
Pakistan

Soviet Union incites tribal insurrection

by Konstantin George

While the West was being lulled with the "Spirit of Geneva," Russia has launched an escalation of its war in Afghanistan, extending it, through tribal Pashtun surrogates, onto the territory of Pakistan. In the first weeks of December, Moscow and its Kabul puppet regime ignited a separatist tribal insurrection in Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), bordering on Afghanistan. The NWFP is better known to the average citizen as the "Golden Crescent," one of the two largest heroin-producing areas in the world.

On Dec. 1, sixteen NWFP Pashtun chieftains, led by the Afridi tribal chief, Wali Khan Kukhikhel, went into open revolt against the Pakistan government. These tribes began to attack supply and troop caravans of Afghan resistance fighters crossing through the NWFP into Afghanistan. For the first time in the history of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, there is a real threat to the rebels' crucial supply lines to Pakistan.

Pakistan responded to the separatist threat by sending thousands of regular army troops and dozens of tanks into the tribal region. On Dec. 2, Radio Moscow, in its English language and other international broadcasts, started beaming out propaganda denouncing the actions of the Pakistan Army, and, abandoning the Soviet profile of granting covert assistance while maintaining public silence, openly endorsed the tribal rebellion.

The Pakistani government has since confirmed that the Army was moved in, and that the tribal areas have been sealed off—with the partial exception of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. Pakistani government sources have confirmed to *EIR* 1) that there is a raging tribal insurrection ongoing; 2) that the thousands of rebel tribesmen are heavily armed with Soviet-made weapons, brought in from Afghanistan; and 3) that Afridi chieftain Wali Khan is the titular head of the uprising.

Previously Moscow and Kabul were destabilizing Pakistan through repeated air raids and artillery bombardments of Pakistani border villages, and with scorched-earth tactics in wide areas of Afghanistan which generated the expulsion of some 3.5 million Afghan refugees into Pakistan, causing an intolerable social and economic burden on that country.

Pakistani government officials emphasized to *EIR* that the uprising marks a new, qualitative escalation by the Soviet

Union, whereby a strategy of tribal separatist blackmail is being employed against Pakistan. The escalation amounts to a virtual ultimatum to the government in Islamabad: Either join with Moscow in crushing the Afghan resistance, or face an interminable guerrilla conflict and potential fragmentation of the nation of Pakistan.

Knowledgeable sources note the obvious "coincidence" in the timing of the Moscow-steered tribal revolt, and the arrival of the Afghan foreign minister, Shah Mohammed Dost, in Moscow on Dec. 12, for talks with the Soviet leadership, before proceeding to Geneva, where U.N.-sponsored talks on the war in Afghanistan will resume.

Russia's tribal assets

In November, while the world's TV cameras were focused on the charade in Geneva, other meetings, symbolic of the post-Geneva drive by Russia to expand its sphere of influence in the developing sector, were taking place in Kabul. Leaders of the Afridi and Shinwari tribes of the NWFP were being wined and dined in Kabul, and bought off by Moscow and the Kabul regime. Thousands of Kalashnikovs and other Soviet-made automatic weapons began flowing to the tribes, together with foodstuffs and other materials. According to Afghan resistance sources, the tribal chiefs were also each given a personal gift of \$10,000 cash.

Besides the obvious strategic value to Moscow in exploding the tribal uprising inside Pakistan, there is another side to the story, equally important, but almost never mentioned—the drug connection. Pakistani government representatives told *EIR* that the tribes now in revolt—the Afridi and the Shinwaris—are the main opium growers and heroin producers in the NWFP, and form the core of narcotics traffic inside Pakistan, and in shipping heroin out of Afghanistan into the West.

If doubts exist on this score, the communiqués issued on Dec. 11 by the government of Pakistan, will put an end to them. Pakistan reports that its Army units operating against the Afridi and Shinwari tribes seized "large quantities of heroin," after conducting searches of tribal villages.

Besides the obvious international importance of this massive drug flow from Afghanistan and the NWFP—the core of the "Golden Crescent"—in the last few years, Pakistan itself has suffered a skyrocketing increase in heroin addiction among its own population.

Earlier this year, the Pakistani government began a severe and very commendable crackdown against these tribes for their role in the drug trade. The Pakistani Army and police not only seized large supplies of heroin, but also killed many drug-trafficking tribesmen in numerous clashes.

As one source stated, "Moscow has exploited the resentment generated among the tribal drug kings against Pakistan for its having cracked down on the drug trade. The quid pro quo for receiving massive arms supplies from Kabul, is that the drug trafficking will be protected . . . and Moscow will get its 'cut.'"