

From New Delhi by Susan Maitra

The García-Gandhi connection

The two young statesmen together could provide the spark that would lead developing nations to a new world economic order.

By all accounts, the five-day state visit of Peru's President Alan García was a big success. It was, as official Peruvian sources put it, "an occasion for boosting relations between our two countries."

Unofficially it was certainly a good deal more, as will become evident in the coming months. As one Indian journalist put it, García and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi are the core of "the most exclusive group in the world"—the new, young leadership of the world, who, united "by their idealism, their dream, and an infectious optimism," have brought a new creativity and vision to politics.

García was the Chief Guest at India's 37th annual Republic Day celebration on Jan. 26. A prime mover with Rajiv Gandhi of the Non-Aligned Movement's AFRICA Fund initiative, García came to Delhi early for the Jan. 24-25 summit launching that project. In the subsequent days, he had extended private talks with the prime minister.

As important, Indian politicians, intellectuals, and ordinary citizens—generally blinkered and cynical about Ibero-America—were introduced to that far continent's most dynamic and bold statesman.

Though not generally known here, the personal and political chemistry between García and Gandhi has been a matter of record since at least the time of the Non-Aligned summit in Harare, Zimbabwe, when Gandhi sent a note to García, later made public by

the Peruvian foreign ministry, congratulating him on his speech. "Dear Alan . . . you said it all," the note began. Further, Prime Minister Gandhi had publicly endorsed García's policy on the foreign debt and International Monetary Fund (IMF), in response to a question from this magazine's Bangkok correspondent, during his recent visit to Thailand—a fact which the Indian press chose to ignore at the time.

But if the Indian elite has been in the dark about the potential of the Gandhi-García connection for helping bring about a new world economic order and an end to superpower manipulations, the Western oligarchy and their Soviet counterparts are not.

Terrorists attacked the Indian embassy in Lima on Jan. 26 and seized two news agencies, forcing them to send dispatches denouncing García's visit to India as a "maneuver" to catapult him into Third World leadership!

On Jan. 27, Dr. García was awarded an honorary Doctor of Law degree by Delhi University, at a ceremony attended by both the prime minister and the Indian vice president. Apart from AFRICA Fund summit, it was the only public event of the visit. In a speech on that occasion, and a subsequent exchange with the press, García said the best answer to the IMF was to pay no attention to its mistaken colonialist theories, and instead create world economic organization that would promote genuine development. He explained his policy of limiting

foreign debt payments to 10% of foreign exchange earnings, and emphasized the need for political unity in Ibero-America.

"The Indian model for modernization, based on a combination of modernity and spiritualism, could hold the key for the development of the 20 nations in the region," García said.

In Delhi, President García visited a milk-distribution center, part of India's unique cooperative dairy industry, and a local thermal power plant. India's dairy development model alone, he later said, could help his country reduce the cost of milk by 60%.

Indications are that García got a good sense of India's development strategy, and the crucial role of science and technology in nation-building. After visiting Agra (the site of the Taj Mahal) and the historic cultural landmark of Khajurao, García completed his tour in Bombay. There the Indian minister of state for science and technology (and former ambassador to the United States), K.R. Narayanan, accompanied García on a tour of the Bhabha Atomic Research Center. "We don't want to wait 25 years," García had earlier said, stating his government's willingness to get Indian assistance in the nuclear energy field, under a presently dormant bilateral science and technology agreement. García added that India could help make Peru take the leap in computers and other technologies the country urgently requires.

Besides talks between the Peruvian and Indian foreign ministers and extension of an invitation to Rajiv Gandhi to visit Peru, the only official business put on the table during the visit was the signing of a cultural agreement. It provides for exchanges of information, artists, and students between the two countries.