

of things, and that their point of view is not brand new. . . . In any case, it seemed to us that the Schiller people are people of their convictions, and that the sentences they received from the American justice system are so incommensurate with the indictments (in this country, you'd have to at least dismember somebody, to get such a sentence), that these sentences really do smell of something very familiar. . . .

We wrote an article in which we presented all the arguments "for" and "against" LaRouche's theory, without embellishing its fantastical character whatsoever. And we took it to a certain democratic newspaper. Well, the article was rejected. It's worth focusing in on the arguments, because they highlight a quite special problem that has nothing to do with LaRouche but is connected to that social ailment which I mentioned above. Here are the arguments:

1) In America, they don't just put people in prison.

(Well, fine. That says it all. After getting such an argument, all you can do is to leave on tiptoes, pressing your hat to your chest. How good it is, that there are still Americans who have doubts about this! What if we had been answered like that in the 1970s or 1980s!)

2) We have a liberal newspaper. A neutral attitude to socialists is unacceptable.

(What a refined understanding of liberalism!)

3) This LaRouche of yours in the U.S. is just like our Zhirinovskiy. LaRouche is an American Kurginyan.

(May be, may be. . . . I am sorry. [English in original.] But Zhirinovskiy and Kurginyan are still at large, and feeling fine, aren't they?)

4) LaRouche's theories are similar to the views of Oleg Lobov, and any Lobovshchina is unacceptable to us, because, once again, we have a liberal newspaper.

(Well, LaRouche really has a bad luck!)

5) LaRouche is a crook. We know this very well. He refused to pay taxes, and that is a serious crime.

. . . Suddenly we felt that they were beginning to look at us as if we were some kind of communists, and they were already grabbing their mausers. Dear gentlemen, we did not want anything like this! God knows, we have no doubt, that we have a punitive system here, but over there it's fair and, what's the word?—civilized. We don't even doubt "the LaRouchies" evade taxes, in their spare time when they're not writing articles (well, maybe we doubted it just a little bit), and are thereby harming friendly America. But please excuse us for looking at things from our own belltower. You realize, that if we were to judge so strictly, then absolutely the entire government would have to be jailed, all the officials, and at least three-quarters of the population; and, as everybody knows, justice should be meted out equally spread all over the world. And then . . . 15 years for a 70-year old essay-writer is just not right, no matter what kind of a Kurginyan or Zhirinovskiy he might be. Don't you sense that? Going by the American movies, they deal more liberally with rapists and maniacs there. . . .

Economic deals bring India and Iran closer

by Ramtanu Maitra and Susan B. Maitra

Indian Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao's recent visit to Iran on Sept. 20-23, following his successful tension-easing trip to China, has brought into focus the possibility of a new strategic alliance in Asia. On Delhi's part, the search for new friends in Asia and efforts to reestablish old ties distorted by the vicious Cold War power game are as much attempts to play the role of a stabilizer in Asia as they are to find new economic partners in the region.

Rao's trip to Teheran was built up at the outset as a venture to further economic cooperation between the two nations. To that extent, the trip was highly successful. Besides the warm reception that the Indian prime minister was given, Iran signed two memoranda of understanding with India for cooperation on surface transport and transit facilities, science, and technology. Implementation of the memorandum of understanding, including laying a gas pipeline, setting up a chemical fertilizer plant, and technical cooperation in the field of oil and gas, are to be strengthened by giving a substantial filip to economic and trade ties.

The agreement represents a reversal of the noticeable hesitancy over recent years to move forward on economic cooperation. In the pre-Islamic Revolution days, the Shah of Iran was favorably inclined to increase trade ties, and India was a major trading partner in the early 1970s, although New Delhi kept its distance from Iran politically in light of the Shah's military and economic ties with Washington and Teheran's anti-Soviet postures. Since then, however, economic and political relations have seen a steady decline, and Iran's vocal support of the Kashmiri militants did little to assuage India's apprehensions.

Hectic diplomatic efforts in the post-Cold War days by the present Indian government, with a clear show of interest from President Ali Akbar Rafsanjani and Prime Minister Rao's old friend, Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati, set the stage for the recent visit.

New strategic alliance

Only two days before Rao's scheduled departure for Iran, President Rafsanjani, in an interview with the pro-government English-language daily, the *Hindustan Times*, stated that Iran seeks better economic and political relations with

India. On the sticky Kashmir issue, Rafsanjani said that Iran did not approve of "the existing situation," but that it will not interfere and would like to see a solution emerging through dialogue.

Rafsanjani also alluded to the formation of an Iran-India-China axis to counter western muscle. He pointed out, "Very important countries are in Asia as far as population, industry, and markets are concerned," adding that "if we cooperate, we in Asia will be able to have a say in international affairs."

Throughout the Indian prime minister's visit and meetings with Iranian political, economic, and academic leaders, these issues were discussed at length. Rao told the Iranian leaders that Muslims are a part and parcel of India, and that they will continue to be regarded as such.

That Rao's point was not lost, was evident from the reception he received at the Iranian Majlis (parliament) which he addressed during his visit. The entire crowd of 250 Majlis members stood up and cheered Rao as he entered, and did the same when he left after delivering his address. Rao became the second head of state, after Pakistani President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, to address the Majlis since the Islamic Revolution.

On Iran's side, Rafsanjani, during his two-hour talk with the Indian prime minister, pointed out that since both India and Pakistan are friends of Iran, Teheran would like to see the two settle the Kashmir matter through discussions, and Iran was willing to offer its services. The Iranian assurance that it would not interfere in the Kashmir imbroglio has brought relief to Delhi. Kashmir, which has the largest concentration of the Shia community outside of Iran, is considered important to Iran. However, Iran, which still identifies Pakistan as a friendly nation, has also taken note of the increasing persecution of Shias in Gilgit (the Pakistani part of Kashmir), Punjab, and the North West Frontier Province.

An India-Iran-China bloc?

The back-to-back visits by Rao to China and Iran, and Rafsanjani's statement that it is important to form an India-Iran-China alliance for the security of Asia, has raised questions as well as expectations. At this point, any assertion of such an alliance would be merely speculative. Nonetheless, there are many reasons why these three countries should work more closely together, at least in certain areas.

To begin with, Iran's economy remains in the doldrums following the snapping of continuity in the aftermath of the Islamic Revolution. The attempt to recover economically then received a further setback when Iraq, prompted by the West, began its devastating eight-year war against Iran. Iran now requires a significant improvement of its basic infrastructure, of the kind which India can provide. Iran also has interest in the newly independent Central Asian nations, not for any territorial ambition as such, but ostensibly to counter the advances of Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan—all

Sunni Muslim nations—in the region. But to make a dent in Central Asia requires large expenditures associated with the necessary expertise to develop infrastructure in that area. Again, Indian assistance would come in handy.

Iran quickly agreed to the Indian request to make New Delhi a partner in the ten-nation Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). All these ten nations are Islamic, five of them belonging to Central Asia, as the memorandum of understanding signed between Iran and India noted.

The agreement could bring considerable prosperity to Iran by putting it on an emerging trade route to the new republics of the former U.S.S.R. India is expected to participate in constructing the railroad link between Central Asia and Iran which, besides promoting economic cooperation with the Central Asian republics, will also be a major step toward realizing the concept of a Eurasian railroad connection (see *EIR*, Oct. 8, 1993, p. 57).

Iran, it has been reported, has already developed a plan to lay a railway line from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf. It is envisaged that the Caspian seaports of Freydukenar (a few miles west of Babol Sar) and Bandar-e Abbas in southern Iran near the Strait of Hormuz, will also be expanded.

Prior to Rao's visit, the outgoing Indian naval chief, Admiral Ramdas, had paid a quiet visit to Iran. Although the details of the trip have been kept under wraps, the Iranians have long shown interest in stepping up relations with the Indian Navy, because they see India as one of the few neutral nations in the region. Iran is uncomfortable about Pakistan's rejoining the American camp and about the recent anti-submarine exercises held near the maritime boundary by the Pakistani and U.S. navies. In all likelihood, in the near future Iran will ask the Indian Navy to carry out a hydrographic survey of the Iranian coast.

For India, better relations with Iran are economically beneficial and allow India to cultivate its relations in Central Asia and parts of the Persian Gulf. India believes that the Kashmir issue, which hangs like a dead albatross on India's neck, can be resolved with active pressure on Pakistan by both Iran and China, both contiguous to Pakistan.

In addition, India wants to utilize its good relations with Iran to dissuade Teheran from playing any negative role vis-à-vis the recent Israel-Palestine accord. Rafsanjani has already spoken out against the accord, and the Indian prime minister has told him why India considers the accord to be beneficial for peace. It has also been reported that Rao was persuaded by Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, over the telephone, to discuss the issue in Teheran prior to Rao's departure. There is reason to believe that Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin will also be discussing the same issue in Beijing during his upcoming visit, and will ask his hosts to use their good offices to talk to Iran about the accord. The Indian interest, besides stability in West Asia, is to participate in the building of infrastructure in the West Bank and Gaza.