

Storm over Asia grows, as LaRouche predicted

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

On Christmas Eve, a group of so-called Islamist terrorists hijacked an Indian Airlines plane, with 168 passengers on board, and after hopping from one airport to another—from Kathmandu, Nepal to Lahore, Pakistan to Abu Dhabi, U.A.E.—landed at Kandahar, in Afghanistan. Some might have shrugged it off, as “just another terrorist act,” organized by “those Islamists,” and expressed due regret that such a terrible event should mar the holiday season. Somehow (is the implicit conclusion), it will all get settled.

Not so. The drama that has unfolded in Afghanistan, has the potential of igniting a brush fire, that will spread far and fast, possibly escalating from wildfire into general conflagration.

Anyone who has viewed the 2 hour and 40 minute video documentary by Lyndon LaRouche, “Storm over Asia,” would recognize in an instant, that what is being played out in Kandahar, is the scenario that the Democratic Presidential hopeful developed in his strategic briefing: Driven by their awareness of the impending financial and monetary breakdown crisis, powerful financier interests are bent on seizing raw materials resources, generating chaos, starting regional wars, and breaking up powerful nation-states capable of resisting their thrust, especially Russia, China, and India.

To the extent that this reality is recognized, and responsible political forces, particularly those in the targetted nations, act to expose the nature of the strategic game being played, there is hope of avoiding the worst. LaRouche’s own role in bringing this to bear on the political debate inside the United States, is a crucial factor in creating a possible solution to the crisis.

Although Kandahar has become the eye of the storm, it is raging throughout the region, precisely as LaRouche identified it: Russian military forces and special units have escalated their assault on the Chechen insurgency in the autonomous

republic, launching an offensive on Dec. 25, aimed at conquering the capital, Grozny, no matter what the cost. Bombardments of border areas, aimed at cutting access for the rebels into neighboring areas, have escalated tensions with Georgia, and further destabilized the precarious situation inside Dagestan and Ingushetia, the latter overwhelmed by the influx of Chechen civilian refugees.

Fighting has increased in Kashmir, fuelled by Pakistani-backed Kashmiri separatists, who stormed a police station in Srinigar, India, killing 4 and wounding 13. And, in Sri Lanka, the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) stepped up attacks on a government military position at the strategically located Elephant Pass in the north of the country, which gives access to the Jaffna peninsula. Twenty-one soldiers and 80 rebels were reportedly killed in the fighting over the Christmas weekend.

Not coincidentally, all the insurgent forces activated in the region, come from the same stable, and bear remarkably similar pedigrees. They are the offspring of the notorious “Afghansi” operation generated in the mid-1970s in Zbigniew Brzezinski’s geopolitical laboratories (and spurred on later by George Bush and Margaret Thatcher). It was Brzezinski who adopted the “Islamic card” strategem of British agent Bernard Lewis, whereby well-heeled, well-equipped, and well-trained “Islamist” insurgents would wage war against the Soviet Union, ultimately leading to its collapse. Today, Brzezinski’s strategy contemplates the break-up of the Russian Federation, as well as of India, through the same ostensibly ethnic-religious warfare.

To document the close kinship of all the players in the Caucasus-Central Asian destabilizations, it is sufficient to consult the profiles of the leading groups and protagonists (see *EIR*, April 12, 1996 and Sept. 10, 1999). And to reflect on the fact, that virtually every such insurgent group has its headquarters in London.

'Kargil II'

The crisis has been manipulated from a geopolitical standpoint, for these broader strategic aims, and the immediate upshot of it could be war between India and Pakistan, both nuclear powers. To understand the political dynamic on the Indian subcontinent which has led to the current showdown, one must go back to the beginning of 1999, when then-Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan and his Indian counterpart, Atal Behari Vajpayee, inaugurated the "bus diplomacy," or "Lahore process," aimed at finally overcoming the conflict between the two nations, which had been the cause of three wars. On the agenda of talks between the two, was also the thorniest issue in Pakistan-India relations, that of Kashmir. The promising developments were deliberately sabotaged by interventions from outside the region, including a British defamation campaign against Nawaz Sharif, and an orchestrated vote of no-confidence which brought down Vajpayee's government in April. Most important in souring relations, was the fact that, while the rapprochement was ostensibly proceeding, Pakistani military units were joining with Kashmiri separatists, in infiltrating Indian Kashmir in May 1999. The battle of Kargil, which ensued, was won by the Indians, dealing a military, political, and psychological blow to Islamabad.

It was in the wake of the Kargil disaster, that Nawaz Sharif's government was overthrown by Gen. Pervez Musharraf, who, despite verbal commitments to pursue diplomatic relations with India, has sponsored a renewed escalation in Kashmir.

The insane notion cherished by Musharraf, and others (but not all) of the Pakistani military and intelligence service ISI, is that, now that Pakistan is a proven nuclear power, it can "settle the Kashmir problem militarily." It failed to do so in Kargil; now, with the hijacking of an Indian airliner, this network of forces in Pakistan again believes it can achieve this aim.

It is in this light that one must read certain recent statements by the Pakistani chief executive, Musharraf, which would be otherwise incomprehensible. Just one week prior to the terrorist attack on the plane, Musharraf said that the Kashmir issue must be solved immediately, as recent events had shown that Kashmir had become a "nuclear flashpoint." Then, on Dec. 27, after the hijacking, Musharraf said that there had been a change in his policy with India, which placed Kashmir first. "I reiterate that there is a change in policy with India. Earlier, we used to say that we will discuss all issues, including Kashmir, but now we say that the solution of the Kashmir issue is first and then other issues." According to wire reports, Musharraf thereupon instructed the Foreign Office to hold no negotiations with India except over Kashmir.

On Dec. 26, Pakistani Foreign Minister Abdus Sattar made the outrageous charge that the hijacking might be an Indian intelligence plot. "The possibility can no longer be ignored that the incident involves a preconceived design by a foreign intelligence organization," Sattar said. He accused

FIGURE 1

The Caucasus chessboard



India of "staging the whole hijacking drama," and said that India itself had "manufactured" the hijacking, to malign Pakistan. The same charge was repeated by Musharraf on Dec. 28, in an interview with CNN. Musharraf claimed that India might have "staged" the whole situation, with an "ulterior motive," as part of "New Delhi's propaganda against Pakistan," the *Hindustan Times* reported.

From India, came the accusation, that Pakistan was promoting the hijacking. At a meeting of the national executive of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in India, a resolution was adopted which characterized the hijacking as "part of Pakistan's continuing proxy war against India." The executive based its charges on certain unequivocal facts related to the incident. The resolution said that Pakistan's "pivotal role was evident from the main demand of the hijackers: the release of Maulvi Ahzar, a top leader of the Pakistan-based terrorist group Harakat-ul-Ansar."

The BJP's point was well made. In fact, the first demand issued by the hijackers, was that Maulvi Masood Ahzar, detained in a high-security Indian prison, be released. They also demanded that the Kashmir issue be settled. Later, on Dec. 28, the hijackers expanded their demands, calling for the release of 35 other militants.

According to profiles published in the French daily *Le Monde* and other press, Ahzar was born in 1968 in Bahawalpur, in a well-to-do Pakistani family. He studied at the Jamia Uloom-i-Islami in Karachi, and became a professor. He was then trained militarily during the Afghansi war against the Soviet Union. He is a relative of Fazul Rahman Khalil,

the current leader of the Harakat-ul-Mujahedeen, and played a role in merging this organization with the Karakat-ul-Jihad-Islami, in 1993. The new combination went under the name of Harakat-ul-Ansar until 1997, when it was placed on the State Department's terrorist list; then it reassumed its old name, Harakat-ul-Mujahedeen.

Ahzar entered India with a Portuguese passport on Jan. 29, 1994, was arrested and jailed, accused of having set up a terrorist organization. The Harakat-ul-Mujahedeen began its operations in Kashmir in 1993, and maintained clearly identifiable connections to Pakistan and Afghanistan. As *Le Monde* noted on Dec. 28, "Unlike the other armed movements active in Kashmir, which have their military training bases in the Pakistani part of Kashmir, the Harakat-ul-Mujahedeen has a vast network of *madrasas* (Koran schools) in Pakistan and still has training camps inside Afghanistan." Following the August 1998 American bombing raids on presumed training camps of terrorist kingpin Osama bin Laden—himself directly linked to the Harakat—during which many members of the Harakat died, the group relocated to south of Kabul "and the militants of Harakat participated in the last offensive of the Taliban against the troops of [Afghan Northern Alliance leader] Ahmed Shah Massoud last October."

Thus, the Harakat overlaps both the Taliban and the institutional network of *madrasas*, inside Pakistan, which gave birth to the Taliban. Both networks have been historically nurtured and guided by that faction of the Pakistani military and ISI, which dreams of a military solution to the Kashmir question.

At the same time, the renewed fighting which broke out in Kashmir parallel to the hijacking, in which separatists assaulted Indian police, was the acknowledged work of the very same group holding the hostages in Kandahar.

Thus, it is no exaggeration to say, that the hijacking represents a "Kargil II," an attempt by Pakistani forces to force a confrontation over Kashmir.

Responses from Moscow and Tehran

It should surprise no one, that the Russian leadership was among the first to respond to the hijacking with outrage, and solidarity with its historical ally India. Russia, after all, is combatting its own insurgency in the northern Caucasus, in the form of the Chechen variant of Brzezinski's Afghansi networks. As reported on Dec. 28 by the *Times of India* and the *Hindu*, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov condemned the hijacking and told Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh by telephone on Dec. 26 that Russia would help resolve the hijacking. The ministry released a statement that the two ministers agreed to stay in close touch and search for ways to release the hostages. Russian diplomatic sources told Interfax that the request for help had come from the Indian side.

The Russian side is taking steps "through both bilateral and multilateral channels" to assist in an early end to the crisis, the sources said. On Dec. 28, Russia assured "every possible" assistance to India to secure the release of the hostages, Dep-

uty Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin told Indian Ambassador to Moscow S.K. Lamba.

Interfax also reported that Russian Foreign Intelligence was engaged in "bilateral and multilateral" efforts to solve the crisis. On the multilateral level, both countries also appealed to Iran for assistance. It was reported by the Iranian news agency IRNA on Dec. 27, that Indian Foreign Minister Singh had asked for Tehran's help, to try to mediate a solution to the hijacking crisis. Singh spoke with his Iranian counterpart, Kamal Kharazzi, by telephone on Dec. 27, and said that India had sent a relief team to Kandahar, to negotiate. Kharazzi condemned the hijacking, and promised his government's help, to end the crisis. On Dec. 28, IRNA reported that Russian Foreign Minister Ivanov had also asked Kharazzi to assist.

The choice of Iran is significant. Iran does not have good relations with Pakistan or the Taliban in Afghanistan, and has explicitly denounced this and all such terrorist actions. The Tehran government has been in conflict with both forces, over the Afghanistan political and military situation, as it has consistently rejected the bid by the Taliban to take over the country by force, a bid backed fully by Islamabad. In addition, sectarian violence against Shi'ite Muslims, who represent the majority of Iranians, has taken place regularly in Pakistan, as the Pakistani authorities have looked on, impotent. In Afghanistan last year, ten Iranian diplomats and a journalist were kidnapped and brutally killed by Taliban forces, in their assault on Mazar-i-Sharif. Iran has demanded that both the Taliban and Pakistan identify and prosecute those responsible.

Despite these serious points of conflict, Iran could possibly exert some political influence. First, it is the rotating chairman of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), and as such, enjoys the authority to make demands on Pakistan as well as the Taliban regime, in the name of the largest organization of Islamic countries. Second, both Pakistan and the Taliban are eager to mend fences with Iran, which is playing an increasingly pivotal role in the region. The Taliban, in fact, made an official application to Iran, after the hijacking had occurred, to overcome conflict.

Most important, the Taliban finds itself in an impossible situation in the current hijacking crisis, a dilemma from which it would like to extricate itself. By virtue of its known historical and ongoing ties with the organization of hijackers, as well as its having allowed the hijackers to land the plane on Afghan territory under their control, the Taliban regime has de facto acknowledged its involvement, and therefore ultimate political responsibility. It now does not know what to do.

In a flight-forward mode, on Dec. 27, the would-be foreign minister of the Taliban, Abdul Wakil Muttawakil, told a press conference that Taliban soldiers would storm the aircraft if the hijackers proceeded with their threat to kill passengers. "If we know that the hijackers are resorting to inhuman acts, like killing people, then we will storm the plane to save some lives," Muttawakil said in Kandahar. "This warning was

given to the hijackers after they told the control tower they had tied the hands and feet of two hostages and that they would kill them and throw their bodies out of the plane.” Muttawakil said. However, earlier, after the plane had landed in Kandahar on Dec. 25, Muttawakil had told the Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) that the Taliban “will not allow anybody to carry out any operation against the plane.” “If India or the United Nations do not take urgent action for the release of passengers of the hijacked plane we will be forced to remove the plane from Afghanistan,” he said. The Taliban in fact refused to allow India to make any attempt to launch an operation against the plane.

Then, on Dec. 28, Muttawakil tried to wash his hands of any responsibility, when he told AIP that the Taliban had “done our best to protect the passengers and met our moral obligations. Now the issue is between the Indian government and the terrorists.”

A deteriorating situation

If a negotiated solution is not found, disaster is on the horizon. As one extremely well-informed Russian source, with experience in Central Asia and India, told *EIR* on Dec. 28, “The situation in the Indian subcontinent has overnight become very dangerous. Anything can happen, first inside India and soon after that *between* India and Pakistan.” This source was informed by highest-level Indian diplomats that “the mood inside India is awful.” He expressed his concern that if hostages were killed, the reaction inside India could rapidly become “very violent,” and “Indians, Hindus, inside India, could start killing Muslims, in retaliation. There is a real chance of very much blood. *Then*, there is the danger of a conflict between India and Pakistan. As of now, the Pakistanis are in too much disarray to do much of anything. But if Muslims inside India are killed, the situation will rapidly change for the worse between the two countries.”

Another possibility which this expert mentioned, was a political upheaval inside India, against the government, as the conditions for the hostages inside the airplane become intolerable.

Identify London’s role

There are ways in which the crisis could be solved, without more bloodshed or war. The most important step would be to identify, as LaRouche has done in his “Storm over Asia” video, among other locations, the political networks, personalities, and institutions which are running the entire gamut of destabilizations across Asia and the Caucasus. Significantly, some steps in this direction have been taken in Russia and India. There is a continuing complaint in the Russian media, against those in the West who pretend to oppose terrorism, but do nothing about it. Specifically, Russian media have been broadcasting the scandalous fact that while the United States government, among others, expresses its outrage at the Taliban regime for harboring the notorious Osama bin Laden, no one in Washington has said a peep about the fact that bin

Laden’s right-hand man, Abu Kutada, is alive and well, and very active, in his London residence.

Along the same lines, an article appeared in *The Hindu* on Dec. 29, entitled “Trail Leads to London,” which tracked the footprints of the hijackers to the British capital. “With Britain as one of its important bases, an international network of operatives appears to have been involved in the convoluted hijacking of the Indian Airlines flight from Kathmandu to Kandahar,” it said. The article reported on telephone calls which had been traced, between a person in Mumbai to a woman in Bolton, who turned out to be a close associate of Yusef Suleiman Motala, who, in turn, is the fundraiser for the Harakat-ul-Mujahedeen—the organization of the hijackers. Calls were monitored “from Mumbai to Karachi, [to] Saudi Arabia and most importantly, Kathmandu,” all prior to the hijacking.

If the role of London as the capital for international terrorism were to be identified loudly and clearly, including from Washington, D.C., the situation would change rapidly. But this would imply a decision on the part of the U.S. government to rethink and recast its policy approach to the entire Indian subcontinent and Central Asia. It is no secret that, from the 1970s on, the Brzezinski “Afganski” operation has enjoyed powerful backing from within the United States, as well as Britain. Support for the Taliban’s thrust into Afghanistan continued to flow from Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and also the United States, especially from the U.S.-based oil concern Unocal, even as administrations have changed. And, notwithstanding the verbal and even military attacks on bin Laden, there has been no action taken to acknowledge—much less dismantle—the British connection of his, and kindred, networks.

For there to be a perspective of peace for the entire region, in the happy event that a political solution can be found to the Kandahar drama, there must be a policy pursued by Washington, based on the “community of principle” which LaRouche has exhaustively elaborated. This means, for the subcontinent, promoting efforts of political forces committed to a diplomatic solution of the Kashmir crisis, and prevailing upon forces opposed to this solution, in Pakistan as in Afghanistan, to accept what must be done. It means creating the conditions whereby bilateral talks, such as those which had been so promising, between Nawaz Sharif and Vajpayee, can begin again, until a solution be found.

There are signs that Clinton recognizes the situation as a threat to global security. “The Kashmiri issue is perhaps the most dangerous one in the world today,” the President said in an interview with Charlie Rose recorded on Dec. 22 and broadcast on Dec. 28, “because you’ve got two nuclear powers there who are somewhat uncertain about one another and why we have to work hard to avoid that.” In late December, after meeting with a delegation from India, the President lifted sanctions against India, which is a further indication that the President is committed to playing a more active role in the pursuit of peace on the subcontinent.