

British-sponsored crisis around Kashmir gathers momentum

by Susan Maitra and Ramtanu Maitra

Although the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), a British-controlled outfit seeking an independent Kashmir, received a setback following its inability to carry out its promised mass violation of the Line of Control separating the Indian-held and the Pakistani-held parts of Kashmir, it is premature to assume that the crisis will not erupt again in the near future. With India far from gaining control over the troubled Kashmir valley and Pakistani domestic policies in total disarray, international human rights organizations, backed by Britain and other western nations, are now hell-bent on creating an independent Kashmir in line with the British desire to turn the former Soviet Union into a bunch of squabbling ethnic entities.

The Kashmir issue, which has been hanging fire for more than four decades, arose when Pakistani soldiers dressed as tribals invaded the princely state of Kashmir just hours before its ruler decided to join his kingdom with the Indian Union. The ensuing fracas saw Pakistan grabbing a part of the state while the other remained with India. Over the years, the two nations have fought three futile, yet bitter and bloody, wars over Kashmir. Since 1989, with the Soviet Union showing every sign of collapsing, a violent secessionist movement in the Indian-held part of Kashmir has brought the issue to the front page and has labeled Kashmir the major hot-spot in South Asia.

Missed opportunities

The Kashmir issue came close to resolution twice. Soon after independence, then-Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, for reasons best known to himself and his foreign policy advisers, opted to hold a plebiscite under United Nations supervision to decide whether Kashmir would belong to India or Pakistan. India soon realized that if such a plebiscite was held, the Muslim majority in Kashmir would most likely vote to join Pakistan, since Pakistan was created on the basis of Muslim majority areas. While India basically abandoned the U.N. resolution passed in 1948 and 1949, which called for a plebiscite following the withdrawal of troops from occupied territories, Pakistan sticks to it for obvious reasons.

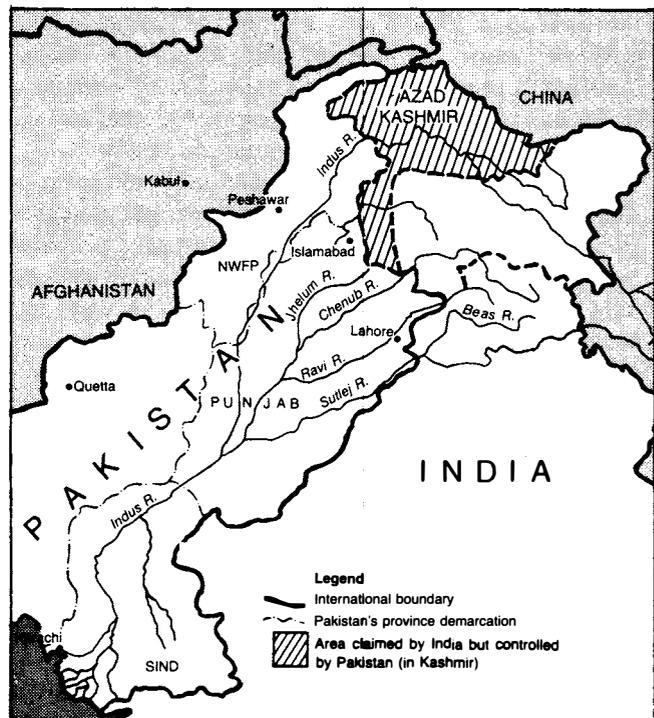
The second opportunity came in 1972, following the 1971 war which saw East Pakistan, with the help of Indian military intervention, separated from Pakistan to become

Bangladesh. The prime ministers of the two nations, the late Mrs. Indira Gandhi and the late Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, drew up the Shimla Agreement, which called for settling all bilateral disputes between the two nations through negotiations and mutual understanding. With 90,000 Pakistani soldiers held by India as prisoners of war, it is conceivable that the Kashmir issue could have been resolved then on the basis of making the Line of Control the international boundary. Now India claims that India and Pakistan should sit down and resolve the Kashmir issue within the framework laid out by the Shimla Agreement.

Stoking the fires

Since 1989, however, the issue has been given fresh momentum as the Indian security forces in Kashmir came up

The India-Pakistan border area and Kashmir



British control of the JKLF

Along with a number of secessionist movements in the Indian subcontinent, the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) is controlled from London. Like its British backers, the JKLF also seeks an independent Kashmir and opposes any move to include Kashmir within India or Pakistan.

In 1985, long before violent secessionist activity had put the Kashmir valley on the media map, some 25 members, representing the Labor, Liberal, and Conservative parties of Britain, decided to form an all-party House of Commons Committee on Kashmir. Leadership at that time was entrusted to Labor Member of Parliament Waller.

About one year before the formation of the committee, an Indian diplomat based in Britain, Ravindra Mhatre, was abducted and killed by a faction of the JKLF. Despite repeated assurances to the Indian government by British authorities, the killers were allowed to slip away. Some routine arrests were made for public display. In those days, the JKLF, like the Naga exiles and the pro-Khalistanis nurtured in Britain, were strictly a gang of assassins, carrying out kidnappings, air hijackings, and other violent subversive activities. Now, since human rights has been recognized by the Anglo-Americans as the new "mantra" to subvert sovereign nation-states, the JKLF has also switched gears. Though neither the JKLF nor its British backers have given up violent activities, changing of their human rights mantra allowed the behind-the-curtain backers of the terrorists to become the legitimate backers of various independence movements. "Human rights" is the principle on which the British-based group Amnesty International was set up and, in Sri Lanka, for instance, it was justly recognized a "terrorist organization."

JKLF controllers

Top British JKLF controllers include:

- Lord Eric Avebury and his wife: Somewhat of a buffoon, Avebury is the chairman of the recently formed Friends of Kashmir organization and also a prominent British human rights campaigner. Avebury hoofs around the world speaking on behalf of JKLF-organized seminars where he shares the dais with top terrorists. Avebury led

a demonstration in front of the Indian High Commission in London last summer, on India's independence day. Avebury also visited Pakistan and the Pakistan-held part of Kashmir.

- Gerald Kauffman: a Labor Member of Parliament who claims to be the foreign secretary of the Labor Party's shadow cabinet. Kauffman, a Jew, is an avid promoter of human rights and visited Kashmir not long ago. He has publicly held that the cause of Kashmiri terrorists is self-determination, and equates independence to the Soviet captive nations in the Baltics before last year.

In all likelihood, Kauffman acts as the link between the British and Israelis and the JKLF. An article in the *Jerusalem Post* on May 17, 1991 said that the ties between the Kashmiris and Israelis are rooted in the belief that the Kashmiris are descended from the Jews. Citing the research of one Rabbi Avraham Avihail on the "lost tribes" of Israel, the article said "beyond the trace of a doubt, that the origins of the Kashmiris are to be found in the People of Israel." There was a big media rumpus in India recently when it was found that the top ideologue of the pro-Israel Indian political party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), attended a meeting, along with a number of other Indian journalists, with JKLF leader Amanullah Khan in Pakistan.

- Sir Frederick Bennett: Conservative Member of Parliament and a long-standing "friend" of Pakistan, Bennett was recently awarded with the Hilal-i-Quaid-i-Azam, the country's highest award for a foreigner, by the Pakistan government.

- Sir John Wheeler: Conservative Member of Parliament.

- Roy Hattersly: Labor Party Member of Parliament.

- John Watts: Conservative Member of Parliament.

- Dr. Philip Jones: vice president of Policy Architects International. Jones harps on the theme that the Kashmiri secessionists are armed with the help of the armor procured from the Afghan Mujahideen. He implies that it is time to supply the Kashmiri secessionists with arms from outside and create a full-scale insurrection.

Besides running the JKLF organization from London and Birmingham, a number of new front organizations have been set up in Britain. In July 1990, a new organization, the World Kashmir Freedom Movement, was set up by the JKLF with the help of British intelligence at 41 Monsell Road, London N4 2EF. Dr. Ayub Thukar, a former lecturer at Kashmir University, is the president of the organization which identifies itself as an "umbrella organization of groups working for the cause of Kashmir at the international level." Another outfit, the International Institute of Kashmir Studies, was also set up at 41 Monsell Road recently.

against increasingly violent resistance from various secessionist forces. India's claim that the secessionists are materially backed by Pakistan has been routinely denied. Throughout the last two years, killings in the valley have drawn international attention.

Beginning in 1991, a slew of international conferences, organized by the JKLF, have taken place in Britain and the United States. A number of British parliamentarians have come out openly in support of independent Kashmir, under the banner of human rights (see box). Two major international human rights groups, Amnesty International, based in Britain, and Asia Watch, based in the United States, have come

out with thick reports accusing India of massive human rights violations. Asia Watch, in fact, has alluded to the present situation as being a "state of war," and pronounced the secessionists justified in killing Indian security forces.

Be that as it may, the British gamemasters' plan, as in the old days, is to create a string of small, dependent nations such as Kashmir, Tibet, Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan. This is what was earlier envisioned as the Federation of Greater Himalayan Kingdoms. Kashmir, which seems the most vulnerable at this point, will be used as the springboard to escalate activities within Tibet in order to wrench it out of China, and also to create problems within the Indian state of Sikkim,

Who Is Amanullah Khan?

No one perhaps fits the bill of an agent provocateur working for British intelligence better than Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) supremo Amanullah Khan.

Born in Gilgit in the Pakistan-held part of Kashmir, Amanullah Khan, along with his late colleague Maqbool Butt, founded the JKLF in the mid-1960s. Although the JKLF was founded in Pakistan, Khan and Butt quickly shifted their headquarters to Britain. Soon after, Indian authorities arrested Butt, while Khan escaped, for masterminding the assassination of an Indian intelligence officer in Kashmir. It is said that at this point Butt and Amanullah Khan began to distance themselves from each other. The two factions that emerged within the JKLF became evident with the killing of Ravindra Mhatre, an Indian diplomat, in London. While the Butt faction opposed the killing, Amanullah Khan pushed it through. Soon after, Indian authorities hanged Maqbool Butt.

Amanullah Khan maintained JKLF headquarters in England until the British authorities, feeling the heat over the Mhatre killing, forced Khan out. The JKLF apparatus, however, remained intact, and, in fact, grew over the next few years. Khan, who settled in Karachi, appeared in the United States in 1990. There he was found in the company of the top Khalistani operator in the United States, Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, president of the World Sikh Organization. Khan also visited California to raise funds in the areas where the major Khalistani fundraiser, Didar Singh Baines, has his base. Goaded by the British authorities, Khan has forged an alliance between the Kashmiri secessionists and the Khalistani terrorists.

During his trip to the United States where he vanished before being declared *persona non grata*, Amanullah Khan said that the JKLF targets were mainly the Indian military. Interestingly, about a year later, in 1991, the

U.S.-based Asia Watch human rights group, in its report on Kashmir, contended that Indian security in Kashmir on combat duty are "legitimate military targets, subject to direct attacks" by militants, and that such killings do not violate the "laws of war." In an interview with the Israeli newspaper *Jerusalem Qol Y'israel*, Amanullah Khan said that the JKLF has branches in India, Kashmir, and Pakistan. "We have large branches in Britain and other European countries, and we also have a branch in the United States," Khan said.

Despite his long stay in Pakistan, Khan is not well liked by the Pakistani authorities. He has accused Pakistan of supporting the pro-Pakistan Kashmiri secessionists who have often clashed with the independence-seeking JKLF activists. He is also clearly at odds with Sardar Sikandar, the former prime minister of Azad Kashmir, the Pakistan-held part of Kashmir. Sardar Sikandar, who claims that Kashmir's destiny is inextricably linked with Pakistan, has warned that he would do everything constitutionally to prevent any scheme to create an independent Kashmir.

Pakistan also did not take kindly to the unilateral declaration of independence which Khan issued from Azad Kashmir following his return from the United States. At that time Khan named his "free cabinet," which included Dr. Karan Singh, scion of the Kashmir royal family and former minister in the late Mrs. Indira Gandhi's cabinet. Dr. Singh, now considered a minor politician, is an international jet-setter who did a short stint as the Indian ambassador to the United States recently.

Khan also drew the ire of Pakistani intelligence and the Army when in January 1991, he published five pamphlets exposing the role of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan in drug trafficking, arms training, and killings and kidnappings in the Indian-held part of Kashmir. Many in Pakistan believe that Amanullah Khan works for Indian intelligence.