

he has been chief minister of Karnataka state, which is fast becoming a major industrial state, with the city of Bangalore emerging as the country's capital of clean industries.

With a diploma in civil engineering, Prime Minister Deve Gowda represents the villager caste, and had worked side-by-side with his father, a paddy farmer, in his youth. Following a short stint as a contractor, Deve Gowda joined politics in 1953 as a member of the Congress Party. However, his first entry to the state legislative assembly in 1962 was as an independent, having severed his relationship with the Congress Party back then.

With Janata Dal establishing itself as the ruling party in Karnataka in 1983, Deve Gowda, along with S.R. Bommai (now a minister in the Deve Gowda cabinet) and the high-profile former Karnataka chief minister Ramkrishna Hegde, emerged as one of the triumvirate that holds the key to the party's political successes. Despite the Rajiv Gandhi-led Congress Party onslaught that almost decimated the Janata Dal in Karnataka in 1987, the efforts of Deve Gowda, Bommai, and Hegde brought the party back to power at the state level in 1991.

In 1994, Deve Gowda was the only Indian chief minister who attended the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, ostensibly to attract foreign investment into Karnataka. Another of his forays, into Singapore, resulted in the first-ever high-technology Information Technology Park in Bangalore. At the same time, it was noted that, despite the Janata Dal's formal opposition to the establishment of the Cargill office and the Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet in Bangalore, chief minister Deve Gowda protected these multinational ventures to boost his state's image with foreign investors.

### **A common minimum program**

So far, in New Delhi, Deve Gowda is drafting a common minimum program (CMP) for the infrastructure sector, which emphasizes implementing environmentally friendly policies and greater support for science and technology. The draft said that "economic stability, responsive and corruptionless administration along with acceleration of reforms," would be the major plank for governing India.

On the issue of taking those measures recommended by the International Monetary Fund to adapt the Indian economy to free-trade globalization, an issue which interests the international investors and financial institutions as much as it interests their Indian counterparts, Deve Gowda is categorical that so-called economic reform would continue with a "Gandhian face"—an expression which has yet to be defined. Undoubtedly, his appointment of P. Chidambaram, a Harvard-trained former member of the Congress Party who was a close associate of the late Rajiv Gandhi, and one of the strongest backers of the liberalization policies of Narasimha Rao and outgoing Finance Minister Manmohan Singh, will reassure the free traders in London and other western capitals.

## **Indian elections: shifting vote patterns**

by Susan Maitra and Ramtanu Maitra

The nation of India today stands as the world's largest democracy, a fact that is at the core of India's identity as an independent nation. The election results that trickled in slowly during the week following the last election (May 7; the other two were April 27 and May 2) showed that the Indian electorate has refused to pin its hopes on any single party.

Unlike the past four or five general elections, particularly the elections of 1977, 1980, 1989, and 1991, this time around, the Indian electorate was not charged up to remove the ruling party in order to bring in some other party just for the sake of a change in government. There was no "wave" as such.

In addition, the Election Commission enforced the maximum expenditure of 450,000 rupees (about \$13,500) per parliamentary candidate, making the election a low-key affair. The Election Commission thus took away the money power of some of the wealthier parties to influence votes. Interestingly, the low-key campaigning did not result in less participation by the electorate.

Although the poll results appeared to perplex the political pundits, the voting patterns cohered with a growing trend that has appeared among the voters in both 1989 and in 1991.

In the 1989 elections, the ruling Congress Party, led by the late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, was soundly defeated. From an unassailable majority in the Lok Sabha (parliament) with 405 members, secured in the 1984 elections following the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the party was reduced to a minority party with fewer than 200 seats. But while rejecting the Congress Party, the electorate did not indicate a positive winner. A rag-tag group of former congressmen formed the Janata Dal and took power, with the outside support of the surging Bharatiya Janata Dal (BJP).

The dismissal of the Janata Dal government within a year, and the upheavals that followed, set the tone for the 1991 elections. The tragic murder of Rajiv Gandhi during the 1991 election campaign, and the collapse of the Janata Dal, gave the Congress Party enough parliamentary seats to form the government.

But even then, the BJP, increasing its tally from 86 in 1989 to 124 in 1991, had served notice.

The trend has in fact continued: The Janata Dal and its allies took 43 seats, the Congress Party went down to 136 seats, and the BJP inched further upward with 160 seats.

Caste politics has also continued to emerge as a significant factor for the electorate. The 1989 regime of united front guru V.P. Singh had unleashed a cauldron of caste politics, which was capitalized upon by the leading non-Congress and non-BJP parties. In 1996, caste considerations continued to elect or defeat candidates in northern India, particularly in Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh. The role of minority Muslims was less discernible in this election, but there is little doubt that a large number of poor and downtrodden Muslims in the states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh backed the candidates identified with the lower castes. Nevertheless, in Uttar Pradesh, the BJP gained another 23 seats to reach 85 MPs from that state.

On the other side, in the Maharashtra city of Mumbai, where the BJP-Shiv Sena combine won heavily, a significant number of Muslims in fact voted for the BJP-Shiv Sena combine.

Aside from the BJP, the only other groupings to show gains in the election were the purely regionally based parties. These include the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M), in West Bengal; the Telegu Desam Party (TDP), in Andhra Pradesh; the DMK or ADMK, in Tamil Nadu; the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), in Assam; the Janata Dal (JD), in Bihar and Karnataka; the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party, in Uttar Pradesh; the Shiromani Akali Dal, in Punjab; and the Samta Party, in Bihar.

A harmonious chord was definitely struck between the regional parties and the electorate. In the south, the issue of water and power is of primary importance, and all the regional parties in the southern states have an ongoing feud with Delhi because of the latter's inattention to the crisis. Instead of deriding the apparent parochial behavior of the electorate, national politicians would do better to heed the message being delivered.

## **Economic platforms**

The Indian population is also beginning to register its response to the policies of "liberalization," carried out by the Rao government under the direction of Finance Minister Manmohan Singh. While these policies have loosened the socialist grip on the Indian economy held by the overbearing government bureaucracy, it also has brought in foreign multinationals in useless ventures in the consumer goods sector and has begun the process of opening up India to free-trade globalization. At the same time, the supposed benefits of liberalization have not trickled down to India's poor.

The BJP took a definite critical stance against the ruling party's foreign investment policies, which, according to their observation, allowed "hot money" to come into the country and did not encourage foreign direct investments in the required sectors, such as non-consumer durables and enhancing the technological base in that sector. The BJP was highly critical of the multinationals which, according to their critique, are extracting benefits which have not been extended

to their domestic competitors. Besides the BJP's demand for a "level playing field" for national producers by enhancing import tariffs, the party called for spending at least 6% of the country's GDP on programs such as education, maintaining fertilizer subsidies, using 60% of plan funds for agricultural-rural development, laying the foundation for a debt market to finance infrastructure and then invite foreign capital into the sector, pruning non-developmental expenditure, minimizing commercial activities of the government, and cutting back on bureaucracy.

The BJP is thus most vocal on behalf of the small and medium-size industries which are in panic following the Rao liberalization policy. The BJP is also consistently strong in pointing out India's poor infrastructure and the previous government's policy of welcoming multinationals into India's consumer sector, instead of attracting a significant amount of foreign direct investment into the core infrastructural sectors where it is most urgently needed.

The ruling Congress Party promised to carry forward economic reforms and restructuring policies to achieve 8-9% GDP growth annually and near-full employment by the year 2002. The Congress Party was also vocal about the farm sector, including promising to do the impossible—computerization of land records in consultation with states. Cautious about future measures vis-à-vis the economic liberalization, the ruling party manifesto assigned high priority to restructuring the public sector. The manifesto mentioned nothing of such controversial policies as disinvestment of public sector enterprises, restructuring of labor laws, and the speed of reforms in the financial and industrial sectors.

True to its tradition, the Janata Dal pushed such populist policies as "right to work," forging economic solidarity with the developing world, and reviewing and reversing existing reform laws.

## **Give the dog a bad name, and hang him**

The pattern of growth in votes of the BJP, widely described in the foreign media as a "Hindu fundamentalist" and "Hindu extremist" grouping, has set a cat among the pigeons within India's political system. Considered an "untouchable" because of its virulent anti-Muslim rhetoric and the support it had lent to the violent destruction of the Babri Masjid, for the purpose of building a Ram Temple at the same location, the BJP still touches a raw nerve in many Indians who were brought up and tutored in the Fabian socialism introduced into the Indian scene by Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India. Most leaders of the present Congress Party and of the Janata Dal, Samajwadi Party, et al., belong to the same school of political thought. Indian communists joined the Fabian school without much fuss. For all of these politicians, the rise of the BJP is a serious threat to their existence.

The BJP of today is a variant of its original form, the Jana Sangh, and came into existence in the early 1980s following the end of the Janata party rule in 1980. The Jana Sangh,

formed in 1952, was always controlled by the cadre-based Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), an ideological grouping promoting Hindu consciousness. The RSS was never interested, in earlier days, in participating in the political system, and, although Jana Sangh ran in the parliamentary elections, it remained a party with only pocket boroughs. Its dogmatic promotion of Hindu consciousness in a country which was recovering from the partition by the British colonial rulers in 1947, pitched it in direct confrontation with the Muslims and secular forces of the Indian National Congress.

Garnering support mostly from the 40 million or so Hindus who had fled Pakistan following the partition, the Jana Sangh remained an anti-Muslim party, spewing venom against the Muslims for cutting up the country—rather than blaming the British. The initial success of Nehru's development policies and of Indian foreign policy, with India being at the center of the non-aligned movement in a hostile Cold War situation, kept the Jana Sangh on a leash. By and large, Hindus did not see the Muslims in India as a threat, and found little reason to support a marginal political grouping dedicated to disparaging the mostly poor Muslims who had no other home but India.

The beginning of the weakening of the Congress Party, brought about by the late Mrs. Indira Gandhi through the misuse of power during the Emergency Rule in 1975-77, provided an opening to the anti-Congress Party "secular" forces and the "Hindu fundamentalist" Jana Sangh to come to power in 1977. The collapse of the Janata party in 1979 and the subsequent resounding electoral victories of the Congress Party under Indira Gandhi, and, later, under Rajiv Gandhi, weakened the political power of the Jana Sangh further. Reincarnated as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the party began seriously to build its political machinery for the first time in the mid-1980s.

### **The Babri Masjid incident**

The BJP's initial success, however, centered around its campaign to remove the Babri Masjid—a 16th-century mosque allegedly built over a Hindu temple during the Moghul days, which has been disputed since the time of the British Raj—and build in its place a temple of Ram, one of the incarnations of Lord Vishnu in Hindu mythology. The campaign, which resulted in the violent demolition of the mosque in 1993 during the Rao government, began to recruit a whole gamut of lumpen masses demanding Hindu revivalism. The 1989 and 1991 elections saw the BJP riding high on the Hindu revivalism campaign, with a liberal sprinkling of anti-Muslim vitriol and a tough position against Pakistan on Kashmir.

The violent fall of the Babri Masjid, however, confronted the BJP with a serious crisis. The BJP never owned up to and even denounced the demolition of the mosque. Nevertheless, the educated class left the party in droves. The subsequent drubbing that the BJP received in the assembly in a number

of northern states put the party in a quandary. The issue at stake for the leadership: While the party has a large following, it could never be a national party unless its image as an anti-Muslim party is removed and it can participate in an educated manner on the major national issues concerning poverty, economy, security, and defense.

Since the Babri Masjid incident, the BJP leadership has attempted to deflect the radical pressure and focus on activities which identify the party as a serious contender for the nation's leadership.

In the 1996 elections, the BJP improved its position in the Lok Sabha from 124 to 160 seats, and was the only major party anywhere to make gains in this general election. This suggests that the BJP strategy has worked and the politics of caste division, introduced in 1990 as a measure primarily to weaken the BJP, has failed to catch on—although, it will not be easy for the BJP to shed its anti-Muslim image.

The Indian electorate, democratic to the core, is not yet convinced that the BJP is for real, but it is surely changing its view about this "Hindu fundamentalist" and "Hindu communalist" party. A large part of India—such as the states located in the east, of Assam, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and a few other small states—has not given a single seat to the BJP.

### **The British are upset**

The dose of moderation and a responsible approach to national politics ushered in by the BJP leadership under Atal Behari Vajpayee, L.K. Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi, and K. Govindacharya, among others, have created new enemies. In Britain, the BJP's ascendance to power has been under hysterical attack in the media. The *Times* of London, worried about "Hindu militants with nuclear bombs" (read: BJP), said, in its May 10 editorial, that a Left coalition is preferable, and hoped that "with luck India will escape the trap of Hindu militancy." The London *Guardian* called for containment of "Hindu chauvinism represented by the BJP," and the *Daily Telegraph* highlighted the dangers of confusion and divisions within India caused by the BJP.

Although the British media were citing the BJP's anti-Muslim image as a threat to tear the Indian subcontinent apart, what was probably of greater concern, is the BJP's strong anti-multinational, pro-nationalist economic outlook. Such British groups as Lever Brothers, Lipton, and Brooke Bond have long been present in India in strength, and are planning expansion in the wake of economic liberalization.

The British are also worried that the establishment of the BJP as a genuine national party, means that Britain may have to deal with a coherent leadership of a large party, instead of a cobbled-together group of politicians with small political bases and high ambitions. In addition, the BJP's opposition to a comprehensive test ban treaty (it would not sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, unless it were part of global disarmament), and its position to officially declare India a nuclear

state, makes the cold warriors and the colonial powers uneasy.

If the British are unhappy with the BJP because it may prevent them from making a fresh bid to loot India in the wake of economic liberalization and globalization, the Anti-Defamation League-linked Abe Rosenthal's outburst against the BJP in the *New York Times* was indicative of the hatred that the liberal establishment is capable of spreading. Equating the BJP moderates with the German SS, Rosenthal said that "these people [the BJP] are Hindu-first and Hindu-only—which would wipe out the concept of unity between the Hindu majority of 700 million and the Muslim minority of 120 million and Christians and Sikhs." Rosenthal warned that the electorate's verdict leads to the dangers to Indian nationhood and the possibility that "Indian civil society could again become Indian civil war."

But those who will indulge in such chaos-mongering should realize that the electorate, which has steadily eliminated the Congress Party from the populous Ganga Valley—the Congress Party having secured only 16 of the 179 national parliamentary seats that represent Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and West Bengal—may be ready to politically eliminate those who will promote chaos and instability. They have voted for political stability, and not against economic reforms, and they see in the BJP, the largest and the only growing party, the party that can provide stability.

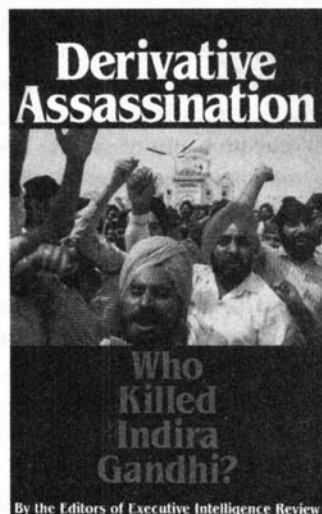
## Derivative Assassination: Who Killed Indira Gandhi?

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## Turbulence ahead for Romania, Bulgaria

by Konstantin George

If there is no break in the shock therapy policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), a crisis with potential strategic ramifications is set to sweep Bulgaria and Romania this autumn, when Presidential elections are scheduled in the former, and both Presidential and parliamentary elections in the latter. The first storms were visible in the Bulgarian Presidential primary and the Romanian nationwide municipal elections, both held on June 2.

### Bulgaria: Who will oppose the IMF?

In Bulgaria, a pauperized and angry electorate gave incumbent President Zhelyu Zhelyev the boot in a primary vote that determined who in the United Democratic Front (UDF) would be its Presidential candidate in the autumn elections. Zhelyev was trounced, receiving only 34% of the vote, losing to the 44-year-old relatively unknown lawyer, Petar Stoyanov, who got 66%. The reason behind Zhelyev's debacle is not hard to find. He is one of the main people responsible for the destruction of Bulgarian living standards under six years of IMF-imposed "reforms."

The UDF is the main opposition party to the current government of the ex-communists, called the Bulgarian Socialist Party. The UDF had formed Bulgaria's first post-communist government. It discredited itself in the first phase of shock therapy implementation, and thus, as in so many other cases in eastern Europe, set the stage for the return of the former communists to power. Given the different schedules for parliamentary and Presidential elections, Bulgaria has a BSP government with an absolute majority in parliament, and a UDF President.

Ironically, the UDF, with its new candidate, Stoyanov, could very well win the Presidential election. Bulgaria has been no exception to the rule that wherever the former communists were returned to power in eastern Europe, based on a popular backlash against the "reforms," the ex-communists, once in power, proceeded to pursue and even to accelerate the very same IMF policies. The BSP regime of Prime Minister Zhan Videnov, during this year, has implemented the most draconian austerity measures to date. This has been done in accordance with conditions set by the IMF for Bulgaria to receive a standby loan and thus prevent, or paper over, an imminent state bankruptcy.