

Dog Bites Dog

On July 16, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi sacked Finance Minister Morarji Desai, old-line pro-U.S. politician, and took over the post herself. With the finance portfolio taken away from him, Desai handed in his resignation as Deputy Prime Minister. Indira Gandhi's move shocked Indian ruling circles. In the words of a PTI report, Indira Gandhi, in taking this step, "threw a political bomb and in the process deepened the crisis in the Congress Party and the government at the centre."

This action by Indira Gandhi was designed as a counter-move against Desai. For on July 12, the Desai faction of the Congress Party had manipulated Congress' Parliamentary Board into nominating Sanjiva Reddy, who is said to be "unfriendly" to Indira Gandhi, as Congress' candidate in the elections for a successor to the late President Hussein. The Desai faction had also planned their next move — to oust Indira Gandhi from power.

After Desai's dismissal, Indira Gandhi called an emergency cabinet meeting, which decided to put into force her long-contrived bank "nationalization" programme. This was a measure to deceive the people and strike at the Desai faction which has always opposed this step. It was also designed to shore up her rickety regime. The "nationalization" programme is in essence a plan to develop bureaucrat-capitalism, in other words, to take the "non-capitalist road" which is advocated by the Soviet revisionists. Revealing the reason for Indira Gandhi's hasty order for the "nationalization" of banks, an Indian paper said that "under the Prime Minister's stewardship, the country is being deliberately mortgaged to the Soviet Union, whose daily growing influence is perceptible not only in the conduct of our foreign affairs but in the trend of our internal policies, particularly economic."

The Gandhi-Desai feud spotlights the sharpening struggle for power within the Indian reactionary ruling clique which is coming out into the open. It is also a reflection of the bitter rivalry between U.S. imperialism and Soviet revisionism in India, which are collaborating with the Indian reactionaries to oppose China, communism and the people. This dog-bite-dog performance is reaching a climax as the presidential election draws near.