

From New Delhi by Susan Maitra

Soviet-Iranian pressure on Pakistan

The arrival of a new Muslim Soviet ambassador in Islamabad follows a series of fundamentalist riots.

Riots orchestrated by the Shi'ite fundamentalists in Baluchistan and Sind in early July have rocked Pakistan. The government has announced the arrest of a number of Iranians who had crossed the borders to arm and support the rioting Shi'ites.

On July 17, a week after the riots were finally quelled, the new Soviet ambassador, Abdul Rakhman Khalil Ogly Vezirov, a Muslim from Turkmenistan who replaced Vitalii Smirnov, presented his credentials to President Zia ul-Haq.

Vezirov is a protégé of Geider Aliyev. Born in Azerbaijan of a Shi'ite Muslim family, Aliyev is known to be the Soviet specialist in using Shi'ite fundamentalism to create chaos in Islamic nations, the overseer of the Soviets' "Muslim fundamentalist" card. Born of a Shi'ite Muslim family in Azerbaijan, Aliyev is a career KGB officer who rose to the top of the party leadership, and, according to one source, had field experience in Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

One of Aliyev's more prominent cards is Dr. Kalim Siddiqi, sponsor of the "Assembly of United Islamic Movements." Siddiqi, who heads the Muslim Research Institute in London, has come in close contact with the Soviets' "Third World"-oriented political and cultural operations in Tashkent, Soviet Uzbekistan.

In early July, ten days before Vezirov arrived, Pakistani Shi'ites went on a rampage in Quetta, Baluchistan, demanding that Shi'ite religious and legal codes be instituted all over Pakistan. Outnumbered local police con-

fronted the armed fanatics and the resulting battle left at least 27 killed and scores injured. The Army was called in and the foreign residents, Americans in particular, were told to leave the town.

Three days later, on July 11, when the Sind police arrested a Shi'ite drug-pusher and three of his cohorts in the port city of Karachi, riots broke out in that town. Two bombs were exploded—one in Karachi near the Pan Am office, and the other in Islamabad which demolished a part of the American Information Center. Notably, the targets of the terrorists were American.

On July 9, Radio Nejat-e-Iran, a clandestine radio in Iran, announced the news that three armed members of the Iranian Guard Corps had been captured while returning from Quetta. The station reported that the three men were members of a 28-man unit sent from Teheran to bring arms and ammunition to the Baluchi Shi'ites.

Pakistan, cautious about its relations with Iran, kept quiet for several days before announcing the arrest of the Iranians. Meanwhile, official Teheran Radio launched a broadside against the Pakistan Government for "surrounding Shi'ite residential areas and arresting them en masse."

Days later, Pakistani government spokesmen revealed that a large cache of arms and ammunition had been seized along the Iran-Afghanistan border. A number of Kalashnikov rifles and East German pistols were seized in the raids made by the Quetta police.

Since then, Pakistani authorities have rounded up a number of Shi'ite leaders, who have pledged "to continue their protest meetings in Islamabad until the acceptance of their demands."

So far, the Soviets have been quiet about the riots. But their assets inside Pakistan are calling loudly for a mass uprising to bring down the government. On July 12 oppositionist A. Qayyum Butt made an impassioned plea to other opposition leaders to unite and "establish a countrywide peoples' front to mobilize workers and peasants in order to bring about a structural change and not a change of face."

As the Pakistani Army became enmeshed in fighting the Shi'ites within the country, the Soviets began accusing the Pakistan government of stepping up espionage activities against the Soviet-backed Karmal regime in Afghanistan.

It is apparent that the Soviets are intensifying pressure in an attempt to force Pakistan to unilaterally accept the Karmal regime as a legal government and acquiesce in the Soviet Union's continued occupation of Afghanistan. Vezirov's appointment is, in fact, part of that operation.

Last month, Pakistani Foreign Minister Shahabzada Yakub Khan was in India and the United States hoping to bring pressure on the Soviet Union to resolve the Afghanistan issue peacefully. There are recent indications that the Pakistanis have concluded that such indirect pressuring is ineffective. According to the July 31 issue of *India Today*, a news bi-monthly published in New Delhi, Pakistan is now looking for a way to talk to the Soviet Union directly.

The arrival of Vezirov and the Iranian tie-up with Pakistan's Shi'ites will put a high price on such desperate initiatives.