

Murder attempt on Gandhi signals destabilization effort

by Linda de Hoyos

On Oct. 1, as Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and President Zail Singh walked out of a two-hour service in commemoration of the birth of Indian independence leader Mahatma Gandhi, a “crazed young man” jumped from a tree and took aim with a home-made pistol at the prime minister and President. On Oct. 4, it was revealed that the would-be assassin was a Sikh, who had been perched in a tree awaiting Gandhi for six days.

Although the assassin did not have the weaponry and may not have been backed by the level of organization required for a successful attempt on the life of the prime minister, the failed attempt functions as a “dry run” for those agencies who are out to murder Rajiv Gandhi—and exposes the incompetence of the security forces around him. Furthermore, since the key conspirators of such significant political assassinations place several, even tens of “assassination” operations in motion to destabilize and divert attention of security forces around the target, the attempt against Rajiv Gandhi Oct. 1 must be taken as the signal that an assassination plot against the Indian prime minister *is in fact operational*.

The conspirators are the same forces, centered in the Russian-controlled Trust operation, with its partners in the West and particularly in London, who carried out the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. In the case of Mrs. Gandhi, the aim was twofold: to plunge the Indian subcontinent into disintegration and to eliminate from the world Indira Gandhi’s leadership in the Non-Aligned Movement and in the fight for a new world economic order.

The assassination attempt on Mr. Gandhi took place soon after the summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Harare, Zimbabwe, where Libya’s Muammar Qaddafi, the protected asset of both Moscow and its rentier finance partners in the West, declared that he had come with the explicit aim to “supersede and abolish” the Non-Aligned Movement—and turn it into a malleable tool of the Soviet Union. Mr. Gandhi, along with Peruvian President Alan García, are agreed in their opposition to Qaddafi’s drive and on the necessity for the revival of the Non-Aligned Movement on the basis of the principles of national sovereignty and the necessity for the creation of a new, just monetary system.

Target: Indian subcontinent

It is also noteworthy that the attempt takes place within a month of the Sept. 6 Pan Am hijacking in Karachi, which similarly signaled a major operation in motion to destabilize Pakistan. The Karachi hijacking, in which numbers of Indian citizens were killed, immediately became a new point of exacerbated tensions between the governments of Mr. Gandhi and Pakistan’s Zia ul-Haq.

The Soviet Union, in league with the U.S. State Department, is now escalating pressure against the Zia government in Pakistan. On Sept. 3-4, only 48 hours before the Karachi hijacking, Yuri Alexeyev, head of the Middle East desk of the Soviet Foreign Ministry, met in Moscow with Arnold Raphel, U.S. senior deputy assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs. Their discussion was part of a series of “exchanges of points of view” on regional issues—the fora through which the State Department has executed its New Yalta deal with Moscow.

While the U.S. Pentagon is reportedly giving 100% backing to Pakistan, as a front-line state with the Soviet Union with a war on its border, the State Department and associates in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee are giving backing to opposition leader Benazir Bhutto, with the hopes that she would be more willing to come to terms with Moscow. Benazir Bhutto’s release from prison Sept. 7 was ordered by Pakistani authorities, Pakistani and U.S.-based sources have confirmed, under pressure from the State Department.

Despite the boosts she has received from the U.S. Eastern Establishment, the Bhutto movement in Pakistan currently is unlikely to pose even the kind of challenge to Zia that it mounted in August 1983, around the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD). The danger is that unrest and violence sparked by the MRD under Bhutto’s leadership will unloose Pakistan’s many religious and separatist movements, fissuring the country. The controlling points for these organizations come from the Middle East—Iran and Libya, in particular—and from Moscow directly, as in the case of Baluchistan separatist leader Abdul Mengel.

The Soviets are also courting the anti-Islamabad leadership in the Northwest Frontier Province, led by Abdul Wali

Khan, chairman of the Pushtun Popular National Party and the source of the major opium-growing operations in the NWFP bordering on Afghanistan. On Sept. 1, Wali Khan traveled to Moscow, on invitation of the Soviet Committee for the Solidarity of Asian and African Countries. After meeting with G. Pallaeu, vice chairman of the Supreme Soviet, Khan also met with Moscow's chief orientologists and traveled to Tashkent, headquarters for Moscow's operations into South Asia. The chairman of the Northwest Frontier Province's Tekrik-i Istaqlal party greeted Wali Khan back in Peshawar with open arms, and reported that soon, leaders of his party would be going to Moscow, "with whom we have diplomatic ties." The invitation comes from Gorbachov, he told the press. With Pushtun Najibullah heading up the Moscow-controlled Afghan government, the Soviets are making a bid to pare off NWFP from Pakistan to form a "Greater Pushtunistan" annexed to Afghanistan. Islamabad's attempts to quell Pushtun opium-growing and control Wali Khan have so far met with no success.

In mid-September, intelligence war broke out into wet-works in Pakistan, with the Sept. 14 car-bombing of an Iraqi diplomat in Karachi and the murder of the Soviet naval attaché, Fyodor Gorenkov, in Islamabad two days later. The latter has heightened tensions between Pakistan and the Soviets, with the Soviet news agency TASS threatening Sept. 19: "Pakistan is giving the green light to CIA-recruited terrorists. . . . It is also known that terrorist-training centers are operating in Pakistan under the guise of various institutions." The day before, TASS threatened: Pakistani authorities "should be well aware that such actions cannot remain without consequences for the future development of relations between the two countries."

The case of Siddiqi

The source of operations against Pakistan is exemplified in the person of Dr. Kalim Siddiqi, director of the Muslim Research and Planning Institute in London, now in Pakistan on a "private" visit.

An Iranian, Siddiqi was trained in Tashkent. On Aug. 8, Siddiqi presided over a conference of international Islamic centers in London that is believed to have been key in planning the coordinated campaign of Soviet-sponsored terror signaled by the Sept. 6 Pan Am hijacking in Karachi.

Siddiqi is regarded widely as a Soviet agent, having extensive ties to the Soviet-run International Institute of Applied Systems Analysis in Vienna. He was instrumental in the overthrow of the Shah of Iran, and is funded by both Iran and Libya. Siddiqi is also the godfather to the so-called Crescent International, an outpost of Pakistani fundamentalist opponents of the current Zia ul-Haq government which works with the Sikh separatists safehoused in Canada.

In late 1984, Siddiqi hosted a conference in London of fundamentalists from the Mideast to plan the overthrow of the Zia government.

The target is not only Pakistan, but the entire Indian

subcontinent. "India was never a nation," Siddiqi told an interviewer shortly after the October 1984 assassination of Indira Gandhi. "The British imposed executive unity over the subcontinent, which broke down during the final years, leading to the emergence of Pakistan. . . . It is a good thing that India will break up. . . . The revolution in Iran is an alternative model of development [sic], neither Marx nor Keynes."

Indo-Pakistani relations

The Karachi hijacking brought India-Pakistan relations to a new low, report political observers. One trigger point is Punjab, where Sikh terrorists have waged a three-year irregular war for the formation of the Sikh state of Khalistan. On Sept. 25, speaking before the National Committee on American Foreign Policy-Indian Chamber of Commerce, Indian Foreign Secretary Shiv Shanka accused Pakistan "of providing weapons, training, and other assistance to Sikh terrorists," according to the Sept. 26 *Hindustan Times* and "asked Pakistan to modify its attitude on this crucial issue for an improvement in Indo-Pakistan relations."

On Oct. 2, the day after the attempt on Gandhi, a serious assassinatin attempt was mounted on Julius Ribeiro, the Delhi-appointed chief of police in Punjab. When he and his wife took a stroll in their police compound at Jullandar at 6:30 a.m., they were suddenly attacked by uniformed gunmen. Ribeiro's bodyguard was killed; Mrs. Ribeiro was wounded. The incident points to the continuing and massive penetration of the Punjab police by the Sikh terrorists.

The Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, which is now 85% Muslim and pro-Pakistani, is now under presidential rule. But Jammu and Kashmir is the strategic meeting place for Pakistan, India, China, and the U.S.S.R. Indian Minister of State for Defense Arun Singh declared in August that Pakistan is building three new airstrips with powerful radar systems in the Pakistani-controlled area of Kashmir, located at Muzaffarabad, Rawala Kot, and Mirpur. The Indians were also miffed at Zia's parading around of Kashmir Liberation Front leader Khurshid Kurshid at the Harare Non-Aligned Summit, and apparent sponsorship of Khurshid's distribution of leaflets attacking Indian occupation and oppression of Kashmir. However, the Indian government might ponder the fact that in London, the attorney for the jailed and now about-to-be-deported Amanullah Khan, chief of the exiled Kashmir Liberation Front, is Lord Anthony Gifford, a Labour Party liberal with ties to Moscow who also represents the Sikh terrorists in court.

The accusations against Islamabad from New Delhi have subsided in the last two weeks, from their high pitch in the early aftermath of the Karachi hijacking. In mid-October, U.S. Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger will visit India and then Pakistan. From the Indian side, it is hoped that if Weinberger is able to forge relations with Delhi, separate from Washington's ties to Islamabad, it can only act to improve relations between India and Pakistan.