

From New Delhi by Susan Maitra

Danger signals in Kashmir

Muslim fundamentalist forces continue to foment separatism on the Indian subcontinent.

The strategically important state of Jammu and Kashmir is simmering with separatist violence after a stormy election campaign in June. Dr. Farooq Abdullah, chief minister and leader of the ruling National Conference Party (NC), has become the focus of attention as anti-India elements gain ground.

The June election was considered a success for Mrs. Gandhi's Congress-I Party, which won 26 of the 76 seats it contested, more than doubling its strength from the 11 seats it won in the last election.

The election results followed the longstanding communal division of the state. Congress-I did extremely well in the Hindu-majority Jammu, and Dr. Abdullah's party virtually swept the Muslim-majority Kashmir Valley. To cash in on Muslim votes, Dr. Abdullah openly used separatist elements, including his political alliance with Mirwaiz Maulvi Sarooq, a fundamentalist Muslim rabble-rouser who had on more than one occasion pledged his allegiance to neighboring Pakistan.

Since Jammu and Kashmir borders China, Pakistan, and the troubled Indian state of Punjab, the growing instability has caused much concern in New Delhi. During October, a series of bombs exploded in Srinagar, the state capital located in the Kashmir Valley. It has also been reported that Pakistani flags were hoisted in some parts of the Kashmir Valley to celebrate Pakistan's independence day on Aug. 14, a signal of defiance unique in the 36-year history of the state.

Recently Indian newspapers re-

ported that an armed training camp has been established inside Jammu and Kashmir near the Punjab border. This camp has been set up primarily to train Sikh extremists and Khalistani separatists to carry out guerrilla warfare against the Indian government.

New Delhi is exerting more pressure on Dr. Abdullah, asking him to curb the communal hostilities erupting in the state. So far, Dr. Abdullah has limited himself to verbal condemnation of these anti-India acts. Dr. Abdullah recently said of the fundamentalist political party Jamiat-e-Islami and its student wing, Jamaat-e-Tulaba: "It is unfortunate that these leaders who swore allegiance to the Indian constitution during the recent assembly elections are now questioning the finality of the state's accession to India."

Some now consider that Dr. Abdullah is deliberately defying the central government's directives and posing himself as the supreme authority in managing his state's affairs.

Last summer, fresh from his electoral victory over Mrs. Gandhi's Congress-I party, Dr. Abdullah went to the troubled state of Punjab and met leaders of the Akali political party there who are openly defying the central government. Besides posing for photographs with the Akali leaders, Dr. Abdullah called for increased autonomy for the states. Last month he hosted a meeting of all non-Congress-I party leaders, which has now come to be known as the "Srinagar Conclave," in Srinagar and put himself forward as

a national leader. In a demagogic attack on Mrs. Gandhi and the Congress-I, Abdullah accused Congress-I leaders of preaching communalism "under the shelter of India's tricolor flag."

Making political alliances with communal elements in Kashmir is a dangerous game. Since 1947, when Pakistani armed forces under the guise of tribal gangs invaded Kashmir and annexed what is known today as "Azad Kashmir," the state of Jammu and Kashmir has been torn apart by communal violence. Dr. Abdullah's father, the late Sheikh Abdullah, a leader with a strong base and personal rapport with the Nehru family, managed the state skillfully until 1981, but the fundamentalists built their strength with financial help from Saudi Arabia and Libyan dictator Muammar Qaddafi.

Today the fundamentalists of Jamiat-e-Islami have been given a free rein. Tulaba leader Tajmul Islam exhorts Kashmiri Muslims to work for the "liberation of Kashmir" from "Indian subjugation." He has vowed that the "prime objective" of the Tulaba is to "ensure that there was no non-Muslim in Jammu and Kashmir."

The fundamentalists are financially supported by organizations based in London, where Dr. Abdullah's spent his student days. These organizations, funded by Libya's Qaddafi and Algeria's Ben Bella, are calling for a worldwide revival of Islamic fundamentalism. Dr. Abdullah retains many official and unofficial contacts in high places in British politics. Last year, Edward Heath, the former British prime minister, and John Nott, then defense secretary in the Thatcher cabinet, took several days off while in India to pay a personal visit to Dr. Abdullah.