

U.S. congressmen back separatists, demand aid cutoff to India

by Ramtanu Maitra and Susan Maitra

As the crisis in Kashmir continues to slide steadily toward a war between India and Pakistan, a posse of U.S. congressmen, funded by separatist Sikhs and the Pakistan lobby, has introduced a bill into the U.S. House of Representatives to cut off aid to India because of alleged human rights violations by the government in Punjab and Kashmir. The first victim of the U.S. Congress-led boost to the terrorist network run by American Sikh leaders is a veteran Sikh politician, Gurcharan Singh Tohra, who miraculously escaped an ambush by terrorists on May 14.

The Sikh separatists are partisans of a non-existent "state of Khalistan"—a concept coined by the British in 1947, as part of their divide-and-conquer strategy for India.

The bill, sponsored by Rep. Dan Burton (R-Ind.), orders President Bush to cut off the economic assistance of \$25 million the administration had earmarked for India for the present fiscal year if New Delhi continues to refuse permission to Amnesty International and other human rights groups to visit the troubled Punjab and Kashmir. It is obvious that the measly \$25 million economic assistance for India is not the target of the Khalistanis; they want to use the bill to revive the flagging pro-Khalistan and pro-secessionist movements in India. It is more like sending a message of assurance that the U.S. congressmen are doing their best to support their "good work."

A similar bill, entitled the "Indian Human Rights Act of 1989," co-sponsored by Rep. Wally Herger (R-Calif.) and then-Rep. Tony Coelho (D-Calif.), introduced into the House last year, was defeated by only eight votes in a House of 435 members. The bill called for denying Most Favored Nation trade status to India unless it alleviated human rights violations alleged in an Amnesty International report, released in August 1988, entitled "India: A Review of Human Rights Violations." The bill secured 15 co-sponsors, including Rep. Les Aspin (D-Wisc.), chairman of the House Armed Services Committee.

The 1990 bill, from which the Britain-based Amnesty International has disassociated itself because the human rights group's mandate "prohibits supporting or opposing any economic sanctions," is prefaced with a report by Max Madden, a British Labour Party Member of Parliament who visited Punjab at the head of a delegation of four people. Citing the Madden report, Representative Burton charged that "unprecedented and barbaric atrocities" were being com-

mitted "against Sikh and Kashmiri communities by the Indian regime."

The debate on the bill took place in the House on May 8 and the transcript of the debate makes interesting reading. Delegate Ben Blaz (R-Guam), a supporter of "Khalistan," urged Indian Premier V.P. Singh "to grant freedom to the Sikhs and Kashmiris." Rep. Robert Lagomarsino (R-Calif.) suggested peaceful dialogue "to resolve the differences confronting those who are being persecuted and those who are abusing the human rights of a significant minority." What Lagomarsino meant is that the government should negotiate with the terrorist secessionists.

The strongest blast was made by Rep. David Dreier (R-Calif.), who likened the developments in Punjab and Kashmir to those of Beijing's Tiananmen Square in June last year. Dreier said, "It is my hope that in the future the international community will give the kind of attention to India that it has given to China." Reps. Vic Fazio (D-Calif.) and Dana Rohrbacher (R-Calif.) joined Dreier's call against India.

Congressmen ignore terrorist atrocities

During the debate, however, no one cared to mention the fact that more than 90% of the killings that are taking place in Punjab are committed by Sikh terrorists, and that the victims are also Sikhs. No one pointed out that veteran politicians like Sant Harchand Singh Longowal and a dozen others less well known, have been felled by terrorist bullets because they tried to oppose terrorism. As a result, the terrorists' firepower, duly boosted by the U.S. congressmen's indulgence, sought to liquidate Gurcharan Singh Tohra just when there were indications that time was ripe to restart the political process in Punjab. The ambush, which Tohra escaped miraculously, killed Tohra's driver and an Akali politician accompanying Tohra—both of whom are Sikhs.

Similarly in Kashmir, elements in Pakistan reportedly within the Inter-Services Intelligence department of the Pakistan Army, are involved in training Kashmiris, supplying them with arms, and sending them over to the Indian side to commit terrorism. All Pakistani politicians, including the prime minister, are revving up the Kashmiris to sacrifice themselves to the religious war. There are also reports, substantiated by a documentary recently shown by the BBC, that unemployed and underemployed members of the Afghan Mujahideen have also been recruited to stir up trouble. All

this and more was left unsaid during the debate in the U.S. Congress on May 8.

Meanwhile, the eyeballing by Indian and Pakistani troops intensifies along the border. While the Pakistani strategy is to continue with the low-intensity irregular warfare in hopes of drawing India into a full-fledged war, India is busy trying to set its house in order and avoid a direct clash. If the measures that are now being taken to restore order and a political process in the state of Jammu and Kashmir do not work, there is no doubt that both nations will face an all-out war.

Buying U.S. congressmen and arms

Over the years the Khalistanis' money power has bought not only congressmen from California and elsewhere, but also human rights groups and guns. There are eyewitness reports of Sikh youths with bags full of cash buying AK-47 assault rifles, rocket launchers, grenades, and pistols from arms dealers in Dara Adamkhel in Pakistan. The Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front leader, Amanullah Khan, who is reportedly spearheading the Kashmir independence movement, said at a press conference in Washington recently that Pakistan is like "an open arms bazaar." Khan, who never divulged his source of financing, was trotted around in the United States by the "President of Khalistan," Gurmit Singh Aulakh and the California-based Sikh businessman Didar Singh Bains.

It is Bains's money that has helped to recruit a large number of "faceless" California congressmen. Rep. Wally Herger, the co-author of the 1989 bill, admitted to newsmen that Bains is his main financier and he had no choice but to back the demand of his "good friend."

On the other hand, Gurmit Singh Aulakh, is a good friend of Delegate Blaz. Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.), has also been recruited by Aulakh. Mikulski, drawing heavily upon the 1988 report of Amnesty International, went on record saying that the Indian government "overreacted" in sending the Army into the Amritsar's Golden Temple in 1984. She has also accused the Indian government of "holding 326 Sikhs in jail under special security laws which deny the basic right of people to demonstrate peacefully."

In addition, these congressmen have also developed direct links with the Kashmiri terrorists. When Amanullah Khan was being escorted around by the pro-Khalistan Sikhs during his recent visit to the United States, he admitted that his group was involved in the kidnaping and murder of the vice chancellor of Kashmir University as well as of a top executive of Hindustan Machine Tools. Khan's statement came a day before their death. Khan, whose visa was revoked by the U.S. State Department for his open promotion of terrorism, also admitted during his press conference in Washington that his group is running training camps, not only in Pakistan-occupied "Azad Kashmir," but also in India.

Human rights groups promote terrorism

Behind these congressmen and globe-trotting terrorists like Amanullah Khan and Gurmit Singh Aulakh, are a number of human rights groups eagerly promoting secessionism and terrorism. A recent report prepared by V.M. Tarkunde, a high-profile human rights activist based in the Delhi's People's Union for Civil Liberties (a group that provides succor to various environmentalist movements against large infrastructure projects, among other things), on the alleged atrocities committed by Indian security forces in Kashmir, is making the rounds in Pakistan following its publication by the news service Agence France Presse. Tarkunde, who has developed strong links with various international human rights groups, acts as a stooge of Amnesty International and similar ilk.

Tarkunde's report on Kashmir skillfully avoids the issue of the violence unleashed by the secessionists, including the large number of kidnapings and killings they have been involved in. His report claims that about 400 people have been killed in Kashmir during the recent spate of violence, but he cites only three cases, each of which puts the accusing finger on the "ruthless killers"—security force personnel. The kidnaping and subsequent killing of academics, politicians, broadcasters, and businessmen by the terrorists were not deemed brutalities. Similarly omitted from mention is the terrorism in the Kashmir Valley which has forced thousands of families to leave their homes and seek shelter in relief camps in Jammu.

In 1985, Tarkunde wrote the foreword for a report by the Chicago-based Citizens for Human Rights and Civil Liberties on human rights violations in Punjab. The report, based on interviews with alleged victims, presented a prejudiced commentary which blames the state alone for terrorism in Punjab. As one would expect, Tarkunde lauded the report and wrote that "it deserves a careful perusal by the discerning reader."

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