

Response to Gulf war muted in South Asia

by Susan Maitra and Ramtanu Maitra

Although India and Iraq at one point shared leading roles in the Non-Aligned Movement, the Indian government of Chandra Shekhar has taken a decidedly anti-Iraq tilt on the Gulf war. At a meeting with foreign correspondents Jan. 17, Foreign Minister V.C. Shukla insisted that only Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait could stop the hostilities, and reiterated the government's position that no linkage should be made with the Palestinian issue.

The poignancy of this situation for India, historically a leading voice for the non-aligned and developing nations, and since Jan. 1 a member of the U.N. Security Council, was articulated Jan. 20 by Rajiv Gandhi, the former prime minister and head of the largest parliamentary party, the Congress (I), in a three-page letter to Chandra Shekhar. "We have lost the initiative and have been reduced to hapless spectators," Gandhi said, adding that instead of "meekly" falling into line with the Anglo-American axis, it was impera-

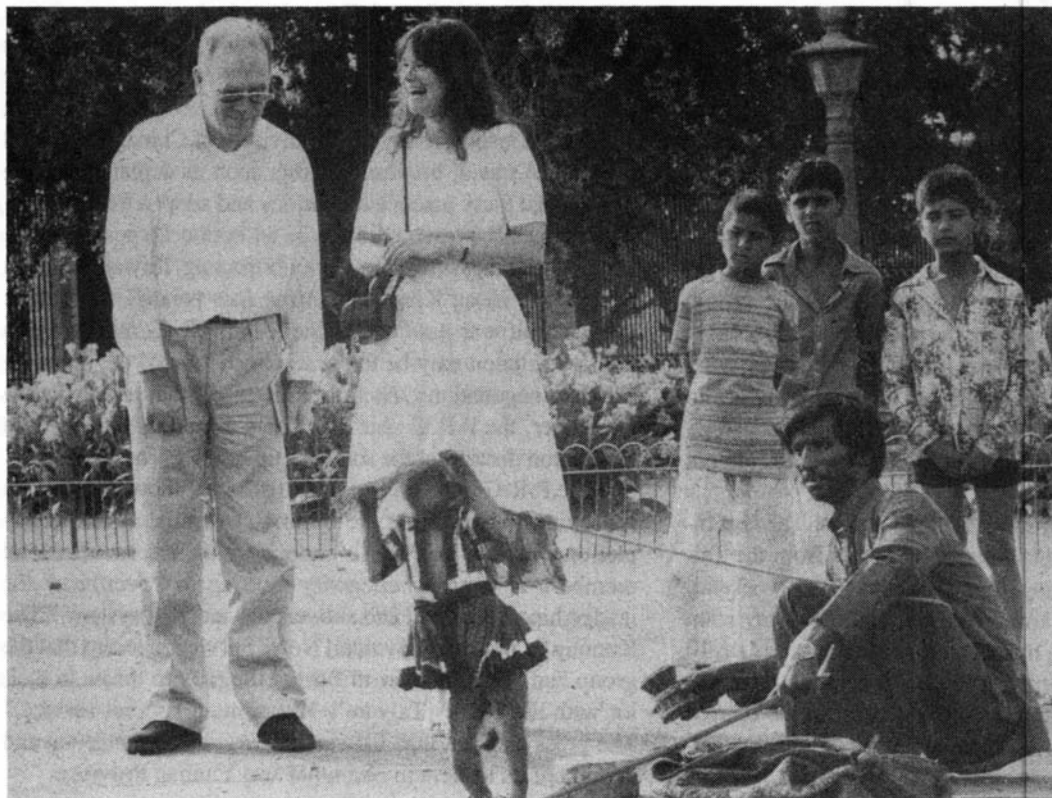
tive that the government come out with a creative and relevant response to the present crisis in West Asia.

"There is no clear recognition of what national interests of ours are jeopardized by the war in West Asia," Gandhi said. Gandhi himself had been at the center of an initiative involving former Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone and former German Chancellor Willy Brandt, that was aborted with the outbreak of war.

"At a time when the entire philosophy of non-alignment runs the risk of being rendered irrelevant or even obsolete, India is nowhere to be seen unfolding the vision of a new international order in a world that has unsheathed itself from the chrysalis of the cold war," Gandhi said.

Gandhi urged that any initiative for sustained peace in West Asia would have to have four key ingredients: immediate cessation of all hostilities; replacement of the present multinational force by a U.N. force under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter; Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait; and a just, comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian issue.

Rajiv Gandhi's letter became the basis for an all-party opposition meeting that sought to mount pressure on the government for a change in policy. The meeting showed that Gandhi was speaking for the entire political spectrum, with the exception of the pro-Hindu, chauvinist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and the ruling Janata Dal (S). A senior Congress (I) politician later told newsmen that his party should uphold the anti-imperialist thrust of India's long-established foreign



American statesman Lyndon LaRouche and his wife Helga Zepp-LaRouche are seen here during a 1983 visit to India, part of the LaRouches' decades-long diplomacy for economic development, as "the name for peace." If there is to be a chance of containing the war, LaRouche must be freed from prison, where George Bush put him in an attempt to silence his policy proposals.

EIRNS

policy, a reflection of the view prevalent here that while no one condones the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, the Anglo-American-led military action represents a continuation of the "imperial" approach and not a solution.

In a recent radio commentary, C. Raja Mohan of the quasi-governmental Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses (IDSA) pointed to Turkey's entry into the war, and reasoned that it might be a pretext for reorienting NATO from East-West to North-South confrontation.

A Ministry of Foreign Affairs official told a correspondent of the *Economic Times*, that the quest for an International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan was behind India's stand on the Gulf. The same correspondent reported that American officials in Delhi were the first to admit that the IMF loan might prove more effective than any diplomatic channel in silencing India on the Gulf. If this is true, a change in policy cannot be expected anytime soon. Within days of the news that the IMF had authorized \$1.8 billion in loans to India, it was reported that India will seek an additional \$3 billion from the IMF.

The Islamic response

South Asia's Muslim population—numbering some 330 million—have so far responded mildly to the outbreak of war in the Gulf. One reason is the continuing propaganda that the multinational forces have carried out precision bombings which destroyed only military and strategic targets and did not hit the civilian population.

The low-profile response of the Muslims in South Asia can also be traced to the politics within the Muslim fold itself. The most organized grouping in the Muslim community are fundamentalists. Since Iraq has never identified with Islamic fundamentalism, and in fact is viewed as anti-fundamentalist, it does not command allegiance from the Muslim masses on this account. More specifically, the fundamentalist groups are financed mostly by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other Gulf nations now aligned against Iraq. Under the circumstances, the Muslim activists are siding with the United States and demanding an immediate withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait.

In Pakistan, the government's decision to send 12,000 troops to Saudi Arabia has come under attack. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and President Ghulam Ishaq Khan both take shelter under the fig-leaf that the troops have been sent at Saudi request for the sole purpose of protecting the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, and not as part of the multinational force against Iraq. "No one should expect my government to ever bow down to U.S. pressure on any issue," Sharif felt compelled to announce on national radio Jan. 20. He also demanded that the multinational forces stop bombing Iraq and appealed to President Saddam Hussein to vacate Kuwait. Sharif has since set out on a mission to Iran. The Karachi daily, *The Dawn*, reported Jan. 14 that the Jamiat Ulema-i-Pakistan (JUP) is forming a 25,000-man force to fight alongside Iraq.

North Africa begins to erupt

by Joseph Brewda

The Anglo-American-French assault on Iraq has led to immediate and widespread revulsion throughout North Africa, as well as the rest of the Arab and Muslim world.

In Algeria, hundreds of thousands of people poured into the streets in several cities beginning Jan. 17, with both Islamic activists and secular nationalists calling on the Algerian government to train volunteers to fight on the side of Iraq. Similar mass demonstrations have taken place in Tunisia, Morocco, and Mauritania.

The fact that the French government has dropped its mask of pretended horror of war, and has instead joined with the British and Americans in bombarding Iraq, has been particularly important in embittering North Africa. France ruled North Africa for some 200 years, and its ruling political establishment still considers the region to be part of its empire.

In an unusually harsh statement, the Algerian foreign minister condemned the U.S.-led war in the following terms on Jan. 17: "This war is a translation of intransigence, of a sense of power, and of the will to dominate. . . . Algeria condemns this war with the strongest vigor. . . . The Arab world appears the first victim of the end of the Cold War and of this 'new international order' which is being established upon its own woes. . . . Algeria, closer than ever to the people of Iraq, proclaims its solidarity with them."

That same day, the Tunisian cabinet issued a statement following the outbreak of the war which called upon the U.N. Security Council to "take immediate and decisive measures to put an end to the killing." Also on Jan. 17, Tunisian government radio praised Iraq for "standing fast in the face of aggression."

Even prior to the outbreak of the war, North African leaders were comparing the impending war to France's genocidal war against Algeria in the 1950s and 1960s. On Jan. 13, the Algerian National Liberation Front, which helped lead the Algerian revolution, noted that "the Algerian people were, for more than seven years, victims of a war waged against them under the cover of a 'legitimize' legality which colonialism granted itself, and an Atlantic legality which enabled it to use all of NATO's arsenals."