

# Russia's 'Muslims' menace south Asia

by Rachel Douglas

The appointment of a new Soviet ambassador to Pakistan portends trouble for that country and its neighbors, including India. Moscow's new man, it was learned in May, will be Abdul-Rakhman Khalil ogly Vezirov, a former party official in Soviet Azerbaijan. Vezirov is a protégé of Geidar Aliyev, the Azerbaijani member of the Soviet Politburo and career KGB agent, who specializes in the creation and control of separatist and terrorist movements for Soviet ends.

Pakistan already experienced one Soviet ambassador, Sarvar Azimov, who was linked to the deployment of several hundred KGB agents into the Baluchi ethnic area of Pakistan, to foment separatism. A Soviet Uzbek writer and cultural official, Azimov was posted in Islamabad from 1974 until 1980. He was so open in making public remarks like, "Pakistan is the friend of our enemies," that the Pakistani government officially protested his activities more than once.

The current ambassador, Vitalii Smirnov, has been very active recently, as the U.S.S.R. stepped up political pressure and military strikes against Pakistan, for harboring *mujaheddin* fighters from Afghanistan. On May 14, Smirnov charged that the death of 24 Soviet and Afghan Army POWs, in an escape attempt from detention by Afghan guerrillas on Pakistani territory, "proved" that Pakistan was involved in a war against Afghanistan. Pakistan was guilty of "blatant violation of international rules," said Smirnov, for the consequences of which it would be "entirely responsible."

Based on what he heard from Soviet party boss Mikhail Gorbachov at their March 14 meeting in Moscow, Pakistan's President Zia ul-Haq told a British interviewer in early April, that he thought the Soviets might commit as many as 500,000 fresh troops to Afghanistan. Already, the Soviets have escalated artillery bombardment and air strikes against Pakistan's border region adjacent to Afghanistan, where the refugee camps shelter guerrillas, as well as the non-combatant displaced population. Pakistani officials count as many Soviet violations of Pakistan's air space so far this year, as there were in all of 1984.

With the arrival of Vezirov, the density of Soviet political operations, on top of these military forays, may be expected to increase. After riots among the Pathan ethnic minority in

Karachi this spring, some Pakistani officials have reported their concern, that the Soviets would rekindle separatist agitation in other parts of the country, such as the Baluchi region adjacent to Iran.

Vezirov is one of those operatives from predominantly Shiite Muslim Soviet Azerbaijan, like KGB agent Kikhmat Madatov who has worked out of the Soviet embassy in Kuwait, who came up under the tutelage of Aliyev. Vezirov, born in 1930, was already traveling to Egypt and Iraq, as a Muslim-born Soviet youth emissary, in the 1950s. He rose rapidly through the party ranks in Azerbaijan in the early 1970s, when career KGB officer Aliyev had taken over leadership of the Azerbaijani party and was purging it. Like many of Aliyev's bright young henchmen with Turkic surnames, Vezirov made his move to the diplomatic service with an assignment in the developing sector; from 1976 to 1979, he was the Soviet consul-general in Calcutta, India, and, after that, Soviet ambassador to Nepal.

## Islamic fundamentalism

The activation of Moscow's Islamic specialists at this highly visible, diplomatic level, bespeaks a broader move afoot in the region. The Soviets, naturally, have their stake in the push for a unification of Islam on a radical fundamentalist basis, which poses a threat to nations throughout south and southwest Asia. (See *EIR*, May 21, "Behind the conspiracy to create a unified, fundamentalist Islam.")

Dr. Kalim Siddiqi, sponsor of the "Assembly of United Islamic Movements," for example, has made his trips to the U.S.S.R. and come into the orbit of Aliyev and of the Soviets' "Third World"-oriented political and cultural operations center in Tashkent, Soviet Uzbekistan. This track of Aliyev's "Muslim card" shows, that Soviet activities in the region threaten not only a country like Pakistan, to which Moscow is openly hostile, but also India, which is otherwise the recipient of oodles of heavy-handed Soviet "good-neighborliness."

An associate of Siddiqi recently stressed that there is a now a common interest between radical Muslims in India and Sikh terrorists, despite religious differences. "As far as their struggle for Kalistan is concerned with the destruction of the Indian nation state," he said, "there are obviously convergences." (This individual boasted that the "Islamic revival" of today is rooted in the work of Al Afghani, the 19th-century Shi'ite; Al Afghani, while based in Moscow in the 1880s, worked hand in glove with a Sikh prince named Maharajah Duleep Singh—under sponsorship of the predecessors of today's Soviet imperialists, the Russian Slavophiles.)

The World Sikh Organization (WSO) of Jagjit Chauhan Singh (another erstwhile visitor to Tashkent), who has boasted of the murder of Indira Gandhi, also took up the cause of joint action by Sikh and Muslim separatists in India. At the WSO convention on May 6-8, there was extensive discussion of how all the minorities in India might unite against the nation-state.