
Afghan Deal Falls Through

Crisis builds up around Pakistan

by Mary McCourt

United States and Soviet efforts to “settle” the Afghanistan conflict, climaxing in October with the shuttle diplomacy of Kremlin associate Armand Hammer, have foundered on one fundamental issue: The Soviets are not likely to withdraw their 100,000 troops from Afghanistan any time soon. Pakistani President Zia ul-Haq, for one, realizes this. As he said in Bangkok Oct. 25, it would be the “miracle of the 20th century” if the Soviets left Afghanistan, Agence France Presse reported, given that the Soviets have never before pulled back from anywhere. Zia said the Geneva U.N. talks were “practically completed,” but since 1979, troops have been fighting in Afghanistan to protect the “soft southern underbelly” of the Soviet empire.

The problem is certainly not due to any steadfastness of the United States behind its ally Pakistan. Secret U.S.-Soviet negotiations, were already going on even before the United States halted a \$4 billion aid package Sept. 30. The Soviet news agency TASS reported Sept. 10 that “within the framework of the practice of Soviet U.S. consultations on regional issues,” Soviet Foreign Ministry official Yury Alekseyev, head of the Middle East department, and U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Edward Djerejian, were to meet in Geneva Sept. 10-11 on the Afghan situation.

Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze’s visit to Washington, D.C. Sept. 15 began unprecedented secret consultations on Afghanistan, the *Baltimore Sun* reported Oct. 4. Moscow-based sources told the *Sun* that the Gorbachov leadership considered the Afghan invasion a mistake, now adversely affecting Moscow’s ability to maneuver in the world. The Soviets’ terms for withdrawal reportedly were, that the People’s Democratic Party—the current Soviet puppet government in Kabul—retains four key posts in the interim cabinet: internal affairs, defense, finance and justice, and Afghanistan’s “neutrality”—meaning no future government would accept anti-Soviet foreign military bases.

This was the backdrop for Armand Hammer’s travels this month, involving seven nations: the Soviet Union, United States, Afghanistan, Israel, Pakistan, Sweden, and Italy. Hammer claimed in an interview with the *Jerusalem Post* Oct. 18, that Shevardnadze had asked his help in disengaging the 100,000 Russian troops in Afghanistan. Hammer agreed to lend his services—in exchange for the release of several Jewish Soviet dissidents. Hammer flew to Kabul Oct. 12, where he found Afghan leader Dr. Hajib Ahmadzai “receptive” to the Soviet-endorsed plan to reinstate the deposed monarchy of Afghan King Zahir Shah as a neutral government in Kabul, the *Post* said.

Hammer proposed that Swedish troops be brought in as a “peacekeeping” force, to protect Soviet troops as they withdrew. Swedish Foreign Ministry undersecretary Pierre Schori, in Moscow during the week of Oct. 12, discussed the option with Soviet officials, according to the British *Daily Telegraph* Oct. 19. Schori, a top figure in the Socialist International, said Moscow had endorsed the proposal, although the Swedes are still undecided.

However, as Hammer was launching his peacekeeping schemes, Afghan Defense Minister Mohammad Rafi was himself in Moscow, Oct. 5-7, meeting with his Soviet counterpart, Dmitri Yazov. An indication of the visit’s purpose was that Rafi visited the Soviet Voroshilov defense academy, the center of Soviet military planning.

World flashpoint

As one high-level British policymaker told *EIR* earlier in October, “Watch the Indian Ocean region”; it will be the next world flashpoint, after the Persian Gulf. The core of the tensions is Pakistan, which has become the target for escalating irregular warfare.

Like that other betrayed Western ally, Turkey, Pakistan is being hit from all sides.

True to their methods of punctuating peace negotiations with military threats, the Soviet military paper *Krasnaya Zvezda* reported Oct. 9 that helicopters had twice entered northern Pakistan, to make “emergency” landings near the Afghan border, although Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Yuli Vorontsov had apologized for the intrusions in a note to the Pakistani ambassador to Moscow.

Terrorism and ethnic conflicts have also been stepped up in an attempt to cow the Pakistani population into demanding a settlement on any terms. Government officials cited by the *Far Eastern Economic Review* Oct. 29, have privately suggested that “the Soviets were deliberately conveying the impression of increased involvement” against Pakistan. Intelligence sources, the *Review* reports, say that “there is some evidence that the Soviets have increased their direct involvement in the recruitment and training of Pakistani tribesmen for terrorist activities in the country. . . . Recently arrested terrorists have told interrogators of receiving instructions from the Afghan secret police in the presence of Soviet personnel

and some have named Soviet instructors who allegedly trained them in subversion.”

President Zia publicly accused the Soviets of terrorism, in an exclusive interview to the English-language *Saudi Gazette* in Jeddah Oct. 14. Zia was returning from a visit to Turkey, where he discussed joint defense production with President Evren.

Zia said the Soviets were using terrorism “because they have seen in the past eight years they have not been able to move Pakistan from its principled stand.” Pressure on Pakistan was coming “mainly from the U.S.S.R.,” Zia said. “So now they come out with new tactics, tactics of terrorism. I call it state-sponsored terrorism—to make bomb blasts, terrorize the people, create a rift between the local people and the [Afghan] refugees, sowing all kinds of uncertainties. Through this they want to achieve what they have been unable to achieve politically or militarily.” Because of the bombings in Pakistan, a small minority in the country had begun calling for resolving the crisis on the terms offered by Kabul or in favor of the Soviet Union. “But we cannot accept any such agreement,” Zia said. “It is not possible.”

Zia said Pakistan had made “major breakthroughs” in investigations into recent bomb blasts in Baluchistan and Punjab, but did not elaborate, the *Middle East Mirror* reported Oct. 14.

Fifty Afghan nationals were arrested Sept. 20 for subversion, Interior Minister Raji Nadir Parvez Khan told the Pakistani National Assembly. Police have recovered explosive materials and timing devices from them.

Terror took a high toll in September. On Sept. 10, ten people were hurt in a car bomb explosion in Peshawar, and two were killed and another 25 injured in a bombing at a market in Lahore. On Sept. 21, five persons were killed and 16 injured when a bomb exploded in the bus station in the northern city of Rawalpindi.

Ethnic violence broke out again in the last days of August, when police arrested more than 400 people after riots that took 30 lives and injured hundreds in southern Pakistan over three days. The fighting broke out between local Urdu-speaking Mohajirs (Muslims from India who settled in Pakistan in 1947), and Punjabi and Pakhtoon settlers, from the northwest area of Pakistan. Police raided the homes of activists belonging to three ethnic parties—the Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM), the Mohajir Ittehad Tehrik (MIT), and the Pakhtoon-Punjabi Ittehad (PPI) in Karachi, Hyderabad, and Sukkur. The presence of some 3 million Afghani refugees in Pakistan has exacerbated the ethnic clashes. Last December, Afghan refugees were at the center of ferocious riots which killed over 160 persons, and Pakistani police moved the refugees en masse from the southern cities where they had migrated, to camps on the northern border.

Renewed separatist activity in Baluchistan was reported by the *Far Eastern Economic Review* Oct. 29. Five thousand Baluchi tribesmen are believed to have gone to Afghanistan

to join separatist leader Khair Buksh Marri for more fighting against Pakistan.

More war threats

Other South Asian regional conflicts are also threatening to break out into full-scale military conflict. Between Sept. 23 and 25, the worst fighting in years broke out between Pakistan and India, when Pakistan launched a battalion-strength attack on India on the disputed Siachen glacier. The attack was the second in two weeks. Indian spokesmen said that Pakistan lost 150 men in the fighting, and troops used heavy artillery and surface-to-surface rockets.

The glacier lies at a very strategic point at the northern extremity of the ceasefire line agreed to by Indian and Pakistan in 1949, re-drawn in both 1965 and 1971. Siachen is close to the Karakoram Pass into China, and overlooks a valley where Chinese troops are stationed, just below Indian positions. The situation is complicated by the fact that on Sept. 13, Pakistan signed a border protocol with China, for the first joint inspection of the boundary between those two nations—a boundary disputed by India.

India herself is feeling heavy pressure from China. Border talks between those nations are to restart in November, over the territory India lost in the 1962 war with China. The recent riots in Tibet, were another source of anxiety. India was subdued in its response, despite unofficial agreement with the Tibetans on their fear of and opposition to the massing of Chinese troops, nuclear capabilities, and Chinese civilians in Tibet.

The third power: China

Pakistan, meanwhile, is not standing totally idle as the United States and Soviet Union yield nations to each other. It is fast consolidating another alliance: with China, the emerging power in the region as the United States pulls out. In his Bangkok statement Oct. 25, Zia indicated the strength of Pakistani-Chinese relations, by saying that the Soviet Union should learn from China how to play a constructive role in providing economic assistance to less developed countries. The Bangkok daily, *The Nation*, quoted Zia's declaration that China has “no intentions” of playing any political role outside its border. Given China's well-known imperial ambitions, the assertion translates as Pakistan's proclamation of China's right to domination in the region—especially given U.S. retreat.

Pakistani National Assemblyman Hamid Nasir Chattha confirmed the same close Sino-Pakistani ties, with his statement from Islamabad Oct. 3 that the Chinese leadership has given its assurance of fully supporting Pakistan in the event of difficulty from any quarter. China will stand shoulder to shoulder with Pakistan in any crisis, the official Chinese news service Xinhua quoted Chattha, just back from six-day visits to both Japan and China. Chattha said China's foreign policy gives a solution of the Afghanistan issue high priority.