

On Indira Gandhi's Death

To Prevent India's Fragmentation

The bullets that were fired by the Sikh guards not only put end to the life of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, but also threatened to end the firm grip of the Congress Party on India.

However, it is not that the Congress Party had such a strong grip on the affairs of the Indian subcontinent until Mrs. Gandhi's assassination. On the contrary, the Congress Party, which had suffered splits in the past few years, was day by day losing control. It was due to the extraordinary capacities of Mrs. Gandhi that the party had managed to retain power. The party has been plagued by serious contradictions. This had a negative influence on its ability to run the affairs of India, which suffers increasing social, economic and political problems.

The contradictions inside the party stemmed from the differences in the points of view between the old leading members and the growing new generation. These points of view concerned the basic economic and social policies of the Congress Party. Parallel to the augmentation of internal contradictions, the Congress Party had been losing influence in several regions of India.

The Congress Party established its power as the ruling party in all regions of India immediately after independence. For many years, the program of the party, which was mainly one of national independence, managed to survive. Yet later with the accumulation of social, economic and ethnic problems, the party's program became unacceptable to broad sectors of the Indian people and even to the young generation of the Congress Party.

However, all the alarm signals failed to influence the attitude of the Congress Party leadership which insisted on retaining the role of the party as *the* ruling one at a time when other parties were growing and acquiring popular support in various regions of India. The program became insufficient and the party became weaker, relatively speaking; it was no longer the indisputable ruling party.

These developments were due to the accumulating problems of India. As became apparent in the seventies and

eighties, these problems required different programs and methods. Politically speaking, India came under a great deal of pressure from the USA, because of the non-aligned stance practiced by the Congress Party. Economically, the line chosen by the Congress Party helped to develop India's industry and thus led to an expansion of the working class. At the same time, the party's policy did not restrict private enterprise and investment. The contradictions between the public and private sector grew to the extent that the big bourgeoisie started to pressure for further concessions on both the economic and political levels. Throughout all this, Mrs. Gandhi, with her abilities, managed to maintain the balance. Yet this did not change the fact that the Congress Party was losing its ability to lead and that social problems were increasing.

The assassination of Indira Gandhi, in a single blow, brought all these contradictions dramatically to the surface. Inside the Congress Party, Rajiv, her son and successor, supports and is supported by the advocates of a more «open» economic policy. This means that the contradictions between the supporters of his mother's policies and his

own supporters will develop rapidly. The eventual result will be the further weakening of the Congress Party, while social and economic problems will become more acute. Rajiv, who is known to be pro-Western, will encounter increasing difficulties with no Indira Gandhi to steer things.

Thus, India stands at a crossroads. The program of the Congress Party will not suffice to cool the problems of the country. While other political forces are not capable of leading the country, if any one force insists on imposing its own program, India will face fragmentation. The only solution for the present period is the establishment of a coalition between the Congress and other democratic parties on the basis of a joint program to solve some of India's problems and maintain its non-aligned status.

This has importance which extends beyond India's internal situation, since India constitutes a decisive factor in the regional balance of power. United, non-aligned India has presented an obstacle to imperialism's hegemonic ambitions in this strategic area, especially by being a counterweight to the dictatorship in Pakistan and its role in the US military plans. Accordingly, India's fragmentation would mean a change in the regional balance of power which would be favorable to imperialism and local reaction.

