's population hanging in the balance. The question is simple: who will be the dominant power in Asia is a generation? India cannot afford to come out second best, and the war effort is geared to prevent such a disaster.)

AT THE SAME TIME, the so-called Afro-Asian bloc of relatively old "non-aligned nations" has failed to rally to India's side, whether or not this would in fact make any difference. Rather than coming out behind an aggrieved India, the bloc has concentrated on a peaceful settlement of differences.

(The settlement proposed by Egypt's Gamal Abdul Nasser is acceptable to India but not to China.)

Nasser has condemned Chinese aggressions, but Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah wrote to British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan decrying Western arms aid. And Indonesia, already on bad terms with India, has kept quiet.

The reason for lack of real support seems clear: because of psychological and historical experience, the bloc can hang together against Western imperialism. But by the same token, it has no particular feeling about the Communists.

This has left, in essence, only the West, and it is there India has had to turn. She's turning cautiously, and all the arms arriving

now presumably will be paid for some day or returned. But Western speed and easy financing are in fact a form of aid.

The longer the action, the more India will have to rely on Western aid, and ties will grow. More arms shipments are in the cards, and India has requested aid for production. Training cadres may be provided. There should be less difficulty than usual in Congress next session about increasing economic aid, little different than actual military assistance in a limited war situation.

INDIA ISN'T abandoning her non-alignment policy. It still serves legitimate national interests and psychological desires. And a big change would probably provoke Russia really to back the Chinese. India, in short, is not becoming a Western puppet.

But the facts are the West stood by India and India felt the Chinese whip. Her heightened sense of international reality cannot help but change the slant of her non-alignment. It will also strengthen the hands of India's pro-Western politicians, of whom there are many.

(The future may not be quite so simple however. It's speculated India will have to move into Tibet in order to safeguard her borders. But this would mean big war. Will the West support it? India cannot do it by itself.)

(Or would the West support air attacks on Chinese supply lines in Tibet? Nehru hinted this might be done when he said New Delhi might be bombed. It would be bombed in reprisal for use of the Indian Air Force, which is doing only transport duty right now.)

(And, if India gets powerful enough to push China around—which seems unlikely—what would she then do about Pakistan? Would the West let her settle outstanding differences by the sword?)

ON THE HOME front, the government has used the crisis to call out mass enthusiasm which must now survive over a long period. Recruiting depots are filled, and gallons of blood are being given. Women are giving their jewelry to the National Defense Fund, and even the poorest of India's poor are pathetically chipping in their meagre savings.

An American professor at Kerala's Trivandrum University has changed the names of his laboratory dishes from "China" to "India."

There is undeniable enthusiasm among the students, even if their demonstrations also represent a desire to skip a day's classes. At my college, students gave up a "hall day," the year's biggest event with expensive entertainment and fancy food. They'll give the money to the defense fund. (The mixture of reasons unfortunately may also mean the proposed universal military training will make them pay even less attention than usual to studies.)

In orthodox Madras, Depavali, the Hindu festival of lights which features massive illumination and scads of fireworks, was noticeably subdued this year, according to residents.

THE PROBLEM now is to transfer this genuine national feeling to more prosaic ends. Increased popular enthusiasm for community progress programs and agricultural extension programs, for instance, would enable India to realize a great part of a potential and absolutely essential fivefold increase in food production. It's been lacking so far.

Since the days of the Freedom Movement, India unity has sagged. Hopefully, the negative anti-Chinese feelings can be transmuted into a more positive allegiance to a greater India, rather than to a particular language-cultural-geographical region. Hopefully, the collective national breast beating now going on can be changed to a new and greater sense of purpose and progress.

One Chinese motive may have been to drain India's resources and divert attention from important internal problems. But if Indian national sentiment is really mobilized behind national advance, India may thereby turn the development corner and show that the Chinese, threw history's biggest

boomerang. This would be immensely more important than any and all changes in foreign policy.

What precisely is China up to? It's hard to say of course, but a prime objective is probably this attempt to set back fatally India development. Democratic India's failure to develop would mean a real ideological triumph for China, whose Marxism would clearly become the "wave of the future." It would also mask China's own failures and distract discontent at home.

An India setback would weaken India's prestige and stabilizing influence in Asia, and open the road for Communist subversion and expansion. And it would be a shot in the arm for Mao's militancy, current cause celebra of his estrangement with the apparently easier-going Kremlin.

A LOOK at the map indicates China could be aiming at a good deal more. The most limited interpretation is that she will use her NEFA conquests as a gambit to gain title to Ladakh, whose resources and roads she values. India has always conceded the Chinese case in Ladakh may be partially valid, and this is the opening wedge.

Or the Chinese may want to keep Ladakh and also stay put in NEFA. They would remain a continuous and diverting threat, even if they did nothing else.

They could drive further, and after a relatively short downhill march reach Pakistan and cut off the Indian state of Assam and some special territories. China may want Assam's oil, though its hard to see how she's get it home.

Looking Eastward, such a conquest could open the gate to northern Burma, and Burma is one of the world's leading rice exporters, a heaven to hungry China. The jungle terrain is tough, but it could conceivably be tamed. Prodigal of manpower, the Chinese may be the ones to do it.

LOOKING EASTWARD, China could use her NEFA conquests as a political and military springboard into Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal. Indian administrators Bhutan and Sikkim's military affairs, and both countries have pledged allegiance, but a strong Chinese force could change everything.

King Mahendra of Nepal has long been making anti-Indian statements and the Chinese are

building a road south to Kathmandu. The Chinese could replace the Indian pre-eminence in Nepal. And the stark fact is that southwestern Nepal is a scant 250 miles from New Delhi. Talk of a full-scale invasion of India is indeed alarmist at this point, but a Chinese communications network in Nepal would stretch all the way over the mountain barrier to the edge of the Gangeatic Plain, industrial and emotional heartland of India.

NEHRU'S GOVERNMENT obviously thinks the threat is serious. It's taking the Munich lesson that tons of prevention are worth megatons of cure.

Another reason for the strong reaction: it takes quite a stock to galvanize somnolent India and a combination of military reverses and slowing economic development call for massive action immediately. Politically speaking, Nehru has been under heavy pressure to do something like this, and now he has acted.

Related to this is the somewhat peripheral patter of Mr. Menon, whose numerous opponents took advantage of the crisis to force him out, probably forever. They argued the wrong policies were his, that he was responsible

for the troops being very poorly equipped (a fact more apparent in Western reports than Indian ones) and that his sarcastic presence was a disunifying force.

Menon is an old and tried friend of Nehru, one of the few intellectual and personal companions left for the 73 year old Prime Minister. His departure is a personal blow.

IN GERMANY or Great Britain such errors would bring down the government. In India Nehru rules unchallenged. But now that the buffer Menon is gone, the political situation may assume a new complexion. Nehru isn't going to be forced out tomorrow. His power and popular support are too great and anyway the Congress leaders too are committed to his policies. But there will likely be a new set of political dynamics in India whose effects are shrouded in the future.

But the most presently critical developments are India's new appreciation of the world and, the more important, new national spirit.

Of course, what happens along these lines depends on India's success.

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