

# Miliband's Freak Show In the Subcontinent

by Ramtanu Maitra

The British Foreign Secretary-with-an-Attitude, David Miliband, was sent to the Indian Subcontinent the week of Jan. 12, by Her Majesty's Service, with two difficult tasks. Both were of crucial importance for London. And, when Miliband found that the old colonial subjects were not in any mood to accept his proposals, he put on a freak show, to the chagrin of the Indians.

India's staid news daily *The Hindu* reported on Jan. 17, that senior officials in the Ministry of External Affairs said that Miliband acted in an "aggressive" manner, in his closed-door meetings with External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. In particular, the Prime Minister's Office took offense at his strident arguments that the Nov. 26-29 Mumbai terror attacks were really the result of the Kashmir issue remaining unresolved.

Officials said Miliband berated Singh and Mukherjee on this point, and said that whatever India may wish to say on the matter in public, in private, it must accept that it had to do more to work with Pakistan to find a solution to the Kashmir issue, according to *The Hindu*. "Yes, there is a Kashmir issue and we need to resolve it," the Indian side told the British minister. "But when a group like the Lashkar, which says it supports 'global jihad,' attacks Mumbai and kills Americans and Brits and Jews, what does this have to do with Kashmir?" All told, say Indian officials, the two meetings with Her Majesty's minister were "pretty awful."

## The Respectful New Delhi

On the other hand, Indian officials, a large number of whom are Anglophiles, were kind. "He's a young man, and I guess this is the way he thinks diplomacy is conducted," a senior official told *The Hindu*. "In both his meetings, his posture and style of talking were a little too aggressive. The PM [Prime Minister] and EAM [External Affairs Minister] are much older and this is not what they are used to," he added, describing the meetings as "quite an episode."

Miliband can act well as a villain. When he was Environment Secretary, he was picked by director Steven Spielberg to play the film role of Abraham Lincoln's assassin, John Wilkes Booth. Spielberg said, in an interview in 2006: "Casting for the film is really at an early stage, so far only Liam Neeson is down to be in the film. . . . However, when I saw David [Miliband] in Paris I saw the face that was perfect for my film." Both the Indian Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister should feel better that Miliband did not act out in real life what Spielberg wants him to do in the Lincoln movie.

Why did Miliband act out so violently? The reasons are that Her Majesty's Services had sent him to accomplish two objectives. The first task was to pressure New Delhi and put the Kashmir issue under a spotlight. The second task was to link the Mumbai terror with Kashmir, and close all investigations related to the attack.

The first task was supposedly justified by the fact that because Britain's 1.8 million Muslims are mainly Mirpuris (from the Pakistan part of Jammu and Kashmir), and of Pakistani origin. In 2002, a survey showed that British Muslims, when polled, say that the Kashmir dispute dominates their concerns, and that they are fearful of a nuclear war erupting between India and Pakistan over the dispute.

## MI5 and the Mirpuris

Analysts said the poll was an important indicator of the domestic pressure on leading British politicians to articulate their constituents' opinion on controversial South Asian issues. The poll recorded "the world's biggest expatriate Kashmiri population in Birmingham," in northwest England.

A leading Birmingham Mirpuri politician subsequently told the press that the opinion poll would probably go a long way towards convincing mainstream British leaders of the need to hammer away at "India's resistance to international engagement and mediation" on Kashmir.

In a hard-hitting statement to the British Parliament, then-Foreign Secretary Jack Straw had once said Kashmir was a bilateral issue, but of international concern because of the nuclear implications and human rights deficit.

What is going on? Why is the British establishment so concerned about the Mirpuri Muslims? According to a high-level intelligence source in India, the Mirpuris in the Pakistani diaspora in Britain have been in the fore-



Indian Government Ministry of Information/M. Asokan

*The British “Foreign Secretary-with-an-Attitude” David Miliband (left) came to India to impose British colonial interests. His aggressive manner, on display in his meetings with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (right), was described as “pretty awful.”*

front of those supporting jihadi terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), and other parts of India, since 1993, when the Pakistani jihadi organizations of Afghan vintage were infiltrated into India by Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). The Mipuris collected and sent funds to the jihadi terrorists in India. Many of them underwent training in the camps of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), the Hizbul Mujahideen (HuM) the Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM), and the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HUJI) in Pakistan, and assisted them in their jihadi operations. British intelligence was aware of members of the Pakistani diaspora going to Pakistan for training, but closed its eyes to it, since it thought that they were going to wage a jihad against the Indians in J&K.

The same intelligence source points out that a careful examination of the details relating to the various jihadi terrorism-related cases in Britain would reveal that the British domestic intelligence service, MI5, was intercepting the telephone conversations of these Mipuris and other Punjabi Muslims with their friends and relatives, in which they spoke of their going to Pakistan for jihadi training. MI5 did not take any action against them because it thought that they were going to wage a jihad only against the Indians, and hence, did not pose a threat to the British. MI5 even intercepted the telephone conversation of one of the perpetrators of the London

blasts of July 7, 2005 (known as 7/7), in which he discussed going to Pakistan for jihadi training. The agency did not act on it, thinking he intended to wage a jihad against the Indians.

In fact, MI5 wanted the jihadis to attack India. The British objective since 1947 has been to create a conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, to maintain that conflict through the jihadis with the objective of creating an independent Kashmir. London has long been promising this outcome. But, New Delhi got in the way.

### **Will the Children Now Devour Their Parents?**

Over the years, MI5 began to lose “total control” over these Mipuris who had their eyes trained on Kashmir. This loss of control showed through on 7/7, when MI5 realized

that their disgruntled “puppets” were not talking any more of waging a jihad against India, but instead, were planning to strike at the British.

Writing in the *Guardian* July 18, 2008, Madeleine Bunting pointed out a few interesting facts. First, the families of the three Leeds-based bombers involved in the 7/7 incident in London were originally, in all likelihood, from the Mirpur part of Pakistani Kashmir. Mipuris form 70% of the British Muslim population, and the figure is even higher in northern towns, Bunting claimed. Just as the dominant role of Saudis in 9/11 led to a spotlight on the religion and politics of Saudi Arabia, so investigations of 7/7 focussed on the Mipuris—the long-maintained MI5 assets.

These rural, impoverished residents of Mirpur, and two other adjacent districts, provided cheap, unskilled labor for Britain in the 1960s and ’70s. Most immigrants were from subsistence-farming communities, and had had little or no schooling. They made a huge cultural and geographical leap to settle in Britain, and Her Majesty’s Service promised them their return to an independent Kashmir.

It is evident from the way that Miliband behaved—or misbehaved—that the British establishment feels that if the Kashmir issue cannot be put under the spotlight again, thus dashing the hopes of its 700,000 Mir-

puris, London will face the wrath of the terrorists they created and maintained. Therefore, it was necessary to browbeat the former colonial subjects, in the aftermath of the Mumbai attack, to link all terrorism in the Subcontinent to Kashmir.

One of the things they brought with them was the perception of a long history of dispossession and marginalization. Partition brought terrible bloodshed and the division of Kashmir between Pakistan and India. (This was the issue cited, until very recently, as the most pressing political priority in the U.K., by the majority of British Muslims.) Within Pakistan, Mirpur is, to the more dominant Punjabis, what the Irish have historically been to the British, explained one Mirpuri.

### **Zardari Throws in a Monkey-Wrench**

Spielberg's John Wilkes Booth also ran into problems in Pakistan. Miliband was on an official two-day visit there the day the Mumbai hotels were attacked, but no statement was issued by him at the time. But, on Jan. 16, on his visit to Islamabad, his objective was twofold: First, Pakistan should accuse the Lashkar-e-Taiba for the Mumbai attacks, and thus claim responsibility; second, Pakistan should also make clear that Kashmir is the dispute which triggered the Mumbai incident.

Earlier, London had dished out misinformation through MI5-linked analysts to press home the Kashmir issue. Take, for instance, a recent write-up by Paul Cruikshank, author of the book *Al Qaeda: The Current Threat*. In the article, "Tackling Kashmir," in the *Guardian*, he said the Nov. 26-29 Mumbai attack "was carried out by Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), a Kashmiri militant group...."

The fact remains that the LeT, created by the Pakistani ISI in the 1980s, is not a Kashmiri group; it is active not only in India, but in Chechnya, Sudan, and in Britain, where Cruikshank resides. Moreover, there is hardly a single Kashmiri in the LeT organization. Most of the LeT members are Pakistanis from Punjab and the tribal areas, in addition to a smattering of British Muslims. It is unlikely that Cruikshank does not know these facts, yet he chose to distort them, to make the point that Kashmir is what keeps India and Pakistan at each other's throats.

Nonetheless, both of Miliband's objectives in Pakistan focussed on a goal: to close the investigation on the Mumbai attack quickly. Here, too, Miliband met with resistance. Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari told him

that Pakistan is determined to uncover the "full facts" behind the Mumbai attacks, and needs India's cooperation for the trial of any suspects linked to the terror strikes. Zardari, during a meeting with Miliband, also said that an elite Pakistani counter-terror team is conducting a probe into the Mumbai incident.

Whether Zardari would carry out a full-fledged investigation, or whether New Delhi would back him in doing so, is not certain. But it was enough to scare Miliband. There are a number of sensitive issues at stake in the case of a full investigation.

### **London: Ignore the Elephant in the Room**

To begin with, a part of the drug money that is generated in this area from the gargantuan production of opium annually in Afghanistan, is being laundered through the Pakistan ISI-MI6-CIA protected criminal, Dawood Ibrahim, who runs his operation through the British-controlled Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. Drugs come into Dubai through Dawood's "mules," who are protected by the ISI-MI6; and by containers which carry equipment sent to Dubai for "repair" from Kandahar, and elsewhere in southern Afghanistan. British troops control the southern Helmand province in Afghanistan where 53% of Afghanistan's 8,200 tons of opium was produced in 2007.

The drugs are converted to cash in Dubai, where Dawood maintains a palatial residence, similar to the one he maintains in Karachi. Dubai is a tax-free island-city, and a major offshore banking center.

With the development of the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC), which is its newest free-trade zone, flexible and unrestricted offshore banking has become big business. Many of the world's largest banks already have significant presence there; big names such as Abbey National Offshore, HSBC Offshore, ABN Amro, ANZ Grindlays, Banque Paribas, Banque de Caire, Barclays, Dresdner, and Merrill Lynch, all have offices in the Emirate already. In other words, the drugs that Dawood's mules carry are doing a yeoman's service to the Anglo-Dutch global financial system, as well as for the terrorists who are killing innocents all over the world. Why create waves about that?, New Delhi ponders.

It is certain that Her Majesty's Service's movers and shakers were not amused by Miliband's trip. In fact, they will be deeply concerned about the failure of their emissary to accomplish what was urgent for London.

Now, let the chips fall where they may.