

Zia assassination a Soviet act of war

by Linda de Hoyos

The Aug. 17 murder of Pakistani President Zia ul-Haq has sent a shockwave through this vital strategic region, and could well mark a decisive shift in the global strategic crisis.

The immediately relevant facts are these:

President Zia was murdered when a C-130 Hercules Transport aircraft exploded and crashed shortly after takeoff from Balapur in the Pakistani Northeast Frontier Province. Also killed on the plane were U.S. Ambassador Arnold Raphel and U.S. Military Attaché Brig. Gen. Bernard Wasson. The crash also caused the deaths of 15 leading Pakistani generals and military officers, including the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Akhtar Abdur Rahman, who also served as the liaison for the supplying and training of forces fighting the Soviet Union in Afghanistan; and Lt. Gen. Mian Mohammed Afzul, Army chief on the Pakistani general staff.

Two U.S. military teams have been sent to Pakistan to investigate the crash. As of Aug. 20, reports indicated that the plane had been destroyed in a mid-air explosion likely caused by a bomb placed inside the transport plane. Preliminary reports on the contents of the plane's "black box" found at the crash site, indicated that the pilots had no foreknowledge of trouble in the plane's functioning. Ideas that the plane could have been knocked out by a ground-to-air missile have been eliminated, since there was no sign of the missile's "tail" at the time. Initial State Department claims that the plane's crashing was "an accident" have been completely dispelled.

Although the news media in the West have focused on the sabotage-murder as if it were the surgical removal of a single, rather troublesome, individual, the sabotage de-

stroyed leading members of the Pakistani military, the country's ruling institution. Whether Pakistan, a nation beset by increasingly violent centrifugal forces based on religious, political, and tribal identities, can withstand the Aug. 17 body-blow remains to be seen.

If it does not, then not only President Zia, but the nation of Pakistan, will have been sacrificed in the "New Yalta" condominium among Moscow, Washington, and Beijing, bringing the "rule of empires" directly to the gates of India.

The identity of the party that actually "pulled the trigger" will likely never be known. However, there is no doubt as to the most immediate beneficiary of Zia's death: the Soviet Union. The Pakistani President's death warrant was the April 15 Afghanistan accord, which Zia is known to have opposed and signed only under extreme pressure from the United States. Zia maintained that any Afghan accord must not only include the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan and the halt of supplies to the Afghan mujahideen, but must also encompass a political solution and the creation of a coalition government in Kabul. Otherwise, Zia maintained, the war would not end, and the 3 million Afghan refugees currently in Pakistan, would not and could not return home. Pressure from the U.S. State Department—centered upon Pakistan's nuclear capability and the U.S. arms supply to Pakistan—forced Zia to sign the sell-out accord.

The result, as *EIR* has documented since April, was that the Geneva accord gave Moscow the green light to pursue its undeclared war against Pakistan, with increased terror-bombings in the Northwest Frontier Province bordering Af-

ghanistan, and domestic penetration operations. The tip-off, however, that President Zia was a target of Soviet assassination, was the June 18 attempt on the life of Turkish Prime Minister Turgut Özal, with whom Pakistan has had close relations. Özal has distinguished himself by resisting the Washington sell-out of his country; he had publicly met with American anti-Yalta leader Lyndon LaRouche in Ankara in 1987. The attempt on Özal signaled that Moscow was fully prepared to eliminate from the scene any statesman who might dare to stand up to the New Yalta sell-out to the Soviet empire.

Soviet threats

In the days leading up to Zia's assassination, Pakistan was the target of increasingly harsh threats from Moscow. The threats were timed with the Aug. 15 deadline for the withdrawal of half of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan. On Aug. 13, Afghan Vice President Abdol Rahim Hatif signaled Soviet plans for Afghanistan's partitioning, stating that Soviet troops would remain in five Afghan provinces: the province surrounding Kabul, the western Afghan province of Herat, and three provinces that form a contiguous link between Kabul and the Soviet border—those of Parwan, Baghlan, and Samangan.

The withdrawal was accompanied by fierce fighting between the Soviet-Afghan armies and the resistance mujahideen. On Aug. 13, sources reported that the mujahideen had taken control of all major highways linking Kandahar to Kabul, and were closing in on the southeastern city. "The city will fall within the next 30 days since the Soviets are gone," reported Western diplomatic sources. The battle of Kandahar is being coordinated by the Hezbe Islami factions of Yunis Khales and Gulbodin Hekmatyar, the Jamiat Islami of Burhanuddin Rabbani, and the National Front.

On Aug. 16, the Soviets reported that the mujahideen had seized the northern provincial capital of Kunduz, as Soviet troops pulled out. Russian Lt. Gen. Boris Gromov, commander of Soviet forces in Afghanistan, told reporters that the Soviet Union would not attempt to retake the city, and claimed that Soviet soldiers "were not taking part and would not take part" in military operations in Kunduz province. The next day, however, the city was retaken by Soviet forces.

In addition, according to the Italian daily *Corriere della Sera* of Aug. 20, the mujahideen had succeeded early in the week of Aug. 15 in blowing up the largest Soviet arms depot in Afghanistan. The depot, located in Kelagay, 250 kilometers down the road linking Kabul to the Soviet border, was hit by two missiles, one of which hit the gasoline tank. The result was a fireball which destroyed the arms depot, where the Soviets reportedly kept two years' worth of ammunition supply for the Afghan Army and Soviet occupying troops. An estimated 800 men were killed, including Russian soldiers and their families who lived on the perimeter of the base.

Alongside these military escalations, the Soviets churned out increasingly harsh statements threatening Pakistan:

Aug. 14: TASS analyst Yuri Kornilov denounced President Zia personally, attacking "more cunning overt and covert opponents of the [Afghan] settlement, who seek to justify their violations. Zia said the Geneva Agreements are mandatory for everyone except for the Afghan 'freedom fighters.' . . . The connivance of Pakistan at the establishment on its territory by the 'Alliance of the Seven' [the seven parties of the Afghan Resistance based in Pakistan] of the so-called interim government, was a crude violation of the Geneva accords."

Aug. 15: Moscow issued an official declaration condemning Pakistani "violations of the agreements," and warned that if the "violations do not stop . . . steps will be taken" against Pakistan by the Soviet Union.

Aug. 16: Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman Gennadi Gerasimov, at a Moscow press conference, stressed the government declaration's formulation: "The Soviet Union reserves the right to take whatever steps the situation requires" in the face of continued Pakistani violations of the Geneva accords. While refusing to specify what these "steps" would be, he ominously threatened that the Soviet government declaration "can be evaluated as an official warning to Pakistan."

TASS described in great detail Pakistani measures to step up the conflict, claiming that "20-30 lorries with arms and ammunition travel daily from Peshawar to Nangarhar Province alone." Long-range rockets are being stockpiled in the Shakardara gorge for use later on Kabul, it added. It quoted "some data" as pointing to the future arrival of a U.S. transport aircraft in Karachi, with a "large shipment of heavy sophisticated weapons for detachments of the alliance of the seven parties."

Aug. 16: The Soviet government daily *Izvestia* carried an interview with Lt. Gen. Boris Gromov, the commander of the Soviet forces in Afghanistan. Gromov was asked about the prospects inside Afghanistan following a Soviet withdrawal, and replied: "The Afghanistan problem will not be solved either today or tomorrow." What happens "is up to Pakistan . . . the problem is the violation of the Geneva accords by Pakistan. . . . Pakistan has sent increased amounts of arms to the rebels . . . and continues its interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs." Gromov, in an implicit demand for the right of hot pursuit onto Pakistani territory, stressed the recurring "problem" of Afghan guerrillas enjoying the sanctuary of Pakistani territory.

Aug. 16: Soviet ambassador to India Oleg G. Bondar denounced Pakistani "obstructionist" policies in a press conference in New Delhi, adding that "the Soviet Union reserves for itself, in that case, the right to take measures that are necessitated by the situation" in Afghanistan.

Aug. 17: Moscow announced that on Aug. 15, "Phase One" of their withdrawal from Afghanistan had ended, and that "Phase Two" would "begin in November." There will be

no further troop withdrawal for the next three months.

On the same day, Zia and leaders of the Pakistani military were killed. The assassinations indicate that the Soviets are fully prepared to move the Afghan war into and against Pakistan. Already, in the last two months, the Soviet-Afghan aircraft have violated Pakistani airspace 120 times—that is, twice a day. Before this period, the violations occurred approximately every two weeks. Then, on Aug. 19, saboteurs launched simultaneous dawn rocket attacks on three strategic oil installations in Karachi, Pakistan.

The official reactions from the Soviet Union to Zia's death were equally blunt. Soviet Foreign Ministry official Gerasimov—the same who had threatened Zia two days before—stated on Zia's death: "Soviet-Pakistani relations were not so good. George Shultz called President Zia a great fighter for freedom. I do not find this correct. Freedom and democracy go together."

Green lights from the West

On Aug. 18, Dan Rather's CBS-News headlined its story on the assassination of President Zia: "Tragedy or Opportunity?" That statement, echoed in the commentary put out from New Yalta appeasers in London and Washington, signifies that the Moscow had been given guarantees from certain factions in the West that the elimination of Zia and the Pakistani military would not provoke a counter-response.

The rationale for the conspiracy for Zia's murder was amplified by the *Financial Times*' lead editorial Aug. 19. "Providing Moscow and Washington can keep their lines of communication open, there is a chance that President Zia's departure [!] could contribute to a more clear-cut solution to the Afghan problem, which has been the main cause of superpower rivalry in this corner of Asia since 1979," the City of London paper wrote. Noting Zia's insistent support for the Afghan rebels, the *Financial Times* noted that the Soviet Union "understandably" does not wish to delay its withdrawal, or see Afghan leader Najibullah negotiate from a position of weakness.

"If the Reagan administration is convinced of Soviet intentions regarding Afghanistan, there is an opportunity for Washington to use its influence in Pakistan so that the heat is taken off the Afghan issue," the *Times* continued. "Washington cannot squeeze much more mileage from the Afghan resistance, and the Geneva agreement has had the effect of reducing Pakistan's geopolitical importance. . . . The easing of superpower tensions, the stand-off relationship, though still uneasy between India and Pakistan, and the changing nature of intelligence surveillance have rendered Pakistan less crucial. Taking Afghanistan off the boil would have the further advantage of allowing the Pakistani political class and the military to concentrate fully on internal matters, and there are enough of these, starting with the need to evolve a more democratic form of government."

The same line was echoed by former State Department

operative Steven Cohen, of the University of Illinois, on ABC-TV's "Nightline" Aug. 17. Cohen implied that the removal of Zia would not permit the implementation of the Afghan accords, and that Pakistan would move toward along the constitutional process towards full democratic rule. He himself, Cohen indicated, had argued with Zia on the issue of the Afghan accords, and had worked with his friend "Arnie" Raphel to force the accords on Pakistan.

There is a faction of dissenters from this rosy view, including Andrew Goldberg of the Washington, D.C. Center for Strategic and International Studies, who has stated that Zia's death is "the Shah of Iran all over again," since there "is nothing in the wings" in Pakistan to fill the political vacuum. "A bad death for the West," was the London *Times*' lead editorial Aug. 18. If the explosion was a bomb, "it is the Afghan Communists, and their Soviet backers, on whom the suspicion of the world is bound heavily to fall. It is a suspicion which will take more assuaging than Mr. Gorbachev may be able to provide," the *Times* stated. Zia's opposition to the Soviets was motivated by "good nationalistic reasons," the editorial noted, because he feared the Soviet threat to Pakistan and the attempts by Kabul to break up Pakistan.

The greatest disaster will occur, if disorder breaks out in Pakistan, and India attempts to "pay back in kind" Pakistani support for unrest in the Punjab, the *Times* said. India has been fostering relations with Kabul since Moscow announced the pullout, "thereby forming a last link in what could be a potentially disastrous chain of events for the subcontinent."

That is precisely the immediate danger. The brutality of the attack on Pakistan and its leadership brings to mind another period when the Soviet Union declared war on the United States and allies by striking at the Asian rim: 1983. In that year, on Aug. 14, dissidents in Pakistan launched a major destabilization of the Pakistani government, heavily interlaced with Soviet-backed separatists. This was soon followed by the Sept. 1 downing of the KAL-007 airliner by the Soviet Union, and the Kremlin's lurid self-justification for its murder. On Oct. 9, North Korean terrorists—likely in league with East German intelligence—carried out the bombing-murder of four members of the South Korea government and other Korean leaders, in Rangoon, Burma. The creation of this new "Arc of Crisis" in Asia culminated in the Oct. 31, 1984, assassination of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

The danger is as acute now, for the leaders of sovereign nations. Pakistan is now under siege by the Soviet Union, internally and from without. In Burma, an uprising sparked by New Yalta and Soviet assets threatens to unleash a new catastrophe of destabilization that will have immediate crisis-effects on Thailand. In South Korea, U.S., Japanese, and Korean intelligence services are bracing for an expected terrorist atrocity to be carried out during the upcoming Olympic Games, most likely to be carried out by the Soviet terror international's Japanese Red Army. Such is the "peace" that appeasement to Moscow has brought the world.