



Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze. His military intervention in Abkhazia unified all the mountain tribes against him, expanding the scope of the conflict.

rejected, and the stage is set for large-scale fighting. According to the Russian Defense Ministry, some 1,000 such armed "volunteers" were in Abkhazia by Aug. 25, including some 500 in Gudauta, to defend the Abkhazian government. Their existence in Gudauta was confirmed, when mountain tribe units attacked the token Georgian detachments in Gudauta, killing six guardsmen. Another 80 were hastily evacuated by Russian military helicopters. The first armed clashes were reported on the Russian-Abkhazian border on Aug. 25, as Georgian troops tried to stop the infiltration of armed tribesmen from the North Caucasus.

Direct Russian involvement is now only a matter of time, in the form of Russian Cossack "volunteers," as confirmed in a statement by the organization of Russian Cossacks that they would move into Abkhazia to "protect Russians," if they are attacked or threatened. Both sides in the conflict, the Georgian government and the Abkhazians, have appealed for Russia to intervene on their side. As an editorial in the Aug. 25 newspaper *Trud* stated, "Russia is staying neutral so far, but it remains to be seen for how long. . . . Both sides are appealing to Russia, asking for its help, or warning that an Abkhazian secession from Georgia may signal the beginning of Russia's breakup into separate states."

An emergency meeting between Russian President Boris Yeltsin and Georgian President Shevardnadze to try and settle the crisis peacefully has been set for Sept. 3. No one is betting on its success.

'Khalistan, Inc.' suffers heavy losses

by Ramtanu Maitra

Despite occasional blusters issued by U.S. Reps. Dan Burton (R-Ind.), Wally Herger (D-Calif.), and a few others who are politically funded by "Khalistan, Inc.," and despite the presence of a sad-faced president of the Council of Khalistan, Gurmit Singh Aulakh, at the Republican Party Convention in Houston, all is not well with the foot soldiers of the Sikh secessionist movement in India. The Sikh secessionists claim the Indian state of Punjab as their nation of Khalistan.

According to available information, in 1992 alone, the Punjab Police have gunned down at least 20 top Khalistani terrorists. Among the militant luminaries, some of whom were wanted for 200 murders or more, are the chief of the Babbar Khalsa; chief and deputy chief of the Khalistan Liberation Front; and chief of the Bhindranwale Tiger Force of Khalistan.

It is difficult to pinpoint why these militants, who had been rampaging along merrily for almost a decade, have suddenly begun to bite the dust. One possible answer is the revamping of the Punjab Police, now under a crop of young officers, which enabled the security forces to successfully infiltrate the rank and file of various terrorist groups. Now, the Khalistani militant organizations, built around cult-like figures, have been turned into leaderless packs, though they still possess a great deal of killing power.

The Sibia revelations

Another explanation came from one Gurdip Singh Sibia, a Sikh of British nationality, who claims to be the chief organizer of the Babbar Khalsa International. Sibia recently surrendered to Punjab Chief Minister Beant Singh before a large crowd, after he had come to realize that the security services were hot on his trail, and he would soon be annihilated.

At the time of his surrender, Sibia gave up the fight only after fully realizing Pakistan's role. Sibia told journalists that, while Pakistan was providing arms and training to the militant Sikhs, it had refused to bring the Punjab issue to the international forums. Sibia said that finally it dawned on him that, while the Pakistani government in Islamabad is interested in getting back the Indian part of Kashmir, which borders Punjab, support to the Khalistanis was provided mainly to destabilize India.

Northwest India



Recent interrogations of a militant arrested in Bombay have revealed the extensive role played on the ground by the overseas-based activists, nurtured and sheltered by politicians and powerbrokers. Despite the police successes, fundraising activities on behalf of the Khalistanis in the United Kingdom, Germany, Canada, the United States, and Hong Kong are going on as usual. In all these countries, the arrested militant said, the terrorists are in contact with Pakistani intelligence operatives, who are helping them bring in money to Pakistan for arms purchases, abundantly available due to the Afghan war.

That aside, behind the curtain, the role of the Israeli Mossad and British intelligence in keeping the "martial race" fighting is also not expected to ease. A letter to Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao by Rep. Les Aspin (D-Wisc.) and co-signed by 35 other congressmen, protesting against the arrest of a Sikh militant, was sent on May 5. These legislators demanded an immediate release of the militant on the ground that the Indian government has not charged the individual with any specific crime and, hence the Indian government itself has violated internationally accepted principles and procedures. The letter is a clear indication of the influence that the British-based human rights group Amnesty International wields over the U.S. Congress.

Links also continue between Representatives Burton, Herger, Vic Fazio (D-Calif.), Mel Levine (D-Calif.), and a number of others with Gurmit Singh Aulakh, even though it has been established that the president of the Council of Khalistan is a conduit for channeling funds for terrorist activities within India, which, as Sibia pointed out, is designed to

destabilize the Indian nation. It is by now very evident that the supported terrorists have done little to weaken the Indian government, but they have killed thousands of innocent people, most of them Sikhs!

High living

What also came to light, following the killing of the top terrorists, is the opulent lifestyle adopted by these militants. With the death of Sukhdev Singh Babbar, chief of the Babbar Khalsa and an omnipotent cult figure, security services found that his home, where he lived under an assumed name masquerading as a building contractor, was a palatial mansion stocked with modern gadgetry most of which had been procured from Thailand. Sukhdev Singh, to the dismay of the Sikh purists and a legion of dedicated young terrorists, had abandoned his wife and children and was found living with another woman.

The impact of these findings, and the killing of the top terrorists, will no doubt push the organized militant activities in Punjab into a corner. It is likely that more successes will pour in in the coming days.

In an interview from his jail cell, Gurdip Singh Sibia said that the militant movement has been "shaken to its roots," but, he cautioned, it could still "rear its ugly head at an opportune moment" if the Indian government does not seize the opportunity and go for a political settlement with the Sikhs. By "political settlement" what Sibia meant is to provide Punjab the kind of status that Scotland enjoys in the ambit of the United Kingdom. Although such a political settlement will likely only help perpetuate another secessionist movement in future years, Sibia is right because of the continuing presence of "Khalistan, Inc." The Indian government's inability so far to protect those Sikh leaders who are categorically against the notion of Khalistan and all terrorist activities associated with it, is another reason why Sibia's words must be heeded.

What can be done

The Indian government in New Delhi must now help encourage those Sikh political leaders who are not tainted by the Khalistan movement and who believe in pursuing a democratic process within the framework of the Indian Constitution.

New Delhi will have to take a number of measures. First, those leaders of the Sikh party Akali Dal, who, under the pretext of being terrorized, had collaborated with the militants, should be cut off from all negotiations and discussions. Second, the Punjab Police Force requires a thorough cleanup. Many security men have been accused of having used the breakdown in law and order to fill their pockets. In addition, the 1985 accord reached between then-Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Akali Dal leader Sant Harchand Singh Longowal, which addressed the grievances of Punjab and then was left in the lurch, should now be implemented.