

Indian Journalist Traces Janata's Anti-Nehru Policies

The following are excerpts from an article which appeared in the Aug. 15, Independence Day issue of New Wave, a leading Indian weekly newspaper. The author, Girish Mathur, a well-known Indian journalist, presents a most insightful analysis of the current debate in India on the policies of national development to be followed.

INDIA

Mathur presents a cogent argument on the continuity of the "anti-Nehru" forces in Indian politics, those persons and groupings who now seek under the Janata regime to reverse the pro-industrial, pro-science development policies of the Nehru era. The author convincingly links the anti-Nehru stand of the present Home Minister Charan Singh, the leader of the anti-growth bloc in the government, and his allies in the ultra-communist Hindu paramilitary organization, the RSS, whose efforts to take over the Janata party are an issue of great controversy, with the anti-Nehru stand of the segments of Indira Gandhi's emergency government centered around her son, Sanjay Gandhi.

The article is timely reading, for at this moment, many of the institutions created during the Nehru era for the advancement of scientific and technological and industrial progress are being dismantled by the Janata government. Most recently, the Center for Scientific and Industrial Research was slated for closing, a move which is being protested by leading scientists, political leaders, and the opposition Congress and Communist parties.

Reversal Of Nehru Policies: Why Charan, Jana Sangh Follow Sanjay Line

The task left unfinished by Sanjay Gandhi has been taken up by the RSS wing of the ruling Janata and its current (even if temporary) ally, Charan Singh. Reversal of what has come to be known as the Nehru path had received a new thrust the day the emergency was declared. The RSS wing and Charan Singh cannot claim to be the innovators in this field. Even their anti-Nehruism is not quite original; most of its elements can be found with all their crudity and vulgarity in the pronouncements of Sanjay Gandhi who was a more authentic spokesman of the politics and economics of the emergency than anybody else. This is not surprising either.

Nehru's greatness lay in that he combined in himself the functions of the Prime Minister and the leader of the opposition. A more severe critic of the status quo than Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru is yet to be born in our country. By combining the two roles he could forge a new kind of consensus; it was not a status quoist consensus but a consensus which generated the urge and the demand for change. Even if little change occurred in actual practise, the urge and the demand for change had their own dynamics.

While Nehru provided articulation to an ineffective opposition, the promulgation of the emergency meant the strangulation of all dissent. With the Nehruvian consensus, an essential element of the Nehru legacy, dismembered, the visits to Shantivan were reduced to a ritual. But the Congress, however emasculated under an authoritarian leadership, and the fifth Lok Sabha, even after it was crippled by the emergency, could not become the instruments of open anti-Nehruism — the Congress because of its commitment, and the fifth Lok Sabha because of its clear mandate.

One of the reasons for holding the Lok Sabha election in March last was to remove the disabilities from which anti-Nehruism suffered during the emergency. The pre-election trend of developments suggests that if the original emergency plans for the selection of Congress candidates had not been frustrated by the resignations of Jagjivan Ram, Bahuguna, Nandini Satpathy and K.R. Ganesh, and if, even after that, the emergency leadership had managed to form the government, anti-Nehruism would have been pursued with very great vigour....

Shastri's Gift

It is not the first time that anti-Nehruism is being given the status of official policy. The first occasion was when on assuming office Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri declared that even as Lenin did not follow Marx, Stalin did not pursue the line of Lenin, or at home, Gandhi did not follow Tilak and Nehru departed from the path of Gandhi, he was not called upon to pursue the Nehru path. Shastri followed this declaration with steps to undermine the legacy of Nehru.

Planning is one of its essential elements. Shastri gave planning a holiday. Public sector is a basic feature of Nehruvian industrial strategy; Shastri's correspondence with Bhupesh Gupta, released by the government, bears testimony to his attempts, though unsuccessful, to open the public sector to big business. Another legacy of Nehru is the comparative autonomy of state apparatus from the big business; Shastri invited the leaders of the

big business to participate in policymaking by constituting them in an advisory committee. He even tried to subordinate foreign policy to their needs through similar institutional means.

Today RSS and Charan Singh want to take us back to the Shastri days of the reversal of Nehru policies. Looking back, it is now clear that it was not accidental for the doors of the Prime Minister's residence to be opened to receive RSS chief Golwalkar and state functionaries to share the platform with him in those days. At least on one occasion Prime Minister Shastri even touched the feet of the RSS Guru and later explained that he was merely seeking a Brahmin's blessing; Vajpayee had then accompanied the Guru to the Prime Minister's residence.

After Shastri, the reversal of Nehru was continued under Indira Gandhi's leadership. Soon after Vajpayee's visit to Washington with a letter from Golwalkar describing U.S. aggression in Vietnam as *dharama yuddha*, Indira Gandhi made a pilgrimage to pay tributes to that butcher of Vietnam, Lyndon Johnson, as a man of peace. She was followed by Asoka Mehta who invited American investors — to use his phrase — “to open the womb of India” and undertake backseat driving of the Indian economy. Asoka Mehta is now in the Janata, and so are others of the “kitchen cabinet” who used to openly denigrate Nehru in the presence of Indira Gandhi to the horror of the Nehru faithfuls in her company.

The immediate results of the reversal of Nehru policies were the devaluation of the rupee and the accentuation of the economic crisis through which India was then passing; near anarchic conditions were created, and violence was generated. The Congress suffered heavy losses in the fourth general election, losing power in as many as nine states. The long-term effects should be evident from the fact that the impact of the world oil crisis on Indian economy would not have been as severe as it was if the oil exploration programme had not been suspended in Shastri's days and had Bombay High exploration begun ten years earlier.

Congress losses in 1967 and 1969 resulted in the split in the party with the promise of restoring the original Nehruite thrust of the national endeavour, and the correction of distortions which had created a number of imbalances. The changes that had taken place in the meanwhile called for tactical adjustments to advance towards strategic objectives. This promise accounted for the massive 1971 mandate. To the extent performance reflected the promise achievements were registered in many fields.

Achievements

The liberation of Bangladesh; the decisive end of the clash of arms with Pakistan in 1971; the Indo-Soviet treaty; the Simla accord, the restoration of diplomatic relations with China; the recognition of Indian power by such a power conscious U.S. Secretary of State as Henry Kissinger; Pokhran; Aryabhata; the performance of public sector; the fight against inflation; the cooperation with other developing countries in the fields of science and technology; a new climate of national unity in the country. These are, to name a few, no mean achievements.

The commitment to Nehru policies on the part of the post-split leadership however, was not unequivocal. This should be evident from the simultaneous dismemberment of the party structure, the preference for the politics of manipulation, the attempts to de-institutionalise politics, the opting for confrontation instead of accommodation, the reliance on bureaucratic methods where personal touch would have succeeded and a distrust of the forward-looking elements.

This also partially explains why Charan Singh did not find any contradiction between his opposition to the Congress on the one hand, and his second preference vote for Giri in 1969 and his subsequent dependence on Congress support to continue in office as long as he could, on the other. Is it then surprising that he was released during the emergency although he was in perfect health, and he on his part, was prepared to consider as late as early March this year the offer of support to him to become Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister in return for his support to the Congress at the Centre...

Sanjay's “liberalism” lay in his rejection of Nehru's strategy for industrialisation and his opposition to “controlled” (which meant planned) development, to state take over, and to public sector. Some of his “profound” statements are being repeated ad nauseam today and his policy prescriptions accepted as official policy. Asked for suggestions to bring down prices, he said, “Production. If production is increased, prices will fall.” This is all that the Chief Ministers had to say when they met two weeks ago to consider the price situation.

Asked about the reasons for the low rate of private investment, Sanjay Gandhi said “credit squeeze”, and now credit is being liberalized. He wanted whatever public sector undertakings were there to function “only in competition” and those that cannot compete “should be allowed to die a natural death”; already the decision has been taken that no preference is to be shown to public sector undertakings in the acceptance of tenders. About inefficient public sector units, he wanted their managers “should be taken out and shot”; this has yet to be done, although, echoing his views, it has been announced that *gheraos* would not be tolerated.

Ruralism

On the face of it there seems to be little in common between the ruralism of Charan Singh and the emphasis on industrial programme during the emergency, or between the RSS concept of Hindutwa and the secularism of the leadership which has been ousted in the last election. A closer scrutiny would show that the differences are not as basic as they appear, and that there is more in common between the two than visible on the surface.

To take first, Charan Singh's ruralism versus the emergency period industrial policy. When Charan Singh accuses Nehru of neglecting the village he is only trying to cover up the betrayal of the peasant masses by men like himself. All along his life Nehru held that the village could not improve without changes in the agrarian economic structure with particular reference to land reforms. But Charan Singh and his like inside and outside the Congress sabotaged any attempt to change the rural economic structure and the introduction of changes in land system.

Compelled by the situation the Indira Gandhi government had to take over wholesale trade in wheat as a first step towards state trading in agricultural produce. The measure met with stiff resistance not only from the followers of Charan Singh but also from the followers of the Congress itself. Congressmen themselves did not sell their wheat to state agencies. Indira Gandhi had to beat a retreat at the first opportune moment.

Thus the surpluses generated by wheat production continued to be cornered by the rich in the rural sector in collusion with the wholesale trade instead of these being utilised for rural development. The process of the rich becoming richer and the poor poorer continued in villages too. Charan Singh's ruralism is aimed at strengthening this system in which the rich have become richer by cornering all the benefits accruing from the measures taken so far for agricultural development and rural improvement.

Atrocities

During the emergency some anti-feudal measures were included in the 20-point programme. The motivation for this is not so important as the revelation made by the white paper on the misuse of the mass media during the emergency, that Vidya Charan Shukla had issued instructions for playing down these measures in the publicity drive. If these instructions reveal the true intentions of the emergency regime in regard to land reforms, Charan Singh's ruralism stands exposed by the callous stand he has taken on the question of atrocities on harijans.

By saying that the atrocities on harijans have been going on since time immemorial, that the entire society is responsible for these atrocities, or that there have been

less cases of atrocities in the three months since he came to power than in the same period last year, Charan Singh is only obfuscating the issue. The issue is not un-touchability. The issue is that the lands allotted to harijans are being taken back and the money-lender has returned to the village, and harijans are resisting both and getting burnt alive or killed in the process.

The allotment of lands to harijans or the abolition of bonded labour however did not mean that the emergency regime was more serious about land reforms than are Charan Singh and his supporters. The lands allotted to harijans were not the surplus lands of the rich farmers; they were the village common lands left after the rich had grabbed these lands. This is not what Nehru meant when he called for land reforms.

On the contrary, the anti-feudal measures included in the 20-point programme were part of the economic policy the other aspects of which found an advocate in Sanjay Gandhi. This policy had been forced on the previous government by the World Bank. The new government has accepted it willingly which is a feature distinguishing it from the previous government. But this policy runs counter to Nehru's emphasis on self-reliance, and the ruralism which Charan Singh advocates seeks to make India industrially dependent on the developed (neo-colonial) countries.

If the pursuit of policies aimed at undermining the national endeavour for self-reliance as visualised by Nehru makes Charan Singh a true successor of the emergency period anti-Nehruism, the ideological orientation of the RSS carries forward the emergency anti-Nehruism to the realm of ideology. The fact is that the Nehruite secularism of the previous leadership was proved by the emergency to be no more than a mask....

New Shifts In Japan

Japanese Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda last week announced a \$7.5 billion reflationary plan to be incorporated in the government's new supplementary budget. At the same time the Bank of Japan cut the discount rate to 4.25 percent in another step to stimulate Japan's domestic economy. Both measures are strongly supported by Japan's business leaders.

JAPAN

Despite this apparent consensus between Fukuda and business, a power struggle has ensued between Fukuda and his Atlanticist business supporters against the industrial forces in Japan centered around such giants as Nippon Steel and the Industrial Bank of Japan. The fight centers on the future of Japan's economy: will Japan push for a high-technology, development-oriented growth economy as industry and Japan's powerful Ministry of International Industry (MITI) contend or will the Japanese economy undergo a "structural reform" to

adapt to an era of "low growth" as Fukuda has publicly demanded?

The controversy surfaced last week when Fukuda announced that he wants to reorganize both the Construction Ministry and MITI along lines more "appropriate" to what he calls a low-growth era. Fukuda said he wanted a new "Energy Agency" which would be based on combining the Energy Department of the Industrial Section of MITI with the Atomic Energy Department of the Science and Technology Agency. The reorganization would virtually strip MITI of its postwar control over Japan's energy policy. Fukuda also called for reductions inside Japan's Construction Agency, a porkbarrel operation largely controlled by forces around ex-LDP premier Kakuei Tanaka.

Fukuda's moves coincided with the government's "compromise" agreement over Japan's nuclear facility at Tokaimura with the U.S. (See Energy Report).

A coalition of bureaucrats and LDP leaders led by LDP Secretary General Masayoshi Ohira and party faction leader Yasuhiro Nakasone, were quick to respond to Fukuda's challenge. Toshio Komoto, LDP leader, businessman, and ally of former premier Miki issued such a fierce attack on Fukuda that according to the