

by the great powers. The improvement in the infrastructure and industry in the Palestinian territories will enable the Palestine Liberation Organization and the population in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank to think seriously about peace. The Palestinians, especially in the wretched refugee camps of Gaza, have been suffering even more inhuman economic conditions in the last two years, since the signing of the Oslo agreement between the PLO and Israel. These conditions have placed the PLO and Arafat in a very weak position, since continuation of the peace talks apparently do nothing to improve the lot of the Palestinian population. The desperate situation has led to a sharp rise of terrorist attacks by certain fanatical groups in the occupied territories, who took advantage of these conditions to recruit young people.

Arafat recently complained that the donor nations, which promised to extend \$800 million a year to the Palestinians, have gone back on their promises. "We have ended with only \$150 million, of which we have only received \$25 million. They are trying to strangle us politically by depriving us of the economic means we need to carry out our responsibilities."

Israeli troop withdrawal planned

A major step forward was taken by the Israeli government and the PLO, when Shimon Peres and Yasser Arafat announced in late May that the July 1 deadline will be respected, as a date to outline the final agreement on the Israeli Army's redeployment outside the Palestinian occupied territories on the West Bank. This will come in preparation for the election of Palestinian self-rule authorities, as stated in the Oslo agreement. The announcement followed a political and diplomatic crisis between Israel and all the Arab countries involved in the peace negotiations. The crisis was triggered by the Israeli confiscation of land belonging to Palestinians in east Jerusalem, and later the proposals made by Republican Party representatives in the U.S. Congress to move the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Despite the optimism that followed the Israeli-Syrian and Palestinian-Israeli revival of the peace negotiations, indications are that meeting the July 1 deadline will not be easy, and concern is being expressed about the fate of the peace process. This was clearly expressed by Chancellor Kohl in his talks with Jordanian officials, when he said, "Mideast peace depends on a few indispensable individuals. . . . It is 5 minutes to 12 o'clock here. Who knows what will happen if the politicians that are acting now, aren't in office any more?" It is not difficult to appreciate the chancellor's concern, given the time bombs remaining in the region, including the World Bank's continued sabotage of economic aid to the Palestinians and the continued presence of Jewish settlements in Gaza and the West Bank. These settlements form the basis for an extremist settlers' movement led by Ariel Sharon, former minister in Likud governments and the darling of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL).

Who is escalating tension in Kashmir?

by Ramtanu Maitra

The burning down of the Sufi shrine Charar-e-Sharif on the morning of May 11, by a group of foreign mercenaries who infiltrated into the Kashmir Valley, evoked the usual bizarre responses from the authorities in both New Delhi and Islamabad. The incident, considered by some observers in New Delhi as a watershed in the past five and a half years of endless violence in the valley, has decidedly enhanced tensions between India and Pakistan, largely because of a string of injudicious and short-sighted statements issued at the highest political level.

Following the burning down of the shrine, Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, whose government has little or no direct involvement in the incident, accused the Indian Army of burning down the Islamic shrine, and gave the much-too-often-exploited populist call for a holy war against India. Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, generally considered a cautious man, matched Bhutto's rhetoric, and blamed Pakistan for all that had happened in Kashmir. Indian Army Chief of Staff Shankar Roy Chowdhury drew flak from the parliamentarians in Delhi for "revealing" that India is engaged in an "undeclared war" against Pakistan.

Terrorists, Inc.

What is significant is that all these powerful people who issued these statements, were way off target. It is being recognized by certain political observers in India, although they continue to remain silent lest they be accused of being conspiracy buffs, that the terrorists operating in Kashmir and who are killing, raping, and robbing the average Kashmiris—mostly Muslims, since Hindu pandits have long left the valley—at gunpoint, belong to an international terrorist network set up by the West in the 1980s under the rubric of fighting the Soviet infidels in Afghanistan. These terrorists were generously funded by the so-called free world during the Cold War.

A similar terrorist organization has also been set up near the southern tip of India in northern Sri Lanka. These terrorists, the Liberation Tigers for Tamil Eelam, got their start by battling injustices heaped upon them by the majority Sinhalese Buddhists for almost three decades since independence. Over time, the Tigers were corrupted and converted into drug-trafficking and arms-dealing merchants. In addition, the Tigers continue to maintain their violent, long-term plan to carve out a separate Tamil country, which would

consist of northern and eastern Sri Lanka and the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, which promises to keep the area in turmoil for years to come.

What is known widely in New Delhi, Islamabad, and elsewhere is that the terrorists involved in burning down the Charar-e-Sharif were Afghans, led by Mast Gul, and members of an outfit called the Harakat-ul-Ansar (HUA). While the Afghans are hard-core terrorists, financed by the drug- and gun-trafficking nexus and patronized by a horde of criminals who were sent to Afghanistan by various Muslim countries in the 1980s to battle the erstwhile Red Army, HUA is a terrorist body based in the Pakistan-controlled area in Kashmir, commonly known as Azad Kashmir.

In its annual report, "Patterns of Global Terrorism—1994," issued in March 1995, the U.S. State Department has identified the HUA as an Islamic militant Group committed to armed struggle against non-believers and anti-Islamic forces. Dominated by the Sunni religious teachers of Pakistan associated with the Deobandi institutions, the HUA is said to collect donations from wealthy businessmen in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. HUA also collects funds from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Emirates for purchase of relief supplies sent to Myanmar (Burma), Tajikistan, and Kashmir—places where HUA has established a strong presence.

The report claims that the details of HUA's military funding are not yet known, but the HUA uses light and heavy machine guns, assault rifles, mortars, explosives, and rockets. HUA's general secretary, Mohammad Masood Azhar, who was arrested in India, was carrying a fake Portuguese passport at the time of arrest.

Who owns the killers?

Despite some useful details, the report is woefully inadequate, if not patently distorted. However, what emerges from the report is that the HUA is an international terrorist operation encompassing the yet-unchartered peripheral zone connecting India, China, and Central Asia-Russia, an area of prime strategic importance. All these nations are undergoing political and economic instability, and yet they possess the potential to pose a serious challenge to the British and European oligarchy and against the financial looting carried out under the aegis of various international financial institutions. The report thus provides the vital clue that whoever it is that controls the HUA—and there is little doubt, considering HUA's wide international network, that it requires centralized international control points to direct its activities—it is a "global player."

New Delhi should know that the Bhutto government is not a global player. Pakistan, under pressure from within and without, has little capacity to fend off the "global players" from using its turf and paying off the assets located inside the country. In reality, Bhutto government's writ does not encompass most of Pakistan.

Another untold story is the Afghani terrorism, which

overlaps the HUA, the Tamil Tigers, and other terrorist groups in the subcontinent. During the Cold War, the Afghans were allowed to grow poppy and deal heroin for arms to fight the Soviet Union. It is likely that the George Bush-Oliver North network, with the usual British overlap, were the controllers of this dirty operation.

What intrigues observers here is that even after the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the apparent decline of the Bush-North crowd, and endless exposés of the Afghani terrorism, no international investigative agency has come forward to find out why such terrorists still exist, who directs their activities, and who provides them with arms and intelligence. Most of the Afghans are semi-literate or illiterate fanatics with no concept of organization. Nonetheless, handled from London, where the so-called pan-Islamic forces have their headquarters, they serve the interests of the oligarchs to a fault. Beside the geopolitical interests, the handling of the HUA, the Afghans, or the Tamil Tigers brings in money to the City of London from offshore banks through various underground arms sales, drug trafficking, and smuggling of gold, gems, and other contraband.

Heading toward war

Despite the availability of such information embossed in reams of reports, Indian Prime Minister Rao has chosen to accuse Pakistan alone; Pakistan Prime Minister Bhutto, who has practically no control over the vast grey zone where these and other terrorists function freely in Pakistan, has called for a "jihad" against India. Equally ridiculous is the fact that the burnt-down shrine, built more than five centuries ago and renovated extensively in 1808, belonged to a Sufi saint, Noor-ud-Din Noorani, respected and loved by both Muslims and Hindus. When he was alive, Noorani was called the "Alamdar-i-Kashmir" by the Muslims and "Nand Rishi" by the Hindus, which indicates that both communities acknowledge his sainthood.

But the name of the game behind burning down the Charar-e-Sharif was to escalate tensions between India and Pakistan a notch upward. For the British oligarchy, a war between India and Pakistan would ensure a long-term, ongoing conflict between the two nations, and the process may lead to the formation of an independent Kashmir, which is the chief objective of the geopoliticians. It would also provide the geopoliticians the base from which to intervene into the Indian subcontinent, China, and Central Asia, and into Russia as well.

Some Kashmiris, like many Tamils living under the oppressive grip of the Tamil Tigers in northern Sri Lanka, realize the game. Caught between the alien and ruthless mercenaries and an inept Indian security force restrained by many factors, the Kashmiris are the real victims on the ground. On the other hand, New Delhi and Islamabad seem to be caught hopelessly in their own web, dancing to the tune of the global players and heading decidedly toward war.