

Dilip's Second
draft

Is The Jana Sangh Really Anti-Communist ?

---Dilip Chitre.

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Is the Jana Sangh really anti-communist ? This question has been asked and answered variously during the last few years but today it has gained sharp relevance due to the dramatic developments following the last Presidential election and culminating in a crack in the ruling Congress party. Everyone except the most naive already know well that Mrs Indira Gandhi's government is crypto-communist, sly and opportunistic. Mrs Gandhi, whom many people wishfully expected to go to pieces after the split in the Congress, has proved that she is the best political tactician in the country, able to exploit the short-sighted opportunism of her supposed rivals to manipulate things in her own favour. It is also an established communist practice to use any suitable strategy in order to subvert the politics of a country from within. Even when the tenets of their own ideology do not seem to permit it, the communists employ tactics of such a kind that they join forces with those whom they theoretically consider reactionaries and enemies of communism. In India the communists have often joined forces with communalists, exploited the politics of caste to their own advantage and formed coalitions with their theoretically sworn enemies. Mrs Gandhi is the ablest Indian exponent of Leninist tactics and strategy, branded communist leaders being no comparison to her in that respect. Today, her socialist bandwagon is supported by her crypto-communist Congressmen and communists outside her official camp. She has been able to confuse further the chronically confounded ^{democratic} Socialist parties of India making them support her on issues critical to her stay in power such as the nationalisation of banks.

But there are many formidable political observers in this country who believe that the real and final struggle for power in this country is between the well-organized communists and the equally well-organized communalists--- the Jana Sangh in particular.

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In 1960, the mouth-piece of the Jana Sangh, Organiser, loftily declared; "The real battle in India is... ~~the battle~~ between Hinduism and Communism". But on March 12, 1967, the same paper made a cautious gesture of courtship to the communists by saying; "There is not much in common between the Bharatiya Jana Sangh and the Communist Party of India. But we are all children of Bharat Mata and we are all heirs to the spirit of the twentieth century. That sure is some base to try to build on". This was supported by an even more revealing declaration: "Perhaps the present encounter will not only make the Bharatiya Jana Sangh more radical and the C.P.I. more national, not unwelcome end-results."

The courtship is mutual as shown by the C.P.I.'s reciprocal gestures. 'The Review of the Fourth General Elections' by the National Council of the C.P.I. noted the increase in the votes won by the Jana Sangh and deplored that the C.P.I. had adopted a "Rigid and inflexible" attitude on electoral adjustments with the Jana Sangh. It suggested that "we should have taken a flexible line and tried for adjustments ..." since the Jana Sangh was gaining a "mass base which included vast sections of the disillusioned bourgeoisie, students, traders, shop-keepers and professional classes." The C.P.I. even made a ~~subtle~~ distinction between the Swatantra Party and the Jana Sangh by observing that "there are contradictions between the two which cannot be easily resolved and anti-communism is not proving efficacious under the impact of the popular and anti-Congress upsurge and the election results."

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The Swatantra Party had also been ^{making} friendly gestures to the Jana Sangh based on the theory that the Jana Sangh was anti-communist and therefore, as the only other right-wing party, was closer in ideology to the Swatantra Party than to any other political party. The Swatantra leader, Mr M.R. Masani, was quick and perceptive enough to glean, from reports and comments in the cryptic-communist weekly LINK, that the communists were wooing the Jana Sangh with exceptional fervour and some sections of the Jana Sangh leadership were even beginning to respond to them. In July 1967, he warned the Jana Sangh of the disturbing implications of such courtship. Except

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for Mr Balraj Madhok, none of the top leaders of the Jana Sangh, seemed to prefer the Swatantra Party to the communists. The Jana Sangh's President, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, even made the following astonishing gesture : " If the Right Communists ~~were~~ could change themselves, and they have really given the impression ~~that~~ of being responsive to popular sentiments and of an urge to break away from the Marxist dogmas and extra-territorial attachment, the opposition ~~might~~ might become the mainstay of the alternative government." (The Times of India, August 14, 1967.).

Either the Jana Sangh is gullible in its tactics or, once its Hindu chauvinism is accepted, it can even become a Hindu communist party ! One would not ^{easily} believe that the Jana Sangh is tactically gullible. If it were, it could not have spread its net so successfully and so wide in Northern, Western and Central India. It has better cadres than any other party in India except the C.P.I.(M). It ^{exercises} ~~holds~~ a ~~massive~~ spell over middle and lower-middle class Hindus. It has an impressive militant organisation, ~~like~~ the R.S.S. as its backbone. And with Hindu revivalism gaining rapidly in strength, it has as much popular motivative appeal as slogans of socialism. In agitation, in mass violence, the only effective motivational ^{appeals} ~~techniques~~ used recently have been either communalist or Maoist. This is not accidental: Hindu society is remarkably susceptible to cultural chauvinism, even its regional and linguistic forms. Nor is Hindu society immune to communism and other forms of totalitarian rule, being authoritarian and individual-negating in its outlook.

What one is witnessing today is therefore a mutually guarded but definitely discernible adoption of the tactics of contingent alliance by the Communists and the Jana Sangh. Both perhaps believe that, once they are in power, they can get the better of their electoral allies. They have experimented with such partnerships but neither are in a position to assess the tangible benefits of such alliances in the present confusion in Indian politics.

There is, of course, an alternative interpretation possible. Considering that in the present state the lack of an adult, well-cared-for society, the liberal democratic ethic does not even exist in Indian society, Indian politics are bound to become more and more populist and not genuinely democratic. ^{It} ~~It~~ may even lead to a chauvinistic brand of communism evolving in India just as it has evolved in China. In that event, it is

even possible that the ideologies of the Jana Sangh and the communists will converge to create a chauvinistic brand of communism. If Russian communists can be anti-Jewish, if the Maoist Chinese can clash with the Russians, it is not impossible for India to have Hindu Communists.

The Jana Sangh, while it favours state control, lacks a coherent economic ideology. ~~And recent divisions in the Lok Sabha on socio-economic issues have shown that the Jana Sangh has swung to economic radicalism quite remarkably.~~

That the Jana Sangh was anti-communist was perhaps a myth based on the fact that the Jana Sangh leaders themselves declared so in the past. This supposed staunch anti-communism of the Jana Sangh was further romanticized by other rightists, more wishfully by certain sections of the Swatantra party. But this was naive. Friendship on the simple basis of a shared anti-communism, as proved decisively by the rise of Hitler, is dangerous. On the other hand, as Nehru's blunders have proven equally decisively, friendship with the communists solely on the grounds of an egalitarian inclination, is equally dangerous. Communalist neo-fascists and communists have one thing in common. Both are totalitarian in attitude and unscrupulous in tactics. The communists have seldom backed a wrong horse: They usually make an ass of the winning horse by owning it after the race is won. Outwardly, they only woo others under the label of a "united front" against the forces of reaction; beneath the surface, they infiltrate the very roots of their temporary allies' cadres in order to perform well-timed, spectacular coups. ~~This country has time and again thrown up its own communists in a Gandhian's clothing. The same can happen to the Jana Sangh, once the communists successfully woo its leaders and simultaneously infiltrate and indoctrinate its cadres.~~

And why not? Divisions in the Lok Sabha during 1967-68 on Socio-economic issues show that, in contrast with the Swatantra Party, the Jana Sangh has been increasingly leaning towards economic radicalism. Indeed, when declaring that a merger of the Jana Sangh with the Swatantra Party was ruled out, the Jana Sangh leader, Mr. Nanji Deshmukh, made the distinction that while the Jana Sangh believed in controlled economy, Swatantra believed in free enterprise. If one were to compare recent 'ideological' statements by prominent Jana Sangh leaders with earlier expressions of Jana Sangh ideology, one finds a noticeable sprinkling of radical terminology in the recent dicta. It may be that the Jana Sangh leaders hope to influence their communist counterparts equally and indoctrinate them into the intricacies of Hindu cultural ideals. Conversely, one can visualize Jana Sangh cadres

simultaneously reciting the Vedas and Lenin and Marx ^{and} finding hitherto undiscovered resemblances. Ideological rationalisations are ~~only~~ the superstructure of communist rule: beneath them lies the communist mode of operation, methods of gaining and holding political power ruthlessly and ~~also~~ shrewdly. Single-track mass-persuasion and propaganda are certainly not a minor communist weapon. Once they come to power by partnering ideologically uncertain electoral allies like the Jana Sangh, they can easily control most ~~of the~~ important policies. The only difficulties the communists have encountered so far in dealing with the Jana Sangh are connected with foreign policy issues. The Chinese ~~aggression~~ ^{aggression}, the Soviet Union's decision to supply arms to Pakistan in breach of the Tashkent understanding, the communists' pro-Arab stance in the Arab-Israeli conflict--- all these are issues on which the Jana Sangh's Hindu chauvinism **showed** ~~strong~~ strongly hostile reactions. But the Jana Sangh's own foreign policy, if it has any, is very naive and simple. It may seem pro-Israel only because the Arab world is Muslim, whereas ~~the~~ Swatantra is pro-Israel because the U.A.R. is in the clutches of the Soviet Union and sees in Russia's Middle Eastern ambitions an eventual threat to democracy in India. In some ways, both these parties have text-book attitudes to the extreme complexities of international power politics. The Jana Sangh is as much anti-U.S. as it claims to be anti-Soviet: for it is basically chauvinistic. Swatantra, on the other hand, needlessly comes out with sophisticated support to the U.S. involvement in Viet Nam, thus lending itself to the charge that it is a pro-American party hardly concerned with India's own problems. The Swatantra Party's ideological battle with the communists is needlessly too 'international' in spirit and the communists have cleverly exploited this to their advantage by persuading the Jana Sangh and the Indian intelligentsia at large that not only Swatantra has extra-territorial loyalties but that Swatantra's sole political objective is to sell India down the river to Western ~~capitalist~~ capitalist imperialism. With a massive propaganda machinery at its command, the C.P.I. is actually making use of Hindu chauvinism to alienate India from the West. Its double-talk with the Jana Sangh on this score has perhaps been an important element in Jana Sangh's decision to move away from Swatantra and closer to the Communists.

The depth to which the communists have influenced Jana Sangh thinking can be gauged from the fact that, as reported in Hindustan Times of May 17, 1969, Jana Sangh leaders declined to meet the Home Minister when the latter had invited opposition parties to discuss measures to deal with the Naxalites. In fact, during the last three years, various Jana Sangh leaders including the Jana Sangh President, Mr A.B. Vajpayee, have blandly declared that they do not mind co-operating with the communists on a minimum programme. With the talk of Hindu socialism, like the talk of Arab socialism, already much in the air, one can even expect the Indian communists to persuade the Jana Sangh that the Soviet Union is less of a foreign power to India than the U.S. Thus, even chauvinism can be taken care of.

The Jana Sangh may not be on the way to becoming gradually communist, but it is certainly not ^{consistently and definitely} anti-communist any more. This has devastating implications for the future of Indian politics. Through Mrs Gandhi, the communists have already brought their Trojan Horse into Delhi. This is just one prong of a multi-prong operation aiming to subvert democracy in India. Mrs Gandhi's drive for nationalisation is already gaining the willing or embarrassed support of the democratic socialist parties. That helps her and her communist advisers to gain further controls ^{of} the nation's politics through greater economic controls vested in the State. This also makes the opposition chaotic. The ~~opposite faction of the Congress party~~ commands limited popularity. Swatantra remains the only democratic party committed to free enterprise and a welfare state. The democratic socialists have no sharply distinctive ideology to offer in contrast with the ruling Congress party and the communists.

If the Jana Sangh were really socialist and equally really anti-Communist, it would be close to the democratic socialists and would have nothing to do with the communists. If they were really 'rightist', they would join hand with Swatantra, on the national level and ~~to~~ the various regional populist parties of rightist leanings on the regional level: but then again, ~~they~~ ^{They} would not only avoid alliances with the communists but would actually try to thwart their tactics. Within the Jana Sangh leadership, the only ^{consistent} anti-Communist is Professor Bal Raj Madhok. At the last ^{annual} session of the Jana Sangh, ^{in 1968} he published a pamphlet entitled, aptly, "Changing Circumstances and the Bharatiya Jana Sangh." He criticised his party's opportunism in the name of power-politics and referred to the last Presidential election which was the first symbolic conflict between the communist-dominated Left and the Rightist parties in India. In the same pamphlet Professor

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Madhok advocated an alliance of his party with the Opposition Congress and the Swatantra Party. But the Jana Sangh's leadership censured him severely for this pamphlet which also contained sharp criticism of the Soviet Union and the Communists. He was compelled to withdraw the pamphlet and even forced to deny that it was circulated.

If this ^{is} ~~were~~ any indication of the shape of things to come, one can venture to guess that however well-organised, Hindu chauvinists are far too naive to withstand the subversive but persuasive Communists who may, one day, defeat them from within. After all, haven't the Communists contributed to caste politics in India and ~~have~~ satisfied such incongruous bedfellows as the Muslim League? The Jana Sangh's vital statistics by way of popular hold will certainly make them desirable, albeit temporary, bedfellows for the shrewd communists.