

Report from New Delhi by Susan Maitra

Does Pakistan have the bomb?

There is good reason to believe revelations by Pakistani scientists, and to fear such a development.

Speculation here on when Pakistan will be ready with an atomic bomb has persisted for the past three years. For the first time, a senior government official has confirmed the "speculation." It was assumed in previous discussions that there exists a "China connection" in Pakistan's bomb-building efforts.

Indian Foreign Secretary M. K. Rosgotra told foreign journalists here March 26 that Pakistan has built an atomic bomb. According to news reports, Rosgotra also claimed that Pakistan had already tested a bomb some 10 months back in the Lop Nor desert in the northwestern province of Sinkiang in China.

Although Rosgotra subsequently denied the remarks attributed to him, reverberations continue in New Delhi as the government deliberates how to respond.

Even before the Indian diplomat's statement, Pakistani scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan had all but confirmed his remarks. Khan won international notoriety three years ago when the Western press spotlighted him as the Pakistani scientist who stole uranium enrichment technology from the Netherlands (an alleged offense for which he was recently tried *in absentia*).

In an interview with the Pakistani news daily *Nawa-e-Waqt* in February, Khan made it clear that Pakistan has attained uranium-enrichment capabilities, and stated that if the government of Pakistan were to decide to make the bomb, scientists in Pakistan were in a position to carry through. Khan's

statement drew an immediate reaction in India, forcing Pakistani President Zia ul-Haq to deny the accuracy of Khan's remarks.

During the democratic regime of President Bhutto, Pakistan started building up facilities for civilian nuclear energy. The present military regime of Zia ul-Haq has pushed for the bomb, some say with funding from Peking.

Pakistan has two tracks to bomb-making capabilities. The first is to use the existing Karachi reactor to irradiate uranium fuel rods with neutrons, producing plutonium which can then be chemically reprocessed for use in a nuclear bomb. The second is enrichment of natural uranium through a complex technology to turn it into a weapons-grade explosive.

To acquire enrichment technology, Pakistan set up a number of front organizations in the West to buy a centrifuge plant capable of enriching natural uranium to weapons-grade quality. Various materials and components were acquired from Great Britain, the Netherlands, Switzerland, West Germany, the United States, and so forth.

Abdul Qadeer Khan, who was employed for a time by the Netherlands government at its enrichment plant at Almelo, brought along the required technology associated with enriching uranium. During Bhutto's presidency, Qaddafi made uranium from Niger available; it is believed that China has now taken up the supplier's role.

The recent revelations have set off a series of familiar debates in India—

which usually begin with the question of how quickly India should build its own bomb. India has reason to be concerned.

The Pakistani generals, still vengeful over the independence of Bangladesh, have lost no opportunity to make it clear that India is their number-one enemy (see article, page 00).

It is also an historical fact, and a dangerous one, that an India-Pakistan war would turn into a no-holds-barred struggle to "once and for all" secure a victory.

U.S. arming of Pakistan with sophisticated weapons is therefore of concern to India. The U.S. Congress, which otherwise prevents supply of military and economic aid to any non-nuclear nation which is building a nuclear weapon, has so far overlooked the Pakistani case.

Recent reports indicate that Pakistan, which has major economic problems, is asking the United States to supply Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missiles. These would be fitted into the 36 remaining F-16 fighter aircraft due to be delivered to Pakistan shortly.

Both the Soviet Union, which has been siding with the Indians in attacking the Pakistani bomb-making quest, and the United States, which is obstructing the spread of nuclear power for commercial use while pouring arms into the hands of an unstable military junta, are primarily responsible for this dangerous situation.

Until there exists a strategic defense against nuclear attack, it is understandable that "third countries" will attempt to get into the nuclear race. That was one motivation, in fact, for *EIR* founder Lyndon H. LaRouche's efforts over recent years to secure a beam-weapons defense which in its early stages would be capable of dealing with such "third-country" nuclear attacks.