

From New Delhi by Ramtanu Maitra and Susan Maitra

Why London likes Comrade Jyoti Basu

Does the Communist Party chief's open door to George Soros in West Bengal have anything to do with it?

As factions of the Congress Party and various anti-Congress rag-tag groups jockeyed to find terms for an alliance to unseat the government of the Bharatiya Janata Dal (BJP), the question arose: Who could lead such an alliance? The name of Jyoti Basu, chief minister of the state of West Bengal since 1977 and the most influential Communist leader in India, was one of the names tossed about. In fact, Basu, an octogenarian, got so caught up in this game of political deception that he rushed to New Delhi to accept the offer, before the central committee of his Communist Party of India (Marxist), ruled out their chief's participation.

The London press stood out as one of Basu's most enthusiastic promoters, surprising many in India. Why would the old imperialists promote the keeper of the red bastion of West Bengal, Comrade Jyoti Basu? The answer lies in Basu's long-standing and continuous ties to the British.

Jyoti Basu, an attorney at law, was educated in Britain, and came in contact with the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) during his student days in the 1920s. A British Communist leader of Indian origin, Rajani Palme Dutt, took Basu under his tainted wings and later helped to form the Communist Party of India (CPI), along with British intelligence deployable M.N. Roy.

Basu was already very much on the scene in 1942 when the CPI had worked out a deal with the British colonial rulers to oppose Mahatma Gandhi's "Quit India" movement. As *EIR's* Founding Editor Lyndon

LaRouche, then with the U.S. Army in Calcutta, was personally told by the West Bengal Communist Party chief P.C. Joshi, in Calcutta in 1946, the Communist Party would not support the Congress Party drive for independence because "Stalin has a deal with Churchill."

Since then, Comrade Basu has distinguished himself by keeping up the good work for London—even after his faction of the party split from the CPI to form the Chinese-affiliated Communist Party of India (Marxist, CPI-M). During his two decades at the helm of West Bengal, which, at the time of independence, was India's most industrialized state, Basu and his party managed to deindustrialize that state and terrorize domestic industrialists, creating massive unemployment among the industrial workforce.

As the "capitalists" left West Bengal to invest in friendlier environs, Basu and his party turned the state into a red fortress, maintaining power through thuggery. Calcutta, once a major trading and commercial center, became the "hot money" real estate center financing the CPI-M and its leaders.

In the post-economic liberalization days since 1991, deindustrialized West Bengal has become the center of attention of the British industrial houses. Basu and his fellow lawyer-cum-communist leader, Somnath Chatterjee, are involved in signing all kinds of memorandums of understanding with the British business houses. Having driven out the Indian industrialists and businessmen, Comrade Basu is once more in the process

of making Bengal the gateway of the next wave of British investors into India.

Two entrants into West Bengal can be cited as the reasons why the British pitched in so heavily for Comrade Basu in the election aftermath in May of this year. Since 1993, Basu and Chatterjee were openly courted by the Hinduja—an unscrupulous group of extremely wealthy businessmen of Indian origin based in Britain—for its alleged plan to invest some \$3 billion in West Bengal. The Hinduja, named in the Iran-Contra drugs-for-guns scandal, and whose application for opening a Swiss bank was held up by Swiss authorities for years because of the group's suspected connection to drug-money laundering, had met with Basu in London to smooth out the deal.

What drew the ire of some of the Communists in West Bengal is that the CPI-M has carried on a campaign against the Hinduja for their alleged involvement in the scandal involving the purchase of the Bofors guns during the prime ministership of the late Rajiv Gandhi. The sweetening effect of the \$3 billion proposal was evident when Chatterjee, defending Basu's talks with the Hinduja, told the media in 1994 that "there was no conclusive evidence of the Hinduja in the Bofors scandal."

Another beneficiary of Comrade Basu's welcoming committee is financier and international speculator George Soros, the man who helped to bankrupt Russia. The Chatterjee Soros Management Fund was allowed to acquire 25% equity in Haldia Petrochemical Limited (HPL). According to the contract, if HPL suffers losses, the West Bengal government will bear the loss, but as soon as it is in the black, the Chatterjee Soros Management Fund can buy out the government equity for an extra 15%.