

Resistance sources in Islamabad, reported the *Washington Times* Oct. 31, say the Soviets have been using the MiG-27s and helicopters to attack guerrilla positions near Kandahar. In mid-October, the rebels had cut the road linking the fortified airport in Kabul to Kandahar in the south, Afghanistan's second-largest city.

A convoy of more than 1,000 vehicles, including tanks, armored cars, and trucks, broke the rebel cordon by Oct. 31, with heavy losses to the guerrillas.

The State Department announced Nov. 2 that through the last week of October, Soviet Backfire bombers, which have a range of nearly 2,500 miles and can carry 12 to 18 bombs, flew from an airbase at Mariy in Turkmenistan to bomb the rebel positions around Kandahar. The Backfires are capable of flying well above the 3.5-mile range of the guerrillas' Stinger anti-aircraft missiles.

On Nov. 2, TASS reported that new missiles had been put into action against a rebel base close to the Pakistani border. "A powerful missile strike shook a base of the irreconcilable opposition in the area of Marulgad in Nangarhar province which borders on Pakistan," the Soviet news agency announced.

The Soviet Union has also redeployed Su-24 bombers close to the Afghan border.

The Soviet escalation, however, has not been limited to Afghanistan. On Nov. 3, Pakistan shot down an intruding Afghan warplane several miles inside northwest Pakistan. A Pakistani F-16 intercepted the Soviet-built MiG-23 about 160 miles west of the capital city of Islamabad.

### **All that meets the eye?**

The Soviets preceeded their military moves with a massive October purge of supposed "hardliners" in Kabul who, they indicated, might oppose a negotiated coalition government with the Mujahideen. They also sent emissaries to Rome to meet with former King Zahir Shah. But all diplomatic displays aside, Moscow's renewal of the war in Afghanistan—in an effort to control the political combination that emerges in Kabul—highlights the original bankruptcy of the Geneva Accords.

Without a political settlement, the Soviet withdrawal of troops has functioned only to escalate the Afghan war as a civil war, and to increase the pressure on Pakistan.

There are two possible consequences of current Soviet actions. One is that the nation of Afghanistan will be obliterated from the map—a perpetual war zone, with the Soviets retaining overall control of its cities and functioning economy, and iron control over the northern areas, while a few areas are controlled by the guerrillas.

But the Soviet military deployment in the week of Oct. 31 raises other questions. The MiG-27s, in particular, are a weapon with an offensive capability, whose range cover Pakistan and Iran. Are the Soviets making preparations for a military move into either of those two countries?

# The countdown to Pakistan's elections

by Ramtanu Maitra

As Pakistan braces for its first party-based elections in 11 years on Nov. 16, recent events have further charged the tense campaign atmosphere. At this writing, the election outcome is too close to call, but the deeper issue worrying observers is: Can the politicians live up to the responsibility of leadership, or will chaos and lawlessness bring the Army into the picture once again?

In the space of 24 hours, on Oct. 23, two bombs went off in the capital city of Islamabad. Two days later, another bomb went off in Lahore, killing two people and injuring dozens of others. Prior to this bombing wave, the two major cities of Sind province, Karachi and Hyderabad, had witnessed rioting and the macabre killing of more than 300 people late last month.

On Oct. 26, Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mirza Aslam Baig intervened with a serious note of caution. Speaking in Quetta, the Army chief reminded politicians that political dissension was a most serious matter, one which had directly affected the integrity and unity of the country in the past. General Baig's pointed allusion was to the disaster that befell Pakistan in 1970-71, and again in 1977 following the elections.

### **The specter of lawlessness**

In 1970-71, coming out of a 10-year-old military rule under President Ayub Khan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, founder and leader of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), rejected the poll verdict that had given the East Pakistan-based Awami League a clear majority. Bhutto's intransigence and manipulations led to a violent confrontation between West and East Pakistan which, after a bloody massacre of Bengalis in East Pakistan by the Pakistan Army, resulted in the tearing away of the eastern wing of Pakistan and formation of a new nation, Bangladesh.

In 1977, Bhutto was in the center stage again, as prime minister. Refusing to respond to accusations by the combined opposition to the ruling PPP of mass rigging in that year's elections, Bhutto resorted to backroom maneuvering. When the opposition took to the streets, bringing the administration to a standstill. Bhutto's effort to bring the Army in to secure his position ended with Gen. Zia ul-Haq, then the Army chief of staff, assuming power and putting Bhutto behind bars.

In 1988, the chaos potential surrounding the elections is no less. The continuing violence and lawlessness is a clear challenge to the military. As General Baig said in referring

to the mafia (suspects in the Sind killings and involved in heroin trade and contraband smuggling with a vast number of guns at their disposal): The lawlessness "acquires dreadful proportions when the power of the money and the guns combine together to affect the entire fabric of the national life."

### Generals 'on trial'

Twitting of the Army has appeared in another form. On Oct. 23, a *Times of India* group newsweekly in Bombay published an exposé on what led to the surrender of the Pakistan Army in 1971. The exposé is based on an unpublished report, prepared in 1972 by a Commission of Inquiry headed by the chief justice of Pakistan, Hamoodur Rehman. According to the *Times of India's* Washington correspondent, who curiously secured a copy of the report from "an American friend," Bhutto had commissioned the inquiry, but found its findings too explosive to make public. Apparently, he destroyed all copies but one, which he kept under the mattress of his bed where it was found following his arrest in 1977.

The exposé put the blame squarely on the shoulders of the Pakistan Army for losing the 1971 war. Five generals, including then-President Yahya Khan, were named, and the report advised that they be tried on charges of personal immorality, drunkenness, and indulgence in corrupt practices. The commission also recommended court martial of three other generals and three brigadiers for their criminal neglect of duty in the conduct of the war, both in West Pakistan and East Pakistan.

What impact publication of the report will have is difficult to say. The press has taken note of it, but so far the politicians have declined to pick up on the exposé. They are so entrenched in the political campaign, that they don't have time to look anywhere else. More to the point, there is no political party that doesn't have a retired general among its prominent members. The PPP, for example, otherwise the most vocal critic of the Army, has given election tickets to Gen. Tikka Khan (ret.), better known as the butcher of East Pakistan and Baluchistan; Adm. Karamat Hussain Niazi (ret.); and Air Marshal Noor Khan (ret.). Perhaps the principle that those who live in glass houses should not throw stones, will hold.

The Army, for its part, is maintaining a neutral and helpful stance. General Baig has reiterated his vow that the Army is fully committed to ensure law and order and "create a peaceful atmosphere to turn the dream of a smooth ballot into reality." Baig also declared that as soon as the new government takes over after the elections, the troops will go back to the cantonments.

### Political 'merry-go-round'

Meanwhile, the announcement of party nominations has drawn heavy flak from the rank and file of all parties. Their loud complaint is that the ballot positions have been given to large landholders, clan chiefs, and the rich. The PPP seems

to be the worst offender, but the fact is that what the Pakistani press describes as a "political merry-go-round" is nothing but the large-scale movement of politicians from one party to another, lured by election tickets.

Until the election, as a matter of policy, the PPP did not tolerate in its ranks anybody who had even inadvertently shaken hands with the late President Zia ul-Haq. But all this changed once the party-based elections were announced. People who had been ministers in Zia's government have been awarded tickets. People who were members of the People's Council handpicked by Zia have been awarded tickets. People who contested the partyless elections in 1985 defying the PPP leadership's dictate have been awarded tickets. One report from Karachi says that fully 30% of the PPP ballot position went to former Zia men!

The case of Ehsan Paracha is typical. He joined the Pakistan Muslim League-F (PML-F) two months ago, and was promptly awarded a Cabinet post by the PML leadership, but jumped back to the PPP on the eve of submission of nomination papers. The PPP has awarded him with a ticket.

An identical merry-go-round is taking place elsewhere. Former Chief Minister Mohammad Khan Junejo, who had split the PML into PML (Junejo) and PML (F) only two months ago, subsequently formed an alliance with the Terik-e-Istiqal (TI) and Jamiatul-Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP) and called it the Pakistan People's Alliance (PPA); he has since rejoined the PML-F-led Islamic Democratic Alliance (IDA) and is preparing to contest the PPP.

### Hard to call

In light of this, it is difficult to determine who has credibility and who has none. The PPP and IDA will be the main adversaries. In Punjab, with 117 of 207 total parliamentary seats, it is a slugfest between the two adversaries. In Sind, with 46 seats, there is a third factor, the Mohajir Quam Movement (MQM), the party of those who had come from India following the formation of Pakistan in 1947. In urban areas of Sind, Karachi, and Hyderabad in particular, the MQM will hurt the PPP, but in the province as a whole, the PPP holds an edge. In North West Frontier Province, with 26 seats, the fight will be between the IDA, Abdul Wali Khan's Awami National Party (ANP), and the PPP-ally JUI. Baluchistan, with 11 seats, will in all probability prefer the regional parties.

A "tough contest" has been predicted by Begum Nusrat Bhutto, widow of former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and co-chairman of the PPP. "If PPP could earn a simple majority, it would be a considerable blessing," she said. (Interestingly, Mrs. Bhutto has come under attack from leading members of her own party for telling a newspaper that her husband had told the United States he would permit U.S. inspection of the country's high-security Kahuta nuclear facility where, it is alleged, the country's plan to make an atom bomb is in progress.)