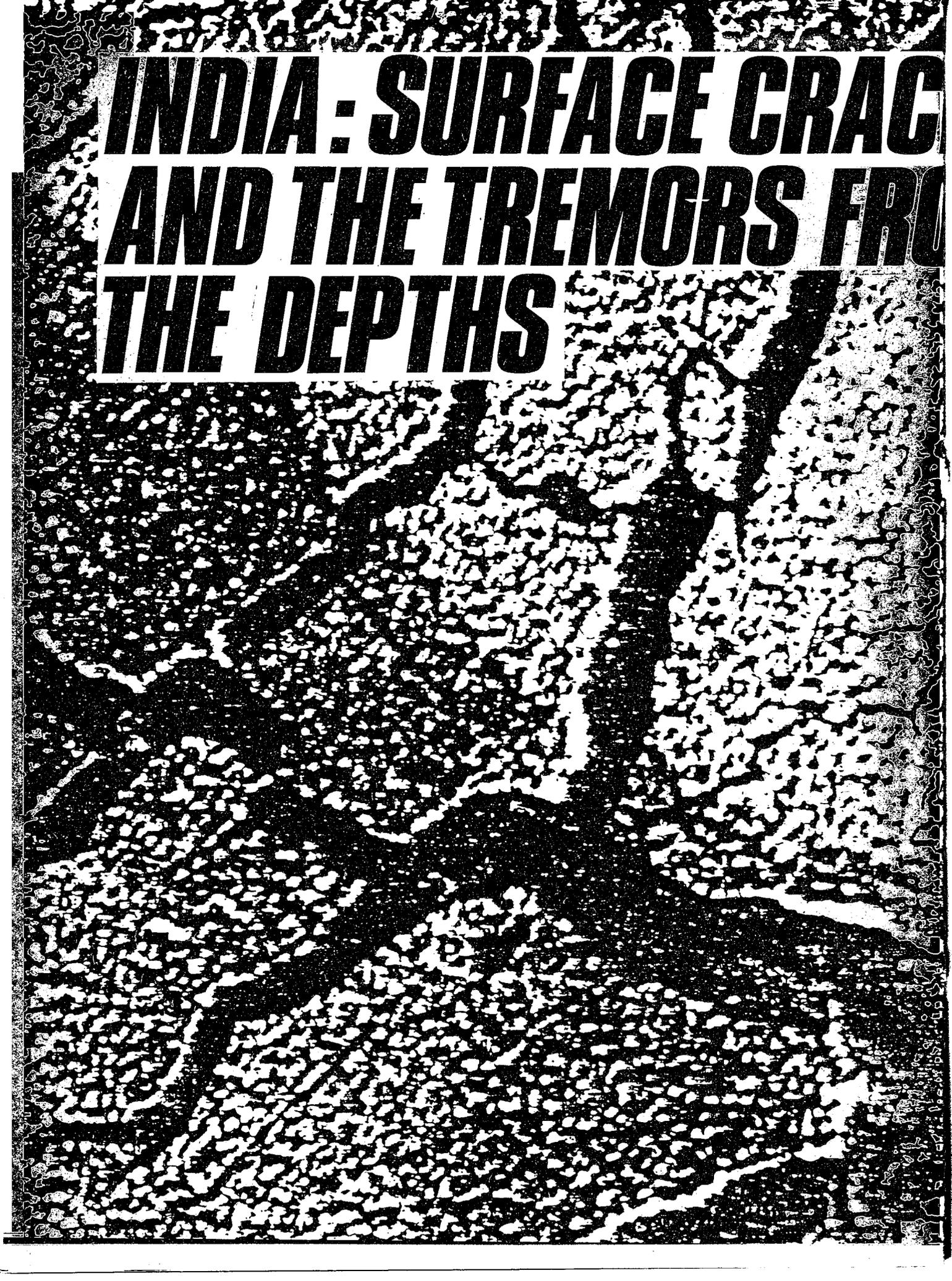


# INDIA: SURFACE CRACKS AND THE TREMORS FROM THE DEPTHS





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India. Home for around 800 million people, that is to say one out of six human beings on the planet earth. A complex intermingling of nations and peoples, of different languages, religions and cultures whose historical diversity is greater than that of Europe. Eight hundred million people who have little in common historically other than to have shared the "honour" of being the Crown Jewel of the British Empire yesterday and being the common feeding ground of all the major imperialist powers of the world today. Eight hundred million people who share a common enemy and a common struggle against the all-India ruling classes and their foreign overlords.

Today a reactionary tyrant is dead. The orchestrated pogroms which were a fitting posthumous conclusion to Indira Gandhi's thoroughly sanguinary career could not hide the joy with which large sections of people in India greeted her demise. That Indira Gandhi was gunned down by those chosen and trained to protect her is evidence of the fragility of the rule of the exploiting classes that Indira Gandhi so faithfully represented.

For the majority of people outside of Asia, India is relatively unknown.

### **Today a reactionary tyrant is dead.**

If its rulers enjoy a certain prominence in the world of international diplomacy, in the eyes of "international public opinion" its teeming millions have never been more than grist for imperialist profit mills and potential cannon fodder for their wars. If any mention at all is made of the masses of India in the reactionary press it is usually to coldly announce several thousands of victims of another flood, or perhaps a new outbreak of communal massacres. India, they would have one believe, is just a place where tragedies seem to accumulate one after another, where misery, disease and starvation are just "the way things are."

But "the way things are" is really the way the imperialist system, interacting with the archaic and reactionary social system that existed in India prior to the colonial period, has *made* them, and it is certainly not the way things *have to be*. The masses of people in India have shown re-

peatedly that they are entirely capable of taking their destiny into their own hands. In fact, the history of India shows, as Mao Tsetung put it, "wherever there is oppression there is resistance."

### Transformations in India

India is a country where the necessity--and possibility--of waging the armed struggle for political power has generally existed. In large expanses of India's countryside countless millions of peasants continue to suffer the exploitation and suffocation of the feudal system, where the ownership of land is tantamount to the owner-

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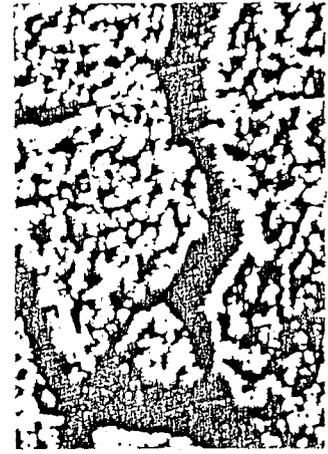
ship of those who work it. Historically colonialism and imperialism made an alliance with feudal reaction in India, and they propped up this archaic form of production even while introducing new elements of capitalist production in the cities. But especially in the period since India achieved formal independence in 1947 and with an increasing rate since the 1960s, imperialism has introduced important changes into the countryside itself. In many parts of India the traditional feudal relations have given way to capitalist agriculture based on wage labour. This has led to a further intensification of class contradictions among the peasantry with the emergence of a class of capitalist farmers on the one side, who themselves are often compelled to struggle against the central state apparatus (see "Punjab: Genesis of a Rebellion"), and a large section of increasingly impoverished agricultural workers whose demands and forms of struggle tend to be along the lines of those of the proletariat and less marked by the traditional demand of "land to the tiller" typical of semi-feudal agriculture. The introduction of fertilisers and new mechanised farming methods in many parts of India is an indication of

this development of capitalist relations in agriculture.

The consequences of these developments are similar to those found in many of the oppressed nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The large cities of India have swollen in size; huge numbers of former peasants unable to find a livelihood in the countryside are condemned to perpetual unemployment or underemployment in the cities because capitalism is not capable of profitably exploiting their labour power. On the one hand imperialism has led to a certain development, on the other hand this development is stunted and deformed to meet the needs of foreign capital. The increasing export of capital has brought forward new capitalist elements but these very forces are themselves hamstrung by the imperialist-dominated economy.

All of this has also meant that India has become more and more tightly interwoven into the whole world imperialist system, and that her peoples are more and more subject to the shocks and dislocations emanating from the motion of development of the imperialist system itself. The further penetration of imperialism in India has not only increased the pressure below in the form of the intensification of class contradictions in the cities and countryside, but has also increased the cracks in the upper reaches of the ruling classes themselves. If all the exploiters of India are united in their determination to maintain their rule at whatever price necessary, they are far from united on the best means to do this, or with what forces internationally to ally. Moreover, the conflicts among these forces are themselves heightened by the further development of the capitalist mode of production in India. These developments have not in any way lessened the need for a New Democratic Revolution in India, a revolution led by the proletariat and based on the worker-peasant alliance, which alone can sweep away imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism.

Thus while it is correct to note that, in many ways, India is a country that has long been ripe for revolution, it would be wrong to see this as an unchanging given. At the current moment this kind of view could well lead



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one to lose sight of the fact that the *revolutionary situation in India is quickly developing at the present time*, that India is indeed developing as one of the "weak links" of the imperialist system that Stalin spoke of in describing the reasons that a successful revolution was possible in Tsarist Russia.

It is worth quoting from the *Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement* concerning the tasks of revolutionaries in the colonial, semi (or neo) colonial countries:

"In the oppressed countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America a continuous revolutionary situation generally exists. But it is important to understand this correctly: the revolutionary situation does not follow a straight line; it has its ebbs and flows. The communist parties should keep this dynamic in mind. . . ."

"... It is necessary to combat any erroneous view which would postpone the commencement of armed struggle or the utilisation of any form of armed struggle until conditions become favourable for revolutionary warfare throughout the country. This view negates the uneven development of the revolution and revolutionary situations in these countries, in opposition to Mao's statement, 'A single spark can start a prairie fire.' It is also important to note that the overall international situation has an influence on the revolution in a particular country; not taking this into account leaves the Marxist-Leninists unpre-



pared to seize the opportunity when the revolutionary process is hastened by the developments on a world scale."

**The National Question in India**

In the large majority of the world the "national question," that is the oppression of one nation by another, is not yet resolved. This is all the more true of India where the national question in all its aspects is very much at the heart of the revolutionary process. India itself, of course, is a country oppressed by foreign imperialism. But within the state borders of present-day India there are many nations which, in addition to being part of the imperialist feasting ground that India as a whole represents, are also subject to varying forms and degrees of national oppression at the hands of the central state apparatus and the all-India comprador-bureaucrat bourgeoisie whose principal political representative, at the present time, is the Congress (I) Party now led by Rajiv Gandhi.

In the past few years this "internal national question" in India has increasingly come to the fore. The British imperialists and, more recently, the all-Indian comprador bourgeoisie have long sought to make use of religious and national antagonisms and foment pogroms in order to keep the people divided and their own rule intact. But today the long-standing oppression of different nationalities within India is leading to increasing opposition to the reactionary rule of the central authorities. This is the reason why all of the imperialist powers, while certainly doing everything they can to make use of the contradictions in Indian society to reinforce their own positions

vis a vis their rivals, are greatly concerned by the menace of what they call the "disintegration of India."

The imperialists are not, and never have been, concerned with "sovereignty" of their neo-colonies. They have always considered it fair game to intervene at will in the internal affairs of India and issue orders to the comprador ruling classes. The recent release of the arch-criminal Warren Anderson, Chairman of Union Carbide, is a graphic reflection of the real nature of such "sovereignty" (see "Capitalism's Great Peacetime Slaughter"). But they are deeply worried that the centrifugal pulls in India and the corresponding challenge to the authority of the all-India state—which have been dramatically illustrated by events in the Assam in the North-East and most recently in Punjab—could make India "ungovernable" and endanger their considerable investments. Most of all, these imperialist gentlemen are aware to a certain degree that the current state of affairs could unleash what they find

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most menacing of all—the revolutionary struggle of the Indian masses. There is no saying what "havoc" this genie might wreak once released from the bottle. If opinions of Indira Gandhi reflected the differing interests of various imperialist powers, all are in agreement that her "iron rule" was fine as long as it was directed against the masses of people.

The current map of India was created by the British imperialists. The current "unity" of India is based on the subjection of many peoples and nations to an arbitrary central authority. It seems that this unequal and reactionary "unity" is doomed in one form or another. And the proletariat has no interest in trying to preserve such a "unity." On the contrary, what will replace present-day-India very much depends on the proletariat's revolutionary struggle. A truly unified state—that is, one based upon the equality of nations—can

only come about through the forcible destruction of the current Indian state apparatus and the establishment of true national equality. As the article in this issue of *A World to Win* by K. Chittaranjam illustrates, this perspective is currently a point of great attention among the genuine revolutionary forces in India who are knitting their brows and striving to develop the correct line and policies for developing the revolutionary movement in India and its various regions.

The *Declaration of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement* makes the following penetrating analysis of this situation common to the majority of oppressed nations:

"... In our era, the national question has ceased to be an internal question of single countries and has become subordinate to the general question of the world proletarian revolution, hence its thoroughgoing resolution has become directly dependent on the struggle against imperialism. Within this context Marxist-Leninists should uphold the right of self-determination of oppressed nations in the multi-national semi-colonial states."

As Mao Tsetung put it, "in the final analysis, national struggle is a matter of class struggle." National oppression, by its nature falls upon all classes in a nation except for the small minority of exploiters in league with the oppressors. But it is the masses of labouring people, especially the peasantry, who bear the largest burden of the oppression of nations. If the national struggles in Punjab and some other parts of India are currently led by bourgeois forces it is nonetheless true that underneath lie the struggles of the workers and peasants. This is the material basis for the current struggles raging in Punjab and other oppressed nations in India to become tributaries of a larger movement aimed not only at the central authorities but also at the imperialists behind them.

There will be no resolution of the national question in India without the New Democratic Revolution. Neither the efforts of the central authorities to reinforce their rule with the army and terror, nor illusory efforts at independence without rupturing with imperialism and reaction,

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can lead to the resolution of this problem.

### India and Imperialist Contention

India, which had long been the private preserve of British imperialism, has in the more recent period been an area where all the major imperialist powers have been able to penetrate and extract wealth produced by the masses of people. This has led to a situation where both rival blocs of imperialist powers are present in India, where both have built up supporters among various sections of the exploiting classes and their political representatives. The traditional "private sector" of the economy continues to be dominated by Western imperialist interests, especially British and American. On the other hand, a large "public sector" has been built up since independence. This public sector has been particularly encouraged by the revisionist rulers of the Soviet Union who have loaned the Indian comprador ruling class large sums of money and have obtained a number of preferential trade agreements. This cozy relationship is disguised as the "non-capitalist road of development" or sometimes as a "step toward socialism" by the USSR. In fact, it is nothing but typical imperialist development.

At times, the presence of conflicting imperialist powers in India has given fuel to sharp disputes in the ruling classes themselves. All of the imperialist powers have sought to build up influence in the ruling classes and the state machinery. The Emergency, for example, declared by Indira Gandhi in 1975, was aimed not only at the revolutionary left but also at many of her bourgeois opponents, particularly those tied more directly to Western capital. The Western imperialists did not hide their pleasure at Indira Gandhi's temporary departure from power in 1977 and the subsequent Janata-led government.

The overall international situation has also had its repercussions on the Indian subcontinent. Indira Gandhi's successful war with Pakistan (allied with the US-led bloc) that led to the establishment of the state of Bangladesh in 1971 cannot be separated from the aid and encouragement her government received from

the Soviet Union (especially in the form of the 20-year treaty of cooperation, etc., which is actually a military treaty calling upon India to come to the aid of the Soviet Union if it is "attacked" and *vice versa*). Similarly, the repeated refusal of Indira Gandhi's government to condemn the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan is testimony to the importance of the Soviet influence over Indian policy, as were India's border war with revolutionary China in 1962 and subsequent clashes, which were spurred on by the Soviets.

But the Soviet Union has not eliminated the influence and positions of the Western imperialist powers in India. In addition, all of the imperialist powers have adopted a common position when faced with genuine revolutionary struggle of the masses. The armed struggle of the Indian masses that spectacularly erupted in the late 60s and early 70s and came to be known as the Naxalbari movement (after the region in which armed peasant revolts first started) was suppressed by guns manufactured in the East as well as the West.

If this uneasy equilibrium between the rival imperialist blocs continues to exist in India at the present time, it is certain that the aggravation of contradictions in the world imperialist system, including the conflict between the imperialists themselves, will have further repercussions in India also. This situation is also creating more favourable opportunities for the independent revolutionary action of the masses as well as creating new obstacles that the revolutionary movement will have to surmount.

Imperialism has not only exported capital to India, it has also exported its ideology and its political trappings. The exploiting classes and the privileged engage in parliamentary acrobatics while the masses of the people are kept firmly in their place through the power of landlords' goon squads in large sections of the countryside or the police forces in the cities. Thousands of political prisoners are locked up in Indian prisons, some of whom are held without charges. The army, of course, is always ready to intervene to protect the rule of the exploiters. Parliament it-



self has been shown to be far from indispensable. For example, during the Emergency of 1975 Indira Gandhi simply arrested the main parliamentary opposition leaders. On numerous occasions in the course of inner bourgeois squabbles and infighting she simply disbanded first one and then another of elected state governments. In the last four months of 1984, the Indian army has been called upon to reestablish "order" an average of *once every three days*. Indeed, the sham democracy of Great Britain (and the West generally) takes on a particularly macabre, if ludicrous, form in the "World's Largest Democracy."

Even the communist movement has historically been far from free of the aping of the imperialists and their system. So-called communists have for decades called on the masses of India to put their faith in the peaceful road to socialism--in other words demanded that they peacefully allow themselves to be robbed and worse in return for the privilege of trotting out every so often to the polling booth and having some so-called workers representatives in the parliamentary talk shop. And in the recent period the Soviet Union has also actively promoted the worship of bourgeois democracy in India. But this pastime of the exploiters has worn thin over the years and when, under the influence of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and the great battle led by Mao Tsetung in the international arena against modern revisionism, a communist movement developed in India that was really capable of demonstrating *another road* to the masses, the revolutionary outpouring shook India from one end to the other. Although this grand re-



volutionary movement led by Charu Mazumdar and the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) was eventually defeated in the early 1970s and Comrade Mazumdar was himself martyred, the legacy of Naxalbari is far from eliminated from the political landscape of India and

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there are important Marxist-Leninist forces in India who are currently preparing a new revolutionary assault, building upon the achievements of the early battles and summing up the lessons, positive and negative, that have been learned from that experience.

#### **India Ripe for Revolution**

The death of Indira Gandhi and the surrounding events underscore one thing if nothing else: the hold of the reactionary ruling classes and imperialism on India is shaky. The objective conditions for revolution--the inability of the masses to live in the old way and the inability of the ruling classes to rule in the old way--are rapidly ripening. The subjective factors for revolution, the communist forces, are also rapidly developing in India. These forces are engaged in the important process of struggling to come to a correct understanding of the nature of Indian society and the transformation it is going through



*Charu Mazumdar, leader of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), martyred July 28, 1972.*

and to develop a revolutionary line that can lead the proletariat and the masses of people forward along the

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path of People's War.

It is critical that the revolutionary masses the world over understand the importance of the stakes involved in India. What has long been a reserve for imperialism, a place upon whose misery imperialism has bolstered its system, can become a bastion of the world proletarian revolution. The recent formation of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, in which two organisations in India participate--the Central Reorganising

Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) and the Organising Committee of the Revolutionary Communist Party, Indja--creates excellent conditions for the unity of the revolutionary movement in India and that of the world as a whole to grow stronger and bear fruit.

At a time when the contradictions in the world are greatly intensifying and the danger of a world war increasing, the possibility of unleashing a revolutionary war in India cannot help but be of great importance to the oppressed the world over. The unfolding of events in India over the next period could do much to change the equilibrium in the world and create a situation more favourable to the revolution. If you're talking about world revolution, you're talking about India. ■