

South Asia

India under cloud of Pakistan war danger

by Daniel Sneider, Asia Editor

The past year has bred a new hot spot, one fraught with extreme danger, which may emerge in next year's front pages: South Asia, where, in the shadow of Afghanistan, war clouds are gathering over Pakistan and India. We may witness another war between India and Pakistan, a war which could include the first use of nuclear weapons since World War II.

The dangers in the South Asian subcontinent are not principally caused by the Soviet intervention into Afghanistan, as U.S. policy-makers contend. They are instead the result of the combined efforts from *outside* the region to militarize the area and make it an arena for superpower confrontation. The immediate trigger is the decision of the U.S. administration to provide an unstable, unpopular military dictatorship in Pakistan, one known to be engaged in a semi-clandestine effort to achieve nuclear weapons capability, with a massive infusion of sophisticated U.S. arms.

The Reagan administration's policy toward South Asia essentially picked up where the Carter-Brzezinski policy left off. Brzezinski, who distinguished himself during a visit to Pakistan by melodramatically standing at the Khyber Pass and pointing a Chinese-made machine gun at Afghanistan, had made an earlier offer of arms aid to Pakistani military dictator General Ziaul Haq, an offer rejected as "peanuts." During the visit of James Buckley, Undersecretary of State for Security Assistance Programs, to Pakistan in the spring, the deal was considerably sweetened. By the end of the year, the U.S. Congress approved, in principle, a six-year, \$3.2 billion aid package which included the sale of tanks and the most sophisticated jet fighter in the NATO arsenal, the F-16, a plane capable of delivering nuclear weapons.

The Reagan administration, like the one before it, sold the deal as an effort to bolster Pakistan against the Soviet Union and to build up Pakistan as a military linchpin in the U.S. "Rapid Deployment Force" defense of the Persian Gulf region. In reality, as numerous critics pointed out, the Pakistani regime itself admitted that it

has no intention to go to battle against the Soviet Union, but rather seeks to bolster its aggressive capability vis-à-vis neighboring India, against whom 80 percent of all Pakistani armed forces are currently deployed.

The Indian government of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi repeatedly and forcefully argued that at minimum, the U.S. move would fuel a dangerous and economically wasteful arms race in the region, and threatens to lead to war. As Mrs. Gandhi told *EIR* in an exclusive interview this September: "Our concern is not just our own concern. We see the problem in the larger context of world confrontation."

Since the awesome January 1980 electoral victory which returned Mrs. Indira Gandhi and the Congress party to power, India has reasserted itself. Mrs. Gandhi's role as one of the most experienced statesmen in world politics has been clear during the past year at such events as the Cancún North-South summit, where the Indian leader was a spokesman for all developing countries. During many trips abroad as well as at home, Mrs. Gandhi has repeatedly sounded the theme of the danger of war and the necessity of world economic development to ensure peace.

Mrs. Gandhi's personal leadership is based on the importance of India itself, a nation of 700 million which despite severe problems of poverty has achieved significant industrial and scientific/technological development and agricultural self-sufficiency. While the World Bank and the IMF this past year promoted the model of Communist China, democratic India's achievements are not considered noteworthy or praiseworthy. Yet India has demonstrated the ability to make steady progress while maintaining the largest democratic republic in the world.

Over the past year, with relative political stability prevailing under the Gandhi government, significant progress has been made to restore forward momentum to an economy debilitated by the anti-industrial, ruralist policies of the previous regime. Record harvests are anticipated, and large jumps in industrial production and infrastructural performance have been achieved.

The Indian government is looking forward to the fruits of massive investment in oil exploration. Several new and potentially major oil fields were discovered this past year, raising hopes that by mid-decade India could be largely free of the burden of oil imports which currently eat up 80 percent of export earnings. That, combined with ongoing development of nuclear energy, could fuel a major expansion of Indian industrial strength, bringing India closer to the status of a major world economic and political power in the next century.

All this, as Mrs. Gandhi has pointed out, is what is threatened directly by the dangers of war in South Asia, by a reckless and nonsensical fueling of a new "hot spot."