

Pakistan to retake Bangladesh?

Ramtanu Maitra and Paul Zykovsky report on Zia's intrigues and the potential for a new civil-war upheaval.

The Pakistani government of General Zia ul-Haq is attempting to re-establish control over Bangladesh, formerly East Pakistan, which gained its independence after a bitter struggle supported by India in 1971. A successful resumption of Pakistani control over Bangladesh was never considered a possibility until last May's assassination of Bangladesh President Ziaur Rahman. Since then, the effort has featured the secret visit of five Pakistani cabinet ministers to Bangladesh last month to discuss the possibility of turning it into a "confederate" of Pakistan.

That delegation also asked the Bangladesh regime to build up its military forces. There are reports that Bangladesh is sending army officers to Pakistan and China for special training.

Indian press report that Pakistani President Zia ul-Haq is now planning a personal trip to Bangladesh, the first such visit by a Pakistani head of state since the 1971 independence struggle. Zia would reportedly press for a joint defense policy.

Behind the Pakistani intervention into Bangladesh is a conspicuous commitment by U.S. Secretary of State Alexander Haig to destabilize India, possibly including a Pakistani-launched proxy war against the subcontinent's leading nation. The State Department's arms aid to Pakistan includes F-16s, giving them an edge over India militarily, and also an augmented delivery capability for the nuclear weapon Pakistan is known to be building.

The effort to establish a Pakistan-Bangladesh axis tends to confirm that Haig's real intention in providing \$3 billion in military equipment to Pakistan is less to counter Soviet forces in Afghanistan than to create tension on the Indian subcontinent. Of itself, Pakistani control of Bangladesh would be unstable to the point of a renewed civil war. In addition, it would confront India with virtual military encirclement by Pakistan, Bangladesh, and China.

Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi warned in a recent speech that the supply of F-16s to Pakistan "represents the introduction into this region of a class of aircraft a generation ahead of anything operating with other air forces in the area. The subcontinent is being pushed, willy-nilly, into an arms race."

Zia's designs on Bangladesh began with the assassination of Ziaur Rahman in a coup carried out by pro-Pakistani military elements, Islamic fundamentalists, and pro-Chinese groups. Since the coup took place, a systematic campaign has been conducted to remove all military leaders who fought for Bangladesh's independence from Pakistan in 1971.

Bangladesh coup

According to the Bangladesh news daily *Natun Bangla*, a few days before President Ziaur Rahman was assassinated, a secret meeting was held to unify the extreme-right Islamic fundamentalists and the extreme-left Moists. Then, on May 31, Ziaur Rahman was gunned down at a rest-home in the coastal town of Chittagong. The ensuing confusion allowed the pro-Chinese and pro-Pakistani elements who had opposed liberation to gain the upper hand in the government.

A liberation war hero, Major General Manzoor, who had close ties to pro-Chinese elements, led the killing. Manzoor and his two associates were eliminated quickly, prior to any public hearing. Since then, Pakistan has strengthened its hold on Bangladesh with the emergence of a triumvirate comprised of the acting president, Abdus Sattar, the Chief of Staff of the Army H. M. Ershad and the Premier Shah Azizur Rahman. These three, with the help of other Pakistani agents, have clamped down on Bangladesh nationalists with apparent ease.

Acting President Abdus Sattar was the former Chief Justice of Pakistan and was Pakistan's Chief Election Commissioner when the liberation war was fought in 1971. He returned to his native Bangladesh only in 1973—two years after independence. He quickly earned the trust of President Ziaur Rahman and rose to become his vice-president in 1977.

Chief of Army Staff Lieutenant General Ershad, now considered the de facto leader of Bangladesh, is also a repatriated Pakistani general and was instrumental in the purges that took place after President Ziaur's death. Ershad has installed repatriated Pakistani army officers as heads of four out of five divisions. Ershad, as reported by the press, is quite happy with Sattar because

of the acting president's "pious Muslim outlook."

The third individual in the triumvirate is the Premier Shah Azizur Rahman, who is well known for his strong ties with the Islamic fundamentalists. Premier Rahman was selected by the then Pakistani President Yahya Khan to plead the case against Bangladesh in the U.N. during the liberation war. Premier Rahman also raised the army of Razakars—a Pakistan government-financed organization meant to destroy the nationalist Awami League and Mukti Bahini (Freedom Fighters) during the liberation war in 1971. Rahman was also identified by author V. K. Sarin in his book *India's Northeast in Flames*, as a close friend of the CIA agent Nolton who was declared persona non grata by the Indian government for his association with various anti-India forces.

The Islamic fundamentalist group Al Badr, which was involved in mass genocide in collaboration with the Pakistani Army in 1971 has been re-established in Bangladesh with the help of financial and political support from the Persian Gulf region. Another key person among the fundamentalists is Khondakar Mush-taque Ahmed, who was directly involved in the assassination of the founder of Bangladesh, its first President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975. Recent press reports indicate that Khondakar is meeting with the Acting President Sattar frequently.

In spite of this apparent control, the oppositionists' voices can be heard. Recently, when two cabinet ministers and former freedom fighters Nurul Islam Shishu and Akbar Hossain were summarily dismissed by Sattar, the press reported a split within the ruling party. The *Times of India* reported in June that Shishu and Hossain had a "wordy altercation with the prime minister in the Parliament, each holding out threats against the other."

Moreover, Pakistan's efforts to establish control over Bangladesh will depend on removal of the nationalist political opposition centered around the Awami League Party founded by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and headed by his daughter Hasina Wazed.

The Awami League has called for boycotting the presidential elections scheduled for October because of growing indications that the elections will be rigged by the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party under Acting President Sattar.

In a recent mass rally at Dacca, the capital of Bangladesh, thousands of Awami League members threatened to launch a "massive and relentless movement" against the Sattar government. The protest featured League demands to withdraw the state of emergency imposed after President Ziaur's death, to guarantee free and fair elections, and to shift the election date to the end of November so that Hasina Wazed will be eligible to run as the Awami League's candidate.

Book Review

The old Colonial Office mentality

by Ramtanu Maitra and Susan B. Cohen

Small Is Possible

by George McRobie

with a foreword by Verena Schumacher

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There can hardly be a more painful reflection on the state of humankind in 1981 than the spectacle of a grouping of leaders of nations, some among the poorest in the world, deliberating on how to build windmills. But that's what happened in Nairobi this month at the U.N.-sponsored conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy. At the "North-South" summit meeting in Cancún, Mexico in October, heads of state of North and South will be given a dose of the Brandt Commission's particular version of the "appropriate technologies" doctrine.

This book presents a kind of international directory of "appropriate technology" projects and think tanks, written by an associate of the late E. F. Schumacher, author of that benchmark manifesto of zero-growth environmentalism, *Small is Beautiful*.

With a foreword by Schumacher's wife giving a personal touch—"Fritz would have valued this book"—McRobie proceeds to outline the development of the "appropriate technologies" movement before getting into the directory proper.

There is little new here, except the reminder that when Schumacher proposed the "appropriate technology" package of low-technology, employment-creating economic programs to the Indian Planning Commission in 1961 he was turned away out of hand. How Mr. Schumacher secured the invitation to regale Nehru's planners in the first place is not mentioned, but one senses the hand of Lord Mountbatten, the Earl of Burma, in the wings.

In any case, it took the British Foreign Office, that repository of old colonial hands for whom the sun has yet to set, to recognize the merits of Schumacher's approach. In 1963 Schumacher was given the go-ahead by Britain's Overseas Development Institute (ODI). The ODI hosted establishment of Schumacher's Intermediate Technology Development Group in 1965—what McRobie describes as "an action group" to promote appro-