

Li Peng's bid for India falls flat in Delhi visit

by Ramtanu Maitra and Susan Maitra

Between the platitudes expressing China's unswerving support for national sovereignty, non-interference, and policies of socio-economic development, the visit of Premier Li Peng to India last month left Beijing's fang marks, including in the joint communiqué issued prior to the Chinese premier's return flight Dec. 16. The insertion of a paragraph in the joint communiqué expressing China's "concern about the continued activities in India by some Tibetans against their motherland" surfaced the arrogance of the Chinese mandarins. This came about after India's repeated official assertion that Tibet is an autonomous region within China, notwithstanding the bloody repression that China has launched against Tibet since 1959.

In addition, the talks between Indian Minister for External Affairs Madhavsinh Solanki and his Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen were a fiasco. It showed once more that China, despite its rhetoric of "mutual understanding and mutual accommodation," has no intention of veering away from its old principle: What is ours is ours and what is theirs is also ours.

This became evident when Indian Minister Solanki, expecting a bit of bonhomie from the guests in this generally friendly atmosphere, produced evidence showing that Pakistan is helping the terrorists within Kashmir and that the junta in Burma (Myanmar) is quietly passing on the arms supplied by China to the secessionists of the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) in the Indian state of Assam. Solanki's objective was to bring to Beijing's attention that the Chinese-supplied arms are, in fact, being used against India as low-intensity warfare. But Minister Solanki's concerns were given scant consideration, and, in the process, Beijing endorsed in effect the subversion of India's territorial integrity.

On the other hand, the Indians, if not exactly bending over backwards to please the Chinese guests, created a spectacle by arresting at random and baton-charging Tibetan demonstrators, many of whom were women and children. At least 10,000 security personnel belonging to the Delhi police were deployed to track down the ostensibly dangerous Tibetans. Reportedly, special commandos were ready for rescue efforts in case the Tibetans turned violent. The Dalai Lama, spiritual head of the Tibetan refugees who has been provided a "home away from home" by the Indian government since 1959 when Beijing unleashed its reign of terror in Tibet, was



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Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen: Belying talk of a Sino-Indian alliance against "OECD colonialism," he hawked Washington's policies to India

not allowed to enter Delhi. He was ostensibly considered a security risk to the Chinese visitors.

Notwithstanding, Prime Minister Li Peng did not, even out of mere courtesy, say even one good thing about India in his various discussions. During his talks with a group of hand-picked journalists, he said that he did not wish to imply that the Chinese system was better than the Indian one, but that "our system is better suited to China." The most derogatory remarks about the Indian system, however, came from the Chinese dissident, Dai Qing. She was sprung from a Chinese jail by U.S. Secretary of State James Baker III during his visit to Beijing recently. Dai Qing, now waiting with packed baggage to board a flight to Washington told the *Guangming Daily* that the Indians are not able to experience "true democracy," and that is why they involve themselves *en masse* in demonstrations and riots and fight each other.

Meantime Premier Li Peng was regaling a handful of journalists, describing the "multi-party" democratic system practiced in China. The Communist Party, said Li, was the ruling party leading eight other parties, which are not, however, in opposition. He described this set-up as a multi-party system under the leadership of the Communist Party.

Beijing appeasing Bush new order

The visit should have been an eye-opener for all those who were vigorously promoting a Sino-Indian entente to fight

the "colonialist economic and other policies of the OECD countries." Besides Foreign Minister Qian's championing of the Pakistani proposal for a nuclear-free zone in South Asia, which has also been highlighted by the recent visit of U.S. Undersecretary of State for Internal Security Reginald Bartholomew (see *EIR*, Dec. 6, 1991), the Chinese solicitude for Washington's concerns took precedence throughout, but came out in the open most sharply during the formulation of an agreement for cooperation in space sciences and technology.

According to the *Economic Times*, the leading economic daily published from Delhi, the Indian Department of Space, in its original draft had included cooperation in "launch vehicle technology." China, which recently signed onto the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) and which enjoys a \$12 billion trade surplus with the U.S. and direct investment to the tune of \$9 billion, was afraid that the cooperation could violate the parameters defined by the MTCR and draw the wrath of Washington. The Chinese balked even when the wording was changed to "satellite launch vehicle." When asked what the problem was, the Chinese were believed to have said: "The Americans will not approve it!" In the end, wordings were changed to "launch vehicle services" to the satisfaction of the Chinese delegation. So much for standing up to the new world order.

Notwithstanding Beijing's slavish attitude toward Washington, Li Peng was not short on rhetoric and posing as a world leader whose concern for the developing nations outstrips India's. In his tête-à-tête with a selected group of journalists—his scheduled press conference originally to be held at the Press Information Bureau was canceled ostensibly out of fear of the Tibetans—Premier Li Peng waxed eloquent. He said that India and China found similarities and even identity in worldview on the need to strengthen cooperation for peace, stability and development in an increasingly turbulent world. These empty words also found their way into the joint communiqué where, however, no mention was made of the massive debt that has crippled the developing nations. Instead, the inanities, such as "international economic relations are plagued by the intensifying North-South contradictions and widening economic gap," found their niche among the verbiage of "peace, security and stability."

Smile and say nothing

The joint communiqué had little to say about what will be done. It stressed the importance of an early political settlement of the Afghan issue and "expressed support for consultations and dialogues among the parties concerned for the establishment in Afghanistan of a broad-based coalition government acceptable to all parties, thereby restoring peace within the country and ensuring independence, sovereignty, neutrality and non-aligned status of Afghanistan." Having uttered this mouthful, the Indians seemed singularly incapable of pressing China to say something on the issues which

Dispute over the China-India border

While the dispute between India and China concerning the demarcation of borders all along the Himalayas, which led to the Chinese armed invasion in 1962 and routing of the Indian Army, is considered by outsiders as the key issue between the two nations, a closer look at China's role in subverting India's security will reveal a number of issues which have created Indian distrust of the Chinese leadership. The following is a partial list of issues on which China will have to come clean before such distrust can be overcome:

- China has become a major supplier of arms to Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Burma (Myanmar), and on one occasion supplied arms to Nepal. All these countries together surround India, and at least Burma, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka have expressed hostility towards India openly.

- A number of secessionist movements in the sparsely populated northeast India draw succor from the Chinese and Chinese-backed Burma regime for arms. These groups include the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), the National Socialist Council of Nagaland, and the People's Liberation Army of the Imphal valley in the state of Manipur.

- China has helped both Pakistan and Bangladesh to set up arms and ammunition factories and provided train

really concern India's security (see box).

On Kashmir, for instance, the joint communiqué carefully avoided the very mention of it, and, instead, took official cover under the usual diplomatic non-speak, such as: "The two sides expressed their support for the peaceful settlement of all bilateral issues between countries in the region through friendly consultations."

On the vexed border issue, even the mention of which could start a heated debate in India, Premier Li Peng took the short-cut by blaming history. "Being a legacy of the past, it would take some time to resolve," he told the gathering of friendly reporters. He also pointed out that China and India had agreed to "keep aside the difficult border question for the time being and not let it stand in the way of improving relations in other fields." The joint communiqué noted that the Joint Working Committee which was set up years ago to deliberate on the border question, "should step up its work in search of an earliest possible solution to the boundary question." It has also been mentioned in the same document that the next meeting of the Joint Working Committee may

ing to their militaries. There were frequent visits of military personnel to both countries.

- At least two of the northeast Indian secessionist groups, the ULFA and the Mizo Liberation Front (MLF), have been photographed in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Two chief ministers from Indian states have produced documents which show these terrorists have set up camps within Bangladesh, where the same Army officials who often visit Beijing are providing them with arms training.

- The secessionist groups in northeast India are bringing in more and more Chinese and Burmese heroin through well-established routes. The smuggled heroin, besides causing a large-scale addiction problem in Manipur, is dispersed all over northeast India by various secessionist groups. Some heroin and hashish is also finding its way into Bangladesh, again carried by the secessionists, and from there into international drug networks.

Recently China proposed a highway from its Yunnan Province through Burma to the Indian border. It is suspected that the highway, in the tradition of the old Silk Road, is part of building a "heroin road" to India for transit.

- China still does not recognize Sikkim as part of India, although in 1975, Sikkim, then a sovereign Himalayan kingdom, on its own volition and through a legislative act, joined the Indian republic.

- The Nepali Communist Party, backed by the monarchy, has begun a campaign to establish a "Greater Nepal." The Nepali Communist Party has close links with China via North Korea. The objective of the movement is to combine Nepal, Sikkim, and at least two northern hill

districts of West Bengal—all Nepali majority areas. The idea, which was formulated by the British ostensibly to protect their Indian colony from the "yellow peril," has the tacit approval of China, and perhaps of the United States.

Nepalis who settled in Bhutan, an independent mountain kingdom with very close ties to India, are getting drawn into this vortex and at least 12,000 Nepalis from Bhutan are presently encamped in India. Moreover, the Communist Party of India-Marxist, which governs the state of West Bengal and with which Beijing claims to have no separate relationship, has endorsed the Nepali "cause."

- Although Beijing maintains its "correct" position by urging both India and Pakistan to settle the Kashmir matter peacefully through bilateral negotiations, it nonetheless never fails to mention that Kashmir is a "disputed area"—a reference hotly contested by New Delhi.

- There is evidence, if not outright documentation, cited by the CIA and Indian intelligence, which implies that Beijing is helping Islamabad to develop nuclear weapons surreptitiously.

- India has rejected earlier proposals, as well as the present Pakistani proposal, to make South Asia a nuclear-free zone. Besides its argument that the solution only lies in global de-nuclearization, India has consistently pointed out that it has a long border with China, which has a formidable nuclear arsenal. During Premier Li Peng's six-day visit, his Foreign Minister Qian Qichen, in talks with his Indian counterpart, endorsed the de-nuclearization proposal that Pakistan put forward in the U.N. recently with backing by the United States.

be held early next year at Delhi.

Li's performance, however, has hardly raised hopes that the border issue would be settled soon. China has given not the slightest hint that it has any intention of accommodating India's requests. From Beijing's point of view, the settlement of the border issue will immediately take away the advantage that China holds by nibbling away at Indian security through various subversive activities. It is perhaps the same logic which induces Beijing to describe Kashmir as a "disputed area," and to refuse to recognize the accession of Sikkim to India.

There is no gainsaying that the Chinese reluctance to resolve the border issue also stems from the fact that, like the British and other western powers, Beijing believes that Delhi will not be able to hold on to its isolated northeast states for long, and the diverse ethnic and tribal identities that exist in these areas can be brought together to exert pressure on India.

It perhaps also believes that Ladakh, the eastern part of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, a good part of which is under Chinese occupation, will eventually become involved

in the imbroglio that engulfs the Kashmir valley now. All this can only help China to expand its territory. On the other hand, as long as India keeps its hands off Tibet, there is little that China gains from settling the border disputes.

At the same time, it is unlikely that China will create another "border incident"—*a fait accompli* to grab unmanned lands which was so very common in the 1960s and 70s. In 1987, the Indian Army, vastly improved over the outfit that the Chinese routed in 1962, moved its troops to the Line of Actual Control from the Hathung La to the passes like Bum La and Tulung La. The Chinese had rushed in a reinforcement in Tibet, but when faced with a better-trained and more experienced army moving with air support, beat a hasty retreat. The face-off at Hathung La had, in fact, laid the basis for the late Rajiv Gandhi's much-cited visit to Beijing in 1988.

As Premier Li's "legacy of the past," one Indian analyst pointed out that all borders in this region bear the same legacies. And, yet, China did not strike out against Bhutan, Nepal, or Burma and, instead, settled those border issues amicably.