

crossroads

suppressed—all to accomplish an austerity drive against the urban, industrial sector of the economy.

The Singh program rejects the idea that continued capital-intensive industry will bring development and calls for creating handicraft, “tiny industry” in the rural areas, while trying to appease the rich farmers who form Singh’s personal base, particularly in northern India. It is not clear whether those farmers, who are now benefiting from industrial inputs like tractors, fertilizer, and irrigation systems, would tolerate the implementation of such a policy for long.

This World Bank perspective has in the past few days forced a new crisis for Singh—the forced resignation of his Finance Minister H.M. Bahuguna, a respected progressive Congressman who broke with Mrs. Gandhi in 1977 to form the Congress for Democracy (CFD) and then joined the Janata. Bahuguna refused to join Singh’s Lok Dal party, preferring to re-establish the CFD as an independent unit in the elections, with the possibility of an arrangement in certain areas, particularly the crucial northern region, with Mrs. Gandhi’s Congress.

The departure of Bahuguna will result in a crisis for the left, who are now supporting a Singh without even the fig-leaf of a progressive cover. For the CPI in particular, which has traditionally aligned itself with the nationalist leadership of the Congress, this is a difficult dilemma.

Decision for the Electorate

Over the next two months or so the battle will be waged before the Indian masses, an amazingly politicized populace despite its mass illiteracy. The proverbial “largest democracy in the world” will exercise its mandate—despite persistent rumors likely coming from Singh’s people of a “postponement” of elections—in a vote which is sure to have great strategic impact on the international situation.

Exclusive Interview

New Wave’s Ganesh speaks about India

Ganesh Shukla, editor of the Indian newsweekly, New Wave, granted this interview to the Executive Intelligence Review. Although Mr. Shukla toured the United States—and now Europe—with an eyewitness report on the holocaust perpetrated in Kampuchea by the Chinese-puppet regime of Pol Pot, he focuses his attention here on the political situation in India.

Q: *With the downfall of the government of Moraji Desai and then his successor Charan Singh, India now faces national elections again, to be held in the end of December. How do you see the situation shaping up and what are the issues of the campaign?*

A: Now, after two and a half years of nongovernment by the Janata Party, the issue in India today that is being debated is whether India will have a stable national government or not. Right now, Mrs. (Indira) Gandhi has become the focal point of the national election campaign because the broad masses of the Indian people think that she alone is in a position to provide a stable and development-oriented government that will be able to restore the traditional Indian political system.

Q: *What do you mean by India’s traditional political system?*

A: This means that India returns to the policy of economic development, in a planned manner, returns to a policy of justice to the weaker sections of the populations, restores India’s foreign policy of independence, peace, and nonalignment, and takes its rightful role in the world again. This embodies the basic nationally accepted political system of India since Independence, as it was defined by Jawaharlal Nehru.

Q: *How do you see Mrs. Gandhi’s prospects for winning?*

A: The climate is very favorable for Mrs. Gandhi.

Q: *That’s quite a change since her defeat in 1977. What has happened since then?*

A: In 1977, Mrs. Gandhi was defeated not because of the emergency period that she imposed on the country, but due to the failure of the government to understand the World Bank game and to reject the policy framework that the World Bank put forward for India. This failure was reflected in the government’s giving second place to development strategy and giving first place to population control. The World Bank recipe was that

family planning is the greatest development input into the Third World. Many operations of a political nature were thus able to be run against the government in the year before the elections because of this weakness. Mrs. Gandhi became alienated from a large section of the population, and in the implementation of program quite a few excesses were committed which were taken advantage of by Mrs. Gandhi's detractors.

But, during the last two and a half years, people have experienced in their own lives that those who were against Mrs. Gandhi in 1977 were not their friends, but their enemies. The Janata government's failure to maintain law and order, to provide physical protection for the weaker, exploited sections of the rural poor, its incitement of communal insurrections, and abnormal price rises—these things hurt the people all over the country. Moreover, the Janata government have an entry for tendencies to once again appear in the country which are threatening the unity of the people and the territorial integrity of the country.

Naturally, people feel that Mrs. Gandhi, who carries the heritage of the Indian freedom movement, is the only available national political leader who can govern in this process.

Q: With the fall of Moraji Desai, it would seem that the Janata coalition party has really fallen apart. Can you explain what the Janata party actually was and why it didn't work?

A: The Janata was essentially a conglomerate of half a dozen political parties and factions with nothing in common except their hatred of Mrs. Gandhi. It represented an alliance of the trading community, led by Jan Sangh, and rich farmers of a certain caste, whose spokesman was Charan Singh. This was always a very tenuous alliance. When the Janata came to power, the farmers were the greatest losers—because of a certain fall in food prices and a concurrent rise in prices of manufactured goods, including fertilizer and the daily necessities of the farmer. That is the real reason for the split between Charan Singh and Desai, in addition to their own hunger for power. But the way the internal party struggle was carried out has created only disgust among the broad masses of people.

Q: The Congress Party, the party identified with the fight for independence and the tradition of Nehru, has also split into the Congress-I party of Mrs. Gandhi and the Congress-U. How does this split in the nation's most important political party effect the election process?

A: After March 1977, many people in the Congress Party felt that Mrs. Gandhi was no longer a vote-getter for them, partly out of fear of the new government and partly because of opportunism they thought they would gain by denouncing and ostracizing Mrs. Gandhi. They were also highly influenced by the mass media, which

in Delhi was claiming that Mrs. Gandhi had ceased to be a figure of consequence.

In that process they went too far, and now they are finding it very difficult to retrace their steps. But the rank and file and the middle level leadership of the Congress Party have rallied behind Mrs. Gandhi. What is now known as the Congress-U is really an organization of leaders, but without cadre and without mass following. So when people think of the Congress Party, they think of the Congress that Mrs. Gandhi is leading.

Q: How do the left parties fit into the national election process—I'm speaking of the Communist Party of India and the Communist Party Marxist?

A: For decades, the one issue that has been dividing the Communist Party in India was the party's attitudes toward the Congress Party and toward Nehru in particular. In 1964, on this issue, the Communist Party was split—one party constituting itself as the Communist Party-Marxist. As far as the CP-M's policy is concerned, it is totally opposed to the Congress. It believed and still believes that it stands to gain from social and economic chaos.

The position of the CPI is different, both in its programmatic outlook and in its tactics. The CPI and the Indian National Congress Party, led by Mrs. Gandhi, have been working together in the legislature and in Parliament and in various mass forms. The CPI rightly supported the proclamation of a state of emergency by Mrs. Gandhi. It had a correct understanding of the danger to which the country was then exposed in 1974 and 1975. However, in the post-election period after March 1977, a section of the CPI felt the same way as some of the leaders of the Congress Party, who are now Mrs. Gandhi's determined opponents. Because of the CPI's failure in March 1977 to win a sufficient number of parliamentary seats, a sectarian tendency has emerged which in practice reflects the same kind of attitude as the CP-M. Therefore, the CPI is today running after the slogans of "left and democratic unity" with the CP-M, on the one hand, and the Charan Singh-type ruralists on the other. This deviation has left some sections of the party to make ideological concessions to the CP-M, and that will be quite damaging to India's democratic movement.

Q: Given this panorama of the Indian political process, how exactly do you assess Mrs. Gandhi's strength going into the national elections?

A: Her strength lies in her appeal to the poorest of the poor who constitute nearly 20 percent of the population—the harijan, untouchable caste, and in her appeal to the adivasi, the tribalists, and the religious minorities of Muslims and Christians. Then she has the support of the farmers, both the poor and the middle-level farmers,

and has the support of a quite a good section of the urban middle class.

By the urban middle class, I mean white-collar employees, engineers, teachers, scientists, and these comprise a very powerful section of the population in formulating policies and programs for India. They have come around to Mrs. Gandhi.

A good section of the industrial working class and trading class are not reconciled to her. There are certain castes, which have had a good share in the power in the states in the past two years, who are also hostile to her. But whichever angle you look at it from, Mrs. Gandhi is the accepted national leader in India.

Q: *What will a victory for Mrs. Gandhi mean for India?*

A: It will mean a restoration of the traditionally accepted national policies in both the internal and external spheres. It means a return to a development orientation, and the relaunching of a political fight for the New International Economic Order as the crucial issue of the Nonaligned Movement. Mrs. Gandhi was one of the initiators of the New International Economic Order, and she knows what it means.

Her victory also means a decisive rebuff to Anglo-American imperialism on the Indian subcontinent. She is in sympathy with the fight of the Vietnamese and wherever she speaks, she tells the Indian people of the holocaust in Kampuchea. But her victory will be a blow to the entire policy being pursued by the Anglo-American circles. By this I mean the murder of Mujib Rahman (head of state of Bangladesh), the murder of Bhutto, and the destabilization of Indochina. Her victory will begin the reversal of this policy, because if India starts acting as it should, it gives the needed strength to the fight for development in Southeast Asia and Asia. That is why many nations in Asia are looking toward the elections in India.

Q: *And lastly, Mr. Shukla, what will be the role of your newspaper, *New Wave*, in this process?*

A: Since we came into existence in 1971, we have been fighting the International Monetary Fund's design to stop India's development, to destroy India's sovereignty. We are working for a broad alliance of prodevelopment forces in India to facilitate the industrial development of the country and all around the world. And irrespective of who the power may be, we have been and we continue to point out, in a real progressive sense, the programs and policies that serve our nation best.

We know that winning the elections is not an end in itself, but just a means. If Mrs. Gandhi wins, as we hope she will, she will have to create a new consensus in the country as Nehru had created during the fight for independence, that takes this nation forward. She is very much conscious of it, and in this process, *New Wave* has a very significant role to play.

'For stability, unity and progress' in India

*Following is the text of a statement on the political situation adopted by the All India Congress Committee (AICC-I) on Thursday, Sept. 14. This text originally appeared in the progressive Indian newspaper *New Wave*.*

With the dissolution of the Lok Sabha a tragic chapter, dismal and dark in the history of the country comes to an end.

The national scene left behind by the Janata Party is one of desolation, distress, disgrace and disintegration. The economy today is in a shambles. Galloping inflation, spiralling up with irresistible momentum, has overtaken the country. Working class cost of living index has shot up to 354, the highest ever. Money supply has reached an appalling figure of 33 thousand crores, the highest ever. Industrial growth, on the negative side, has reached the nadir, the lowest ever. Unemployment figures have soared to the highest levels ever. Essential commodities are in short supply so that the country has become a paradise for hoarders, black marketeers and smugglers. The self-sufficient structure of our economy, so carefully built up over the years, has been left badly fractured. The damage done to our economy has reached the point of irredeemability.

On the social front the nation is in deep crisis. Divisive forces and sectional passions have taken the upper hand. The minorities, the weaker sections, the Harijans and the Adivasis are living in acute distress and under growing sense of insecurity. The standard of public conduct and political morality has never been so low. The atmosphere is thick with vile and vicious charges traded against one another by Cabinet Ministers and quietly withdrawn on convenient reconciliation, with the result that the system itself is facing a crisis of confidence. The breakdown of law and order has become a regular feature of life. Security to life and property no more seems to be an obligation of the Government. Added to this, regional conflicts are assuming menacing dimensions.

Policy reversal

On the international front the nation has lost its leading position of respectability and moral authority. Even in the non-aligned movement of which India was one of the founding fathers, the country has come to play the role of a back bencher. The reversal of the policy of the nonalignment with the spurious phrase of "genuine nonalignment" has cost the country dearly. Despised by