

seems that former Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who was pushed out of power by a bloodless coup on Oct. 12, 1999, had reached some sort of arrangement vis-à-vis Kashmir with his Indian counterpart. But a border skirmish between India and Pakistan last summer, and the coup that ousted Sharif, weakened that initiative. The recent hijacking has put up yet another barrier to the resolution of the Kashmir dispute. Islamabad has already announced that it will not join the South Asian Free Trade Association of seven South Asian countries, and therefore there is nothing to talk about with India except Kashmir. India has reiterated its old position that it wants to resolve all outstanding issues, including Kashmir, with Pakistan. In other words, positions have hardened once again.

The problem is a big one. India was divided in 1947 under the British imposition of the “one country, two nations” theory, according to which India is one country, but has within it a “Hindu nation” as well as a “Muslim nation.” Pakistan was carved out because of the assumed validity of this theory. While Pakistan’s entire identity depended on it, few in India accepted the theory. India called itself a secular nation, and Pakistan is now an Islamic Republic. Indian political leaders, such as Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel, accepted the theory in 1947 in order to get the British out. Mahatma Gandhi did not accept it, but there was no plan to revisit the issue. Meanwhile, Hindu-Muslim riots, erupting from time to time, continued to inflict further damage. In 1972, when Bangladesh was born out of East Pakistan, India pointed out that the “Islamic bond” was only skin deep. New Delhi claimed then that that was the end of the “one country, two nations” theory. But, Pakistan had no way to accept this. The Kashmir issue, to both the Indians and Pakistanis, is yet another chapter from the same book. While the Indians cannot give up Muslim-majority Kashmir, because that would “justify” the “one country, two nations” theory, it is for the same reason, ironically, that Pakistan cannot give up Kashmir. Moreover, the Kashmir dispute keeps India at the center of Pakistan’s basic threat perception. This helps the old feudal order, and the Pakistani Army and the intelligence services, to continue ruling the country the way it has ruled for decades. It is a vicious circle, and both India and Pakistan are wholly within it.

Things have to change. If Kashmir continues to be a theater of death and mayhem, the international community will lose faith in India’s, and Pakistan’s, ability to resolve the issue bilaterally. In addition, with the passage of time, and continuation of violence, new scars have appeared, and some of them are quite deep. A time will come, and it is not too far off, when the entire world will tilt toward making Kashmir an independent nation. Pressure will mount on both India and Pakistan to accept such a solution. The hijacking, and the events that followed, indicate that neither Islamabad nor New Delhi is quite ready to deal with this.

British establishment admits, ‘Yes, we harbor terrorists’

by Mary Burdman

The British authorities and media have not considered it necessary to disguise London’s role as a command center for terrorist and separatist operations. Groups including the support apparatus for the Saudi terrorist kingpin Osama bin Laden, and militant Kashmiri separatists who have led a 10-year war which has killed some 25,000 people in the Indian subcontinent, work out of London with the full protection of the British authorities, as *EIR* has repeatedly documented.

In the wake of the terrorist hijacking of an Indian Airlines plane on Dec. 24, the British Foreign Office and its circle have even been aggressive in acknowledging Britain’s role.

“The fact is, that London has been the center of terrorist groups,” a stalwart of the British establishment candidly told a journalist on Jan. 5, when he was asked what initiatives the British Foreign Office or British government might be considering vis-à-vis the explosive situation on the Indian subcontinent.

Asked to elaborate, this figure, who is close to both the Foreign Office and Ministry of Defence, stated: “As with Kashmiri groups, for example: London is the center for many emigrés, who are the background to terrorist activity. What often happens, is that emigrés come here legitimately, stay for a while, then have children, who are British citizens, and who then become involved in international terrorism and planning, and guerrilla activity. The nominal problem becomes, that their presence here is seen as legitimate. As a result, much of the theory and planning for international terrorism is done here in London. Top people of bin Laden, for example, operate here quite openly.”

The establishment figure acknowledged that, at least “logically,” there is an argument to be made for a U.S. military attack on London, just as an attack was ordered on Sudan—this one, totally unjustified—by U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in August 1998, for allegedly abetting terrorist operations. It is also the case, this figure concurred, that London’s notoriety as a protector of terrorist groups is reinforcing the view that the British are *running* terrorism, for strategic and political reasons.

He has been agitating for some time, the man said, for

Britain to take harsher measures against terrorists operating on its soil. But, "there is a great deal of hypocrisy on this whole matter of terrorism. The private thinking of governments, and not only the British government, is that tolerating terrorist groups gives a certain type of immunity from being attacked directly, so we turn a blind eye to what is going on. Therefore, all these summits to deal with international terrorism are nonsense."

Public statements by the Foreign Office itself, would have hardly made it possible to demur on this question.

One of the three imprisoned militants who was released to the hijackers on Dec. 31 by the Indian government, was Ahmed Omar Sayed Sheikh, a member of the group Harkat-ul-Ansar, and a British national of Pakistani origin. Ahmed Sheikh, the son of a well-to-do family, had attended a public (i.e., private elite) school in Britain, and studied mathematics at the London School of Economics. His specialty, after he entered India in 1994, was to kidnap Westerners visiting India and to hold them hostage for the release of imprisoned Harkat-ul-Ansar leader Masood Azhar. In autumn 1994, Ahmed Sheikh, flaunting his perfect British accent and public school manner, had befriended four young men—three Britons and an American—visiting India, and persuaded them to come with him to Saharanpur, northeast of Delhi, where they were ambushed and held as hostages. Indian police, however, were able to free them and arrest Sheikh and others.

British aid India Airlines hijacker

British officialdom was most forthcoming about its efforts to aid Ahmed Sheikh in any and every way possible, including financially, now that he is out of the Indian prison, as the London *Times* reported on Jan. 3. The "justification" for this is that Sheikh was never tried or convicted of kidnapping in India.

Despite the outraged protests of the three Britons Ahmed Sheikh had kidnapped, a British Foreign Office spokesman stated, "It is quite possible that Mr. Sheikh will come back to this country where his family is. As a full British national, he has every right to return. We spoke to his father on Friday and told him we would provide normal assistance to help repatriate him. However, we have been unable to contact him since, so we do not know if his son has been in touch.

"It is quite possible that, if he still has a valid British passport, the first we may know of this is when he turns up at the airport."

India is not likely to ask for Sheikh's extradition if he does come to Britain, the official asserted. "He has not been convicted of any offense, and at this stage, we have no indication that the Indians would seek his deportation if he does come back to this country."

British diplomats have even said they would provide Ahmed Sheikh with financial help and consular assistance,

including issuing a new passport, if he requested these services at any British consulate abroad, the *Times* reported.

On Dec. 29, while the hijacking was ongoing, Indian authorities had revealed that the terrorists' "trail leads to London," as an article in one of India's leading English-language dailies, *The Hindu*, reported. "With Britain as one of the important bases, an international network of operatives appears to have been involved in the convoluted hijacking of the Indian Airlines flight from Kathmandu to Kandahar. . . . Inquiries in London reveal that a network of the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen [the new name of the Harkat-ul-Ansar terrorist group], apparently had a hand in the hijacking."

Calls made on a cellular telephone from Mumbai (Bombay) were traced to a woman in Bolton, U.K., who is a close associate of Yusuf Suleiman Motala, a leading fundraiser for the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen.

While Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and the Taliban in Afghanistan all played key roles in carrying out this latest assault in the long-term war on the Indian subcontinent, if the Indian government—or any other government, including in Washington—wants to take action to prevent an escalation which might even risk nuclear confrontation between India and Pakistan, it is essential that the "trail to London" be exposed.

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