
Interview: Gen. Mirza Aslam Beg

War's 'Serious Impact' On Pakistan, All Asia

General Beg is a senior figure in the Pakistani military establishment. He took over as the Chief of Army Staff, after President Gen. Mohammed Zia ul-Haq fell victim to an air crash in 1988. Beg opted for democracy, and within 90 days, elections were held; power was transferred to the new Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, who remained in office until 1990. Beg is chairman of Foundation for Research on International Environmental, National Development and Security (FRIENDS), which promotes peace and economic cooperation in the region and beyond; he is a strong supporter of the Eurasian Land-Bridge policy. He gave an interview Dec. 8—excerpted here—to Muriel Mirak-Weissbach.

EIR: At the UN-sponsored conference in Bonn, an agreement was reached among four of Afghanistan's parties, to set up an interim government, with a Pashtun political figure (Hamid Karzai) at its head. Current President Burhanuddin Rabbani has reportedly agreed to hand over power to the new government on Dec. 22. However, events on the ground seem to challenge the feasibility of this arrangement.

General Beg: The UN-sponsored Bonn agreement shall not work because it denies to the Pashtuns their right to have due representation in the government, on the basis of population, which is over 60% of the total. This was the main issue, in the past, as well as now in the Bonn agreement, which recognizes only 40% representation by the Pashtuns, which is unjust. This issue can be solved only through a census, which the interim government can hold, supervised by the UN. Once the population distribution of various ethnic groups is clearly determined, power sharing will be possible on that basis, and a stable government can be formed.

EIR: Regarding security, what do you think of peacekeeping forces in Afghanistan?

General Beg: Peacekeeping forces have a definite role in Afghanistan, otherwise the whole structure will collapse. They will be needed till such time as a broad-based government is formed on the basis of population of all ethnic groups.

EIR: Although the war is moving into its third month, there is still a great deal of controversy regarding the legitimacy of the claims, that Osama bin Laden was responsible for the events of Sept. 11. As you know, Mr. LaRouche said from the outset, that the attacks in New York and Washington represented the work of a highly sophisticated organization. He

characterized it as a covert, strategic attack against the U.S. government, involving "rogue" structures of the military and intelligence community. What is your view?

General Beg: Many of us in this region believe that Osama or his al-Qaeda were not responsible for 11 September attacks in New York and Washington, yet the Coalition led by the United States is busy on "Afghan bashing," chasing objectives which go much beyond Osama bin Laden. The information which is now coming up, goes to prove that involvement by the "rogue elements" of the U.S. military and intelligence organization is getting more obvious. Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda definitely do not have the know-how and the capability to launch such operations involving such high precision coordination, based on information and expertise.

EIR: How will the current and future developments impact Pakistan?

General Beg: The war against Afghanistan and its impact on the region as a whole, would have serious repercussions on Pakistan. Pakistan may be facing a "two-front" hostility because of a volatile Pashtun population of our own and that of Afghanistan, bolstered by over 40,000 armed Taliban who feel badly let-down by Pakistan. The Pashtun population across our borders, is also being pushed and compressed by the Coalition air strikes and denial of political representation in the interim government of Afghanistan, which is considered a grave tribal degradation at the hands of the minorities supported by the Coalition. The situation has created a deep impact on the Pashtun population as a whole, forcing it to assert itself as a separate entity at the cost of both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

EIR: On the regional level, what do you think is most important to re-establish security and stability?

General Beg: The establishment of the "parameters of representation of the ethnic groups" in Afghanistan would be the most important step for peace and stability in Afghanistan; otherwise the dangers of civil war exist, which would seriously impact the security of the region, particularly Pakistan, Iran and the Central Asian countries. An unstable Afghanistan with no administrative infrastructure and instrument of security would keep Euro-Asia destabilized, and restrained in breaking the centuries' old "land-lock" which has denied regional integration and prosperity of a people which constitutes almost 60% of the population of the world.

EIR: What, in your opinion, is the end result of the intervention by the Coalition forces and the defeat of the Taliban?

General Beg: There is no single authority which can regain control over Afghanistan, which stands divided between the various ethnic groups, particularly the east-west divide—Kandahar/Jalalabad—which is also the major divide between the secular North and the non-secular South, primarily the Pashtuns. This is also a political and tribal divide, restricting the Pashtun majority, which has ruled Kabul over 250 years.