

Assam, and six semi-autonomous regions closely affiliated with the central government. All seven areas are largely made up of people from a different ethnic and cultural background than the rest of India.

Assam has been the principle focus of attention, as students are demanding that all "foreigners" (Muslims and other "non-Assamese") who entered the state after 1951 be immediately expelled. There has been widespread violence and economic dislocation wrought in the state, including the shutdown of oil refineries in the area that provide thirty percent of India's entire domestic oil production.

Backing up the Assam agitation are the demands for "independence" from the more tribal-based areas, such as Nagaland and Mizoram, where violence has also taken place. In all seven areas, brutal killings are reported every day.

Chinese backing for these political rebellions is so well documented that it is now common knowledge throughout India. Even radio broadcasts from China have expressed support for the rebels against the "repression" of the Gandhi government. Arms and money are also flowing into the area.

Recently a new element was introduced to the northeast situation when the Gandhi government revealed that the fanatical Hindu chauvinist organization RSS has become involved in the anti-government agitation. RSS was the leading constituent organization in the Janata Party government that came to power in 1977 in India, but which was routed in the national elections last year that returned Mrs. Gandhi to power. Nominally a "super-nationalist" organization, the RSS-dominated Janata government is known to have had extensive talks with China, Israel and South Africa while in power. All three of these nations worked together to develop nuclear weapons.

The northeast crisis has since December been a tremendous drain on the energies of the Gandhi government, due to both the economic impact and the danger to national unity and security. Following the recent elections, Mrs. Gandhi is expected to renew efforts for a negotiated settlement, all of which have been rejected up to now.

Strong economy needed

Overall, there is a widespread recognition throughout India that a strengthening of the national economy, nearly brought to its knees by the policies of the previous Janata government, is vital to counter the threats to India at this time. Short-term measures to get the economy moving are an immediate necessity. However, a long-term economic development plan to modernize the entire country is also an immediate priority, as this will enable India to become both a political and economic superpower for the cause of peace.

Exclusive Interview

Indira Gandhi talks to EIR about peace and development

On June 5, Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India, granted this interview to Daniel Sneider, EIR Editor-in-Chief, in New Delhi.

Q: I would like to start with the situation in Assam because it is very difficult to get an accurate image from the press as to what exactly is going on. I would like your assessment of the situation now and what the government's policy is.

A: Well, there is an agitation there against the so-called foreigners. Ostensibly they say it is against those people who have come into India from Bangladesh or from Nepal, but in actual fact it is working against some Indian citizens who have come from other states as well, and citizens of Assam who are completely Assamese, who have lived in Assam for generations. It is one of those chauvinistic things that come up every now and then.

India is a developing country, and development has been rather uneven. It is obvious that where there is industry it is much easier for that area to grow and for people to get more jobs. We have a program for developing backward areas and we have made progress in it. But nevertheless we don't reach all places, and business people don't like putting up an industry where it is going to cost them more, either by way of transport, or other things.

Certain areas that have remained backward have benefited less from our scientific advances and Assam is one of them. But it is not the only one. Eastern Uttar



Photo: Sygma

Pradesh is in the same situation. Large parts of Orissa are so, perhaps even more than Assam. Almost every state has an area which is not developed. That's why we made a list of backward areas and backward districts.

Now we have this problem of people coming in from both sides of Pakistan. But whereas the rush from West Pakistan [large migration into the West of India at the time of the 1947 partition—ed.] was a torrent or a flood right in one state, here it has been a more gradual process. Many of them were being persecuted there. We accepted them, and we were accepting them up until 1960-61, when the government of India did take a step and said that we have to do something about these people.

Tribunals were set up to see that people were sent back after that. When Bangladesh came into existence, we had no formal agreement but we more or less agreed that—not at my level but at the junior ministers level—that those who have come have come, but from now on we have to be very strict. However, some of the people who had been deported have come back because the border is not the sort of border you can totally seal.

Now, why has this movement come up at the time it has? This is rather curious, and also the manner in which it has arisen. The problem was there, everybody knew about it. It was the Assamese themselves who were not terribly keen at that moment on implementing a solution. The central government was reminding them about this problem. They did not bother about it in the Parliamentary elections in 1977; they did not bother about it in the

assembly elections in 1978. Then, when the Janata government fell in Assam, a part of the Janata broke off and called itself the Assam Janata. Now that is the moment when this started. Now the Assam Janata people feel that it was those who had gone out, and whose government had been defeated—they are the ones who started this, thinking it might help them out.

It is not possible to say whether this is true or not, but this is the report, because the agitation was on for some time before our government came in, a minimum of months or so. This was the report we got when we came. By that time it had already spread.

This sort of thing, if you deal with it in the beginning, is much easier. Once it has spread, it becomes more and more difficult. Now, why it has popular support, is that the feeling is being spread among the people that if you throw out all of these people, then you will get more land, you will get more jobs. This is not going to work out that way in fact, but it is something that can arouse people's feelings, and may make them feel involved.

I've always dealt with all such things sympathetically, because I know that although such demands are unreasonable, there always is a base of genuine grievances. We are prepared to deal with the genuine grievance, which is one of economic development, the question of employment which they share with the whole of India. In fact, with almost the whole of the Third World, I would say. Nevertheless, something special has to be done for the northeast areas.

These areas do not have very good communication

and are in a difficult situation, even when you start development. It is a longer process than it would be on the plains. So, on that part of it, we took action immediately. We set up a committee of ministers. This does not mean putting off something, as some people think when you name a committee you put the problem off. Our experience was that Jammy and Kashmir had raised the same problem—things not being passed quickly by the center [central government—ed.].

During my previous regime, we had set up a small committee and any economic issues that came up, all of the people met immediately and took a decision on the spot, and they were very happy with this. When I came back, the first thing they said to me is, 'Look, this was not done in Janata time, so can you revive this?' So, we thought we would do a similar thing in Assam. Instead of decisionmaking from file to file, office to office, everybody meets, and either they say yes or no, but it's definite. Of course, there are proposals for specific projects which we are also looking at.

Now, with regard to the so-called foreigners, we want to make a clear distinction that those who have come after 1971, there is no doubt that they must all go. There is no controversy about this with any political party or with the Bangladesh government. The controversy starts about the others. The proposal made to the agitators was that, let us start this work. At the moment, nothing is being done, the tribunals are inactive, the local staff is not working. So, we wanted to start. While this process is going on, we shall meet simultaneously, to try to understand: a) the size of the problem; b) the human aspect. In theory, you can say that if somebody is born in India, he is an Indian citizen. But suppose you have old parents who were not born in India. What are you going to do, where are you going to push them out? We can't deal with them as statistics. We have to say that these are men, women and children and we don't want to keep a burden on Assam. But first, we must know the numbers, and we must know the type of problem. Then we must sit together and find a human settlement, so that nobody is harassed. I said to them clearly, do you want me to shoot these people? So of course, they said no, no. Then I said, where do they go? I'm not saying they shouldn't go anywhere, but it's something that has to be worked out. I can't just say I'm going to push them into Bangladesh if Bangladesh does not want them, or to any other state. So on these matters they (the students) have been really very unreasonable. They say no, you agree to this first, then we will see.

What happens when you agree to anything is that both of the political parties want to keep 1971 as the cutoff date. I have only taken 1971 as a starting point, not as a cutoff point. Then, somebody started talking about 1967, and immediately, the West Bengal govern-

ment and others started saying, 'Oh, she is doing something behind our back. She promised she wouldn't move from 1971.' So, it's extremely complicated from that angle, but it's not an insoluble problem.

Q: What about the question of foreign involvement?

A: Well, I was just coming to that. As I said, it is the general public who's involved, it is this kind of economic issue. And of course, they have done a lot of propaganda, that these people staying there means that Assamese culture is going to get drowned, which is not true. In fact, the people who are coming are being absorbed. They are speaking Assamese, they are not speaking their languages. In fact, in our census, we see that the number of Assamese speaking people should have gone down, but it hasn't. It has increased. So that far from drowning it, it has helped it blossom. Every other country does want new talent.

Now while the bulk of the students are also sincere, perhaps they have been affected by what is happening in other countries, and they feel that they should take the lead. From time to time they make a statement like, 'political parties are irrelevant.' And even in the last two days, they were angry that I met with the political parties to consult with them on the Assam situation. So that attitude is there. However, there are some other people. . . who are guiding those people, and who are motivating them, we don't know. But every time the students themselves have agreed to something they have gone back and one hour later have said, 'we are sorry.' They have made a suggestion to which we have agreed and then they have gone back on it. So this is what gives the feeling that there is somebody behind them.

Also, they seem to have large funds. In the beginning, some local people were giving funds, but they tell us they have not taken any money from them for many months. There is certain other circumstantial evidence and also previous experience. There is also a certain amount of rivalry there between groups.

Now, there are some elements who would like to introduce communal overtones. Some of them say it is the pure Assamese vs. the rest, and not specifically against the Bengalis (because) in British times there was no education in Assam, and only a few Assamese could go to Calcutta University. They were the ones who got educated. Almost all of the officials were Bengalis. So that feeling is also there. But now gradually, the Assamese are taking over from them. But most of our civil service cadres are rather mixed. They may be south Indian officials and we think that is a good thing for national integration.

Q: In terms of the communal element, I see in the press here some questions about the role of the RSS in partic-

ular, in terms of giving it a Hindu-Muslim character.

A: The RSS has been there, as everybody else. There is an anti-national element. It may be exceedingly small, but there are some people who bring out anti-Indian posters, and so on. Now, my grouse was that none of these people who are supporting the agitation—I am not accusing them of being anti-national—why don't they condemn that aspect of it, and those who are doing these things? But they are not. The RSS has been encouraging the agitation without providing a solution. And of course, even earlier their solution to it always is to have an exchange of population religion-wise, or something like that, which would be fatal to the unity and strength of the country.

Q: You have pointed out that this thing has accelerated somewhat in the period since your government came to power. Is there anything in looking at this which suggests a pattern of destabilization which perhaps may be similar to previous efforts that have taken place in the earlier part of this decade?

A: Those who are against us, they continue to be very virulently hostile. Now there is one thing to be hostile in your speech, or something, but it is another matter when you go beyond that. I don't know whether you have read the statement of the leader of one of the political parties when we won these elections. Now it has been a pretty close fight, some of our people have lost by only a couple of hundred votes, and some of their people have won by that. Now the contrast is that when they won, we did not say a word about rigging, although the victory was so

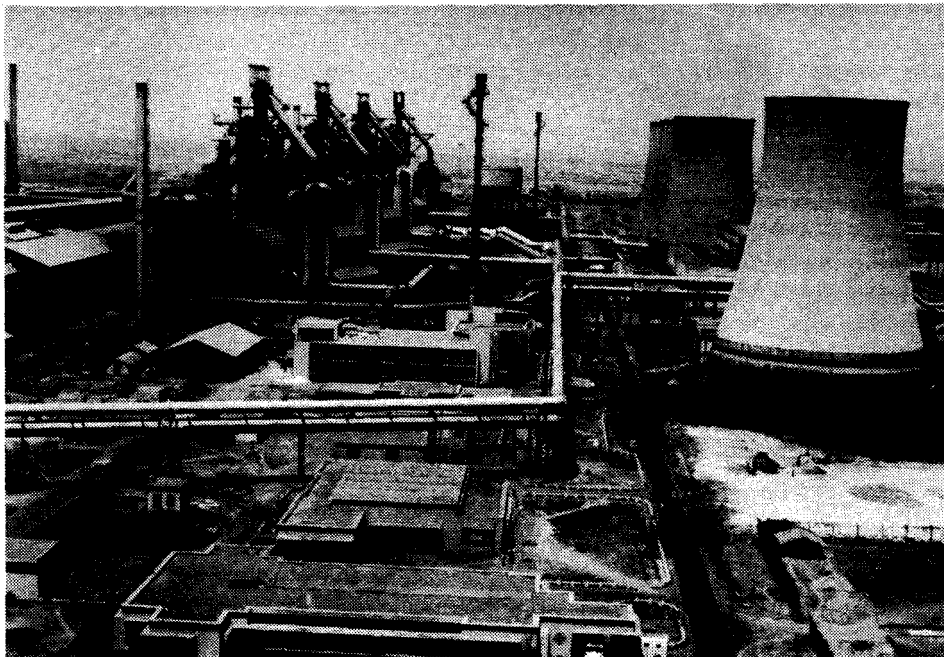
sweeping that it was not really believable. In some places, it was almost as though more people had voted than existed, and things like that. It is hard to imagine that in one place everybody would vote for the same candidate, and the other candidate would not get any votes. Anyway, this gentleman has said that now Parliament is irrelevant. Now you see that this is the sort of attitude that while they are winning the system is all right, but as soon as they don't win they start blaming the system.

Q: But also in terms of the foreign question. That was also on my mind.

A: The foreign element is very difficult to say, but I don't know if they have reconciled themselves to the changes here. Now certainly, most of the foreign press has not, and they continue their hostility. And, also some of the governments encourage elements which are so hostile.

One is the political hostility. You say we do not approve of the policy, and you put the facts. That is fair enough. But it seems some of them encourage people who are very viciously against, without having anything to back up what they are saying. And their statements are given tremendous publicity, whereas no reply is allowed.

Q: Let me take off from this press question. I have brought this copy of *Newsweek*. I don't know if you have seen this cover. This is the June 9, 'China's Military Liftoff,' coverage of *Newsweek*. But the implication both here and elsewhere is that a linkage is being made between the Chinese new military relationship with the



"I've always dealt with popular unrest sympathetically, because I know that although some demands are unreasonable, there always is a base of genuine grievance . . . which is one of economic development."

Durgapur steel plant, West Bengal.

U.S. and the recent Indo-Soviet arms deal.

A: Ours is not recent. I mean this talk was going on long before, even during the Janata time, because, you know, these things are not decided in a couple of months. We have finalized something that was on the anvil for quite a while, and I think most of it was done when Mr. Kosygin visited here in 1978.

Q: I am aware of that fact. What is your view on the Chinese role, the way the Chinese are viewing their role in Asia, and their relationship with the United States?

A: The Chinese want to strengthen themselves in every possible way. Now, if they can use the United States for this, they will use it. They *are* using it. The United States thought it could use China against the Soviet Union and they did. But it was counterproductive in this sense, that this is what has started the other reaction, because the Soviet Union is very much concerned about what they consider is a new movement to surround them. And, I think sometime or other the Chinese and the Soviet Union may make up. None of these things are permanent. We don't like anybody encouraging anybody.

Q: You have been speaking a lot in your campaign address, I notice even in your campaign in the Assembly elections, about the threat of a third world war, the possibility of the renewed cold war turning into a nuclear confrontation. What is your view of the importance of East-West detente for the developing sector?

A: Well, it is very important for us because we think that war is disastrous for anybody, but more so for countries like India, which desperately need peace to conduct our own economies. What I was saying is not that war is likely, but that our effort is to see that it is avoided.

Q: When President Giscard d'Estaing was here in January, there was a sense communicated both in verbal statements and in subsequent events of a common understanding between France and Europe and India and the developing sector of playing a role, perhaps even a role together, to preserve this kind of peace, and preserve conditions for development in the world. I'm wondering how you visualize India's role now, and how you see the European role in this period, particularly after the last few weeks. The Europeans, I think, have taken some very clear moves to preserve peace, at least in Europe.

A: Well, I think they also see that war is not in their interest. Each is worried about their own economy, how the international situation is going to affect their markets, their dealings with other countries.

Q: In terms of India's policy at this time, is there some sort of coordination, at least checking back and forth, as far as the initiatives that are being made from the Euro-

pean side, in the Middle East, and so forth?

A: It is more a question of keeping in touch. We agreed with the French that we would keep in touch. In Salisbury and Belgrade, I met a large number of people, practically night and day. While they were concerned about Afghanistan and Iran, they were also worried about their own countries, their economic difficulties, prices, and also the North-South situation.

Q: Is there a link in your mind on the necessity of modernization in the developing sector and the preservation of peace?

A: There is, of course, a link.

Q: As far as India is concerned, as far as the developing sector is concerned, how do you act to create the circumstances whereby large-scale development can take place?

A: Firstly, there should be peace and stability within the country, and then peace and stability around the country, and so on. Today's world is such that if there is a conflict anywhere, the waves are bound to touch most other countries. We in India are in a special delicate position, because in some ways we are among the poorest countries, and yet, we are also developed. So, we get the worst of both worlds, instead of getting the best. Take oil prices. In the more affluent countries, you can grouse about it, but they can pay finally whatever the price is. Now, we are not in a position to pay. Now, the developing countries, most of them also cannot pay, but their needs are very much smaller than ours. Now it is not such a large problem for them. For us, it is a very big problem. Now, our farmers are using large quantities of fertilizers and diesel for pump sets. They are average farmers, not just the big farmers. We are not wasting it (oil), but it is just that the size of the country and the size of the population creates a huge demand.

Q: You have just completed the Assembly elections and the Parliament opens shortly. What are the priorities of the government, particularly in terms of the economy?

A: First, to get the economy going. There has been stagnation. We have to encourage investment to increase production, we have to build up the distribution system for essential commodities, and one of the biggest bottlenecks was transport. We simply could not get coal to the factories, sugar to the markets, and things like that. Railways have improved, but still there is a gap. We have to take up again the special programs for the poorest and weaker sections of the population, because what happens in development—we are blamed for it but it is a natural law, there's nothing we can do—that whatever program you have, it is the better off people who benefit from it. If you have more technology it is those who can use that technology who are going to become richer. Now, if we

deny it to them, we are in a way cutting off our nose to spite our face. So, we have to balance it by doing something for the others. Although the benefit does seep through, as we have seen in the Punjab, that is, with the improvement of agriculture the rich farmers got richer, but so did the middle farmers and so did the smaller farmers, and finally the laborer. Their daily wage went up as well. So, it does percolate down.

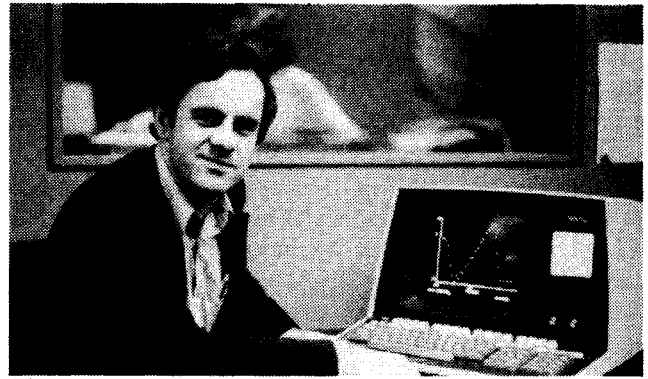
As I said, it is such a large country, there are large areas which have not benefited, and we must reform, where we give land to the landless. Then, in our twenty-point program we also propose building small houses for the homeless, and various things like that. If anything is lacking, we will take up new programs to provide it. Employment—we have certain programs, but at best they are patchwork, because employment can only come with greater development.

There is a constant quarrel going on. . . . On this again, the government immediately before mine felt that because we were encouraging industry, we were neglecting the farmers. This is not at all true, because most of our industry is based on agriculture or for the benefit of agriculture. In a place like the Punjab, bringing in machinery there has not led to unemployment. On the contrary, it has led to a shortage of labor. So all of these things are there.

The election has cut across different layers of the population in many places, but in this interim period, when we were not in power, caste-ism ruled very largely. It was always there, but had not played such an important part in politics. There is a general lack of will, a lack of thrust with everyone working together. Now, a lot of people who come from abroad, say that people here have been apathetic compared to what they see in Germany. So we have been able to build up that atmosphere. The year just before my defeat, people felt they were involved with India and everybody felt that it was their future, and it was not something in the air. So, we have to bring back that kind of feeling.

Q: Since I have been here, and talking to people in different parts of the country, there is an atmosphere of expectation.

A: Yes, you know it is the usual expectation, that somebody has come and something is going to happen from above, which simply cannot happen. At the most you can give a direction, you can give encouragement. What has to be done has to be done all along the line. If agriculture production in my time has doubled I did not go and dig the fields, but we gave a program. The farmers accepted it, and it yielded results. All that we can do is to try to help to the best of our ability, but they must have the feeling that they must take advantage of the programs that are made for their benefit.



The Fusion Energy Foundation's Dr. Uwe Parpart

Parpart tours India: 'Science is universal'

Special from New Wave by Leela Narayan

Beginning in mid-May, Dr. Uwe Parpart, Director of Research for the Fusion Energy Foundation, undertook a tour of India with Daniel Sneider, EIR's Editor-in-Chief. Dr. Parpart is also a contributing editor to EIR. Both men had addressed a conference May 6-7 in Frankfurt, West Germany, jointly sponsored by FEF and EIR under the title, "The Industrial Development of India—Its Potential, Its Necessity." That conference was devoted to a special programmatic report issued on the basis of the LaRouche-Riemann economic model, which outlined measures that could successfully achieve "economic superpower" status for India by the year 2020. The 40-year program, based on specific, high-technology development projects, focused on irrigation of agriculture in the Ganges-Brahmaputra region. It included an extensive treatment of Indian energy needs—emphasizing that nuclear power was absolutely indispensable—and proposed both educational and manpower development programs. Naturally arousing great interest in India, Dr. Parpart and Mr. Sneider were invited to undertake their current tour, with the goal of elaborating and clarifying the details of the programmatic proposal in the minds of Indian officials and the scientific community on the subcontinent. We publish here a report on Dr. Parpart's Indian lecture tour dispatched to EIR by Leela Narayan of New Wave, the influential Indian weekly newspaper.

Addressing the Indian National Science Academy and the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library here last