

## Report from New Delhi by Susan Maitra

### Beijing shift on India relations?

*Recent moves suggest Beijing may be trying to force the issue over the India-China border.*

**T**here is a lot of flux today in China, making it difficult to analyze any given event. But recent developments raise the question whether China's policy on the disputed India-China border, which constitutes a serious hurdle to rational relations, is not also undergoing a change.

As we have reported before (see *EIR*, Aug. 22, 1986), after annexing Tibet in the 1950s, in 1962 China invaded India and occupied a strategic chunk of Kashmir, which it still holds. While China also invaded eastern India, its forces were later withdrawn. Nonetheless, China never formally recognized the validity of the British-drawn MacMahon Line, which had been the effective line of control separating India's northeastern territory from China, and has kept that fact as leverage, while proposing that India agree to a "package" border settlement, ceding Chinese-occupied Kashmir. India has, so far, said no.

Seven rounds of negotiations in alternating capitals have taken place since 1981, and the onus is on Beijing to take the initiative for the next round in Delhi.

In December, Beijing took New Delhi by surprise when it reacted to the Dec. 11 decision by the Indian Parliament conferring statehood on the northeastern territory of Arunachal Pradesh, as provided for in the Indian Constitution, and lodged a threatening official protest. The move was illegal, China said, and a violation of China's territorial integrity, and furthermore, deeply hurt the feelings of the Chinese

people.

New Delhi rejected the protest, describing it as "clear interference in the internal affairs of this country." Since China had neither protested the establishment of the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) in 1954, or NEFA's elevation to the Union Territory of Arunachal Pradesh, China's outburst was more than "for the record." The irritation was compounded when China campaigned on the issue at the United Nations.

India has taken military precautions to ensure their ability to thwart any Chinese incursion when the high Himalayan mountain passes open in the spring. But there are strong hints that the latest Chinese provocations are not military, but meant to serve as a forceful reminder that China cannot abandon its formal territorial claims in the northeast, without an overall border settlement.

Within days of the incident, a seven-member delegation from the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee Liaison Department landed in New Delhi for a 10-day tour of India, invited by the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the CPM.

Welcoming the delegates at a public reception in Calcutta, CPM boss and West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu raised the call for "initiatives on both sides" to rapidly settle the border dispute, a call raised at each stop of the tour.

"We are fully confident that friendship between India and China would blossom into more beautiful

flowers in the new historical perspective," beamed delegation leader Ziang Guang Hua, as he evoked the *Hindi-Chini bhai bhai* ("India-China brothers") slogan of the 1950s heyday of the Indo-China friendship.

CPM officials say the visit was a gesture of courtesy in return for junkets to China they have enjoyed. There is doubtless more to it. The CPM began as a fallout of the Sino-Soviet split, when it broke away from the pro-Moscow Communist Party of India (CPI). The party's relations with Beijing sank over China's invasion of India and, later, China's support for the Naxalite revolt, which nearly wrecked the CPM in the early 1970s. Only in 1983 were party-to-party relations established. But the CPM also has channels to Moscow, so the rift between the two communist parties of India has healed particularly in the last year.

The Chinese visitors toured West Bengal and Kerala, the two states where the CPM is a dominant political force, and also visited the Tamil Nadu chapter of the party. In Delhi, the group's engagements included a seminar hosted, ironically, by one of the most strident opponents of the "Sino-U.S. imperialist axis," former government adviser P.N. Haksar.

China's quiet courting goes beyond the CPM. A visit by senior editors from China's *People's Daily* is expected, to be followed by a return visit of leading Indian journalists. The CPI, the Congress, and most of India's political groupings have also been targeted in China's bid to broaden contacts in India.

Whether this also entails a reinvigoration of longstanding links to insurgent forces that continue to bedevil the northeast—from the Tribal National Volunteer guerrillas lately reactivated in Tripura, to the Ghorkalan agitators in West Bengal—is certainly worrying some.