

Independent Baluchistan? Ataulah Mengal's 'Declaration of Independence'

Author(s): Lawrence Lifschultz

Source: *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 18, No. 19/21, Annual Number (May, 1983), pp. 735-737+739+741+743-745+747+749+751-752

Published by: Economic and Political Weekly

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4372119>

Accessed: 05/03/2009 19:58

By purchasing content from the publisher through the Service you agree to abide by the Terms and Conditions of Use, available at

<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. These Terms and Conditions of Use provide, in part, that this Service is intended to enable your noncommercial use of the content. For other uses, please contact the publisher. Publisher contact information may be obtained at

<http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=epw>.

Each copy of any part of the content transmitted through this Service must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

For more information regarding this Service, please contact service@jstor.org.

Independent Baluchistan?

Ataullah Mengal's 'Declaration of Independence'

Lawrence Lifschultz

The plight of small nations or nationalities situated in crucially strategic regions on the borderline between two great systems has ever been one of tragedy, threat of extermination, and an all-too-familiar manipulation of local aspirations towards self-determination by more powerful and cynical regimes. Baluchistan, Pakistan's largest province, presents a modern version of the classical dilemma of a small nation under siege. The dilemma is further aggravated by the developments preceding and since the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

This article, based on an interview with Ataullah Mengal, the Baluch leader who headed the only elected government of Baluchistan, considers the background of Baluch nationalism and the consequences of the 'Declaration of Independence' which, as Ataullah Khan Mengal makes clear in his interview, has been forced upon the Baluch in order to ensure their mere survival as a nationality.

The interview itself is appended at the end of the article.

THE plight of small nations or nationalities wedged between great empires has for centuries been a story of tragedy, extermination and an all-too-familiar manipulation of local aspirations towards self-determination by more powerful and cynical regimes. The Poles, the Kurds, the Meo and the Eritreans all know what it is like to be someone else's battleground. Only at rare moments do small nationalities emerge on their own conditions of self-determination. The price in blood and sacrifice is usually as high as the tactical intelligence and heroism required to achieve the goal.

When such a nationality finds itself in a crucially strategic region on the borderline between two great systems, rather than in the same remote backwater of world indifference, it may discover that its own hopes are pressed tightly between the loaded gun-barrels of powers which care nothing for the independent rights of a peripheral people. A modern version of the classical dilemma of a small nation under siege, fighting for survival on its own terms, appears to be emerging in Baluchistan, Pakistan's largest province. The nationalism of the Baluch now lies at the intersection of what is potentially an area of immense superpower conflict that could conceivably draw the world towards a major war. While the Soviet Union sustains an unpopular puppet regime in Afghanistan on the bayonets of 80,000 soldiers, American policy has found its own reflection in its unambiguous and financially substantive support for Pakistan's military dictatorship. The Baluch are caught between these two contemporary dictatorships, solemnly backed by Moscow on one side and Washington (plus Beijing) on the other.

The former Chief Minister of Baluchistan has issued a declaration from exile in London which threatens to have ser-

ious political repercussions not only for the future of Pakistan but for the Gulf and the entire central Asian region. Ataullah Mengal, who headed the only elected Baluch government ever to serve in Pakistan's westernmost province, has declared that the Baluch will no longer pursue their thirty-five year quest to secure 'provincial autonomy' as a recognised nationality within Pakistan, but will now fight for 'complete independence' and the end of Pakistan as a state in its present form.

Mengal, who has lived in exile since shortly after his release from prison in 1977, is still regarded as a potent political force within the province. His arrest in 1973 along with most of his provincial cabinet set off a province-wide rebellion which engulfed the Pakistan Army in one of the more brutal, yet least reported, wars in Asia. Mengal was detained by the Bhutto government in large part due to pressure from the Shah of Iran who opposed the presence of an elected social democratic government contiguous to Iran's eastern border. The consequences of the arrests were traumatic as rebellion spread throughout the province. At one stage nearly a quarter of the Pakistan Army was deployed in the province along with units of the Iranian Armed Forces.

The rebellion came to an end following the *coup d'etat* which brought General Zia-ul-Huq to power in July 1977. Within a week of the coup Zia personally flew to Hyderabad Central Jail where Mengal and others were detained to begin negotiations for an end to the war. Ultimately, the Baluch leaders were all released, a ceasefire was declared, the Army withdrew from operations in the interior of the province, and an amnesty to those involved in the rebellion was offered. An uneasy truce has existed in the province ever since.

Baluchistan is situated at a strategic crossroads of major importance wedged between crucial Western concerns with security in the Gulf, and the presence of Soviet forces to the north of Afghanistan. In an extended interview, Mengal declared that although the Baluch existed in the very vortex of a superpower confrontation in South West Asia, it remained their intent to become neither the pawn nor the victim of either power, as they now pursue their own independent national aims. Such a goal will require exceptional diplomatic skill and a capacity to make their own position an intractable factor which other powers in the region will have to come to terms with. They are prepared to have direct relations with both the US and the Soviet Union as well as the Gulf states in determining the future configuration of the region's political geography, so long as their own position is clearly taken into account as a factor by all concerned.

Mengal stated he has issued his declaration because a crucial turning point had finally been reached after three decades of violence. The option of a democratic resolution to the crisis within the structure of Pakistan had now passed the point of no return in his view. "We have tried our best over all these years to find a solution to the issue within the framework of Pakistan," he said, "It is the reason why we have been fighting for provincial autonomy and democracy at the all-Pakistan level. Had Pakistan accepted the concept of nationalities within Pakistan and the rights of those nationalities as partners within the boundaries of Pakistan, one could have said, 'Yes, adjustment is possible'. But they have always denied the existence of such rights. From 1973 to 1977 the Army's operations in Baluchistan has made clear to us that even if the demand for provin-

cial autonomy is made within a democratic structure, it will be met with the same violence from the Army which is more or less comparable to what we would have faced had we opted for independence. For us there is only one way left. If the Baluch are to survive, then we must struggle for an 'independent' Baluchistan, outside the framework of Pakistan".

POLITICAL POLARISATION

Mengal, who has spent nearly eight years in Pakistani prisons, half of them during the mid-sixties under the first martial law regime of General Ayub Khan, has always been considered one of the more moderate leaders of the country's democratic opposition. His sharp militancy today is one reflection of the political polarisation existing within the province.

The central political dilemma that has plagued Pakistan since its creation out of the partition of colonial India has been the country's unending confrontation with the 'national question'. The formation of Pakistan brought together an amalgamation of five provinces (two of them in part) into one state linked to one another by the notion of it existing as a 'Muslim nation', or homeland for the principal persecuted religious minority of the South Asian subcontinent. However, in three of the four provinces which today constitute Pakistan—NWFP, Sindh, and Baluchistan—although formally existing as Muslim majority areas, dominant political sentiment in 1947 was led by secular democratic nationalists opposed to the founding of a separate theocratic state based on a religious demarcation. This was to be seen most acutely in the province of Baluchistan at the very outset of the transition to partition.

The position of Baluchistan was one of particular distinction from the other provinces which were to make up Pakistan. The confederation of Baluch tribes and their titular head, the Khan of Kalat, considered their status within the disintegrating British Empire to be equivalent to that of Nepal. While other so-called 'native states' dealt with the British 'Indian government' in New Delhi, Nepal and Baluchistan maintained treaty relations directly with London. More significantly, the 1876 treaty which had permitted Britain access to areas of Baluchistan and permission to establish specific fortifications pledged that the British "would respect the sovereignty and independence of Kalat". The Baluch *Diwan* or Assembly repeatedly rejected in votes 'accession' to Pakistan and directed its leadership to secure by negotiations

the status of full independence as guaranteed in the 1876 treaty. A close relationship with Pakistan was not ruled out, but the pre-condition of full national sovereignty was laid down by the *Diwan* as the first step toward such an association. However, the province was forcibly annexed after a nine-month stalemated interregnum which followed partition. The annexation set off a rebellion and Pakistani Army units suppressed the first modern armed revolt of the Baluch led by Prince Agha Abdul Karim, the younger brother of the Khan of Kalat. The new Pakistan authorities imprisoned much of the recalcitrant Baluch leadership with Karim spending the next 18 years of his life behind prison bars.

From the 1950s to the 1970s the Baluch leadership accepted the *fait accompli* and the political reality of Pakistan, but maintained that only elected democratic governments at provincial and national levels would guarantee autonomy to the minority nationalities within the framework of secure constitutional guarantees. This alone was seen as the solution for growing inter-regional tensions, particularly the perceived material domination by the Punjab of all other provinces. The continued existence of military rule in Pakistan from 1958 into the early 1970s obstructed a democratic solution to the crisis and exacerbated inter-regional antagonisms. The democratic prospect ultimately exploded into civil war when the Pakistan Army refused to accept the results of Pakistan's first general election in 1970. The election results, had they been implemented, would have made the leader of the majority party, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman of the Awami League, Prime Minister of Pakistan. Mujib's elevation to Premier along with his political base in the majority province of Bengal was perceived by more conservative Army elements as a threat to the entrenched position of the Punjab within the existing state. Civil war in 1971 led to the emergence of Bangladesh as Pakistan's 'national question' ripened into secession, and finally independence for the eastern half of the country.

GROWING DISILLUSIONMENT

Two principal events contributed to the growing disillusionment among the Baluch leadership who had become increasingly skeptical of a democratic Pakistan ever emerging. The first concerned events in Bangladesh where elections in Mengal's view led not to a transition to democratic institutions, but to violent repression from an Army unwilling and incapable of accepting democratic norms. The second was the dismiss-

al and arrest in 1973 of the first elected provincial ministry in Baluchistan. The sense of betrayal from a civilian regime which had signed iron-clad constitutional guarantees was only a part of the growing nationalist sentiment which fueled the four year rebellion which followed. Mengal claims that when the ceasefire took effect in 1977 only one option remained which could have persuaded the Baluch to envisage a future within Pakistan. This was "a confederation of states similar to the United Arab Emirates". The confederation principle within the framework of a new form of republic, with four associated states based on the existing provinces, was the minimum they would have responded to.

The timing of Mengal's 'declaration of independence' occurs at an exceptionally delicate and fluid moment within the overall context of conditions in central Asia. In the opinion of senior United Nations sources, the Soviet Union has indicated it is prepared to move forward toward a negotiated withdrawal of its forces from Afghanistan, if Pakistan will co-operate in formulating a workable solution. Last July in Geneva the Soviet Union indicated its approval of the terms put forward by the UN Secretary General's special negotiator, Diego Cordovez, when nine days of indirect talks were held between the foreign ministers of Afghanistan and Pakistan under UN auspices. Three conditions were outlined as part of the simultaneous process leading to a comprehensive solution. First, Soviet forces would be withdrawn in stages from Afghanistan. Second, in a phased manner refugees in Pakistan would be simultaneously repatriated to Afghanistan. And, third, Pakistan would restrain insurgent activity originating within its borders and actively work for an effective ceasefire, so as to allow both withdrawal of troops and repatriation of refugees under as near peaceful conditions as possible.

The movement towards a more comprehensive settlement would be determined by initial agreement on these points. Ultimately, there is no question that a political solution based on compromise would have to involve some form of coalition regime emerging in Kabul. The Soviet Union has indicated to a number of non-aligned states including India that it would not be adverse to such a development. Whether such a position is a purely tactical element in Soviet strategy or a sincere approach based upon the reality of the existing stalemate within Afghanistan has yet to be tested. The shape and constituent elements of a future coalition would emerge at a later stage once preliminary agreement on the first steps of

the Geneva negotiations is reached and implementation initiated. Andropov's long and unexpected discussion with General Zia during the Brezhnev funeral is one indication of the seriousness of the Soviet Union's desire for the terms formulated in Geneva last July to move forward.

SOVIET INTERVENTION: REPRIEVE TO ZIA

In Pakistan a genuine dilemma exists regarding an advance in negotiations toward an Afghan settlement. The Soviet invasion in December 1979 proved to be a political life-line for General Zia-ul-Huq's relatively new and still unstable military regime. On the verge of financial insolvency and isolated politically, following the execution of Pakistan's last civilian premier, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Pakistan's military authorities under Zia parlayed the Soviet invasion into a remarkable source for economic assistance of a magnitude unimaginable until then. In October 1979, six months after Bhutto's hanging and three months prior to the invasion, the Zia government was entering a severe foreign exchange crisis. Bankers were reluctant to loan to a regime which then appeared to offer little prospect of political stability, and the Carter administration in Washington was actively engaged in discouraging a major financial infusion. General Zia's pariah status at the time, even among the Gulf states who had publicly opposed Bhutto's execution, made long-range prospects look bleak.

The Soviet invasion changed the equation. Taking upon themselves the image of a 'front line' state, Pakistan's military leadership developed their position as defenders of the 'free world' in spite of the internal ambiguities of their own dictatorship. From the edge of insolvency Pakistan entered a period of sudden prosperity in terms of foreign military and economic assistance. The new Reagan Administration combined with Saudi financial co-operation to fund a multi-billion dollar aid package which was comparable to that received during the era when Pakistan was an active member of both the CENTO and SEATO alliances. Allocations in the financial year 1983 represented a 348 percent increase in US military assistance to Pakistan over the previous year. No other nation has received such a sudden or comparable increase in American largesse in the past decade. The massive infusion of financial and military aid was politically crucial in stabilising Zia's own position within the Army's still unsettled officer corps and to securing the junta's own dominance over the body politic.

The strategy of posing the US and the USSR against each other so as to yield a maximum material benefit has until now proved exceptionally profitable for the military authorities in Islamabad. However, it is a policy with certain limitations and dangers. A genuine dilemma does exist now for Pakistan's military regime in how to approach negotiations with the Soviet Union without undermining the architecture of the American/Saudi alliance upon which the regime in Islamabad is now wholly dependent.

The issue of negotiations is not an academic one from the point of view of the Soviet Union which is unlikely to show unlimited patience if the process initiated at Geneva in July stagnates. Until now the Soviet Union has been exceptionally restrained in its material assistance to the wide array of political groups operating underground in Pakistan against the military government. The Soviet Union's Afghan allies in Kabul have with Moscow's approval permitted the city to become a refuge for a broad spectrum of political exiles opposed to the military authorities in Pakistan. By and large, however, the Soviet Union has until now done nothing to actively encourage or provide significant material support for an opposition which, if it were better armed and supplied, might pose a serious threat to the stability of the Zia regime. Prior to the July negotiations Pakistan was wracked by a series of explosions and successful assassinations of figures associated with the military authorities. Most of these were associated with militant elements identified with Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party. If the Soviet 'olive branch' of a negotiated settlement is not seized upon in the months ahead by the Pakistani authorities and by elements within the Afghan insurgency capable of conceiving of a framework of negotiations whereby a withdrawal and coalition formula could be arrived at which might provide the form for an 'honourable' exit of Soviet forces, then the situation regarding specific material support for dissident groups within Pakistan could change dramatically.

DIVISIONS IN CPSU POLITBURO

The CPSU Politburo was never unified in the decision to intervene in Afghanistan. Divisions at the top are believed to have been collegial but deep, with Mikhail Suslov, the Party's senior ideologue who died last year, dominating the majority at the time. The intervention was the final manoeuvre in a sequence of efforts to remove Hafizullah Amin from leadership and direction of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). In the

Soviet view, Amin was a major cause and source of deteriorating political and military conditions within the country. Although a communist and a leading member of the Khalq faction of the PDPA, Amin's methods of harsh and aggressively brutal military tactics combined with mass arrests and executions in the leading urban centres were driving more and more of the population to take up arms against the regime. Attempts to dislodge him from his position of direct command in the Afghan Army in favour of a more gradualist and reformist policy had failed. In September 1979, four months prior to the massive intervention, the Soviet Union in co-operation with then President Nur Mohammed Tarakki had attempted to remove Amin. The scheme failed and in the first of several blunders, Tarakki, the 'father figure' of the PDPA and once Amin's mentor had himself been killed by Amin's proteges. Amin, immediately took complete power, and demanded the withdrawal of the Soviet ambassador whom Amin quite correctly accused of complicity.

The Soviet Union found itself now in the dilemma of formally supporting a man it had attempted to remove and with whose excesses it continued to be identified internationally. Advocates of intervention believed Amin could be dislodged quickly with a major show of force and persuaded to leave for a diplomatic post abroad. His departure in their view would allow a reconstitution of the PDPA coalition by the organised return of the purged Parcham faction led by Babrak Karmal. Tarakki, in a secret Moscow meeting with Soviet leaders and Babrak Karmal on his return from the non-aligned conference in Havana, is reported to have agreed to such a move. A new moderate political course would be the first step to the scaling down of the civil war.

According to detailed interviews with a well informed Soviet source with intimate knowledge of events in Kabul between September 1979 and January 1980, and Communist Party of India sources with close association with the PDPA, the entire Soviet operation in December 1979 backfired and was botched up badly. Amin chose to stage a last ditch resistance and would not be gently persuaded to go abroad on a diplomatic assignment. He is reported to have ordered the Soviet emissary shot who presented him with the *fait accompli*. He then staged a final stand and after a twelve-hour gun battle with Soviet forces at the Presidential Palace, Amin went to his death with nearly 2,000 loyal members of his Armoured Corps.

The smoothly planned transition to a

more moderate coalition was in a shambles. According to Soviet sources, the Soviet commander of the entire operation, General Paputin, reportedly committed suicide upon his recall to the Soviet Union days after the invasion and Amin's death. The entire operation had gone quite differently than planned. According to the dissident Soviet historian, Roy Medvedev, "The replacement of Amin by Karmal was meant to take place 2-3 days after the successful securing of the capital by the Soviet army, but it seems something 'went wrong' with this scenario. The murder and death of Amin and part of his circle of followers and relatives on the night of December 28, 1979, was not planned but happened as a result of unexpected developments during the seizure of Kabul on December 27-28."

Although Soviet forces released thousands of political prisoners from Puli-i-Charkhi and other prisons the morning after the invasion, they were hardly seen as liberators in the country as a whole. The manoeuvre to remove Amin and to reconstitute a moderate coalition led by the Parcham had transformed itself into a very different phenomenon. The invasion itself now eclipsed all prior issues.

From the start a minority faction within the Politburo had opposed the invasion arguing instead for a withdrawal of military and civilian support to Amin. Even Soviet newspapers at the time described how tens of thousands of innocent people were suffering at the hands of the ruling group in Kabul. The advocates of withdrawal argued it would mean Amin's demise in the end, and was preferable to the risks and uncertainties of full-scale intervention. It is now widely reported, not only by Soviet sources, that Yuri Andropov headed this minority view within the Politburo; that Suslov had his way over Afghanistan; and, because of its catastrophic consequences, Andropov had his way over Poland. If, in fact, it is correct that this earlier minority opinion has ascended to power in Moscow with the rise of Andropov, then it is plausible that Soviet proposals regarding a negotiated settlement in Afghanistan may indeed be serious.

PROSPECT OF NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT

In the view of Selig Harrison from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and author of "In Afghanistan's Shadow: Baluch Nationalism and Soviet Temptations", the prospect of a negotiated settlement must be taken seriously. "Sceptics argue that Moscow's participation in the negotiations is a cynical ploy.

This appraisal can be tested soon enough when the United Nations Under-Secretary General, Diego Cordovez, presents his proposals for a settlement to the concerned parties in the months ahead. If it becomes clear that Moscow is not serious, then the onus will be on Moscow and Kabul for any breakdown in the dialogue. However, there are increasing indications that Yuri Andropov's regime wants to find out whether what it regards as a face-saving settlement is actually possible".

Mike Barry, a Paris-based American scholar of Afghan affairs, argues that if the Soviet Union genuinely wants to negotiate a withdrawal it must bring about a fundamental shift in military tactics that are depopulating entire regions. Barry has been a leading participant in recent hearings held by the Bertrand Russell Tribunal which has focussed on the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. According to Barry, "There is not a single exile or internal Afghan resistance group which would not be prepared ultimately to negotiate an assured status of international neutrality in return for a Soviet withdrawal. All would certainly pledge not to accept membership or involvement with any Western military alliance. But if the Soviets want to achieve withdrawal, they must first make peace with the Afghans on the ground. Everything they are doing is in the opposite direction. One-fourth of the population has fled as refugees. Soon it will be a third. Military operations particularly in Logar Province, south of Kabul have been brutal and murderous in the extreme, with village after village burned to the ground. I saw these with my own eyes. If the Soviets want a negotiated settlement, they cannot expect to go on escalating the war on the ground and find Afghans in the opposition camp prepared to speak with them." Should negotiations not advance, Barry believes that an implicit Soviet threat to back Baluch national aspirations, and thus open a 'second front' in the region's conflict, must be regarded with utmost seriousness. "If Atallah Mengal is prepared to declare independence," says Barry, "it means the backing he needs is potentially within his reach. Such an announcement by Mengal must be taken extremely seriously."

If the Soviet Union is indeed serious regarding the negotiation process, then progress will have to move forward without major delay or prevarication. The role of Pakistan as an intermediary with elements within the insurgency is extremely crucial if the negotiations are to progress. The insurgents are politically a deeply divided force. Their bravery against Soviet forces has been paralleled

at moments by an almost equally savage civil war between contending factions. Certain elements, though not all, among the insurgents are dominated by the practice of warlordism. There is fierce rivalry between the six principal exile groups based in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province. A similar breach exists between members of the 'internal front' operating within Afghanistan who are doing most of the fighting, and well supplied exiles in Pakistan who organise most of the press conferences. At this stage there appears no one Afghan leader, with the possible exception of King Zahir Shah in exile in Rome, who might command enough support to enter into negotiations. Even the King, who was overthrown in 1973, is opposed by a number of the exile factions. Abdul Rahman Pazhwak, a senior Afghan foreign service official who once served as President of the UN General Assembly and fled from Kabul last March, has been one of the few Afghan figures advocating proposals calling for a negotiated settlement leading to a Soviet withdrawal. However, at present with such a divided and inchoate polity, Pakistan would have to serve at least in the preliminary stages as an intermediary if any serious process of negotiation is to advance.

A genuine dilemma exists for Pakistan regarding negotiations. If serious talks actually move forward toward the emergence of a 'neutralist' Finnish style coalition in Kabul and the ultimate withdrawal of Soviet forces, Pakistan's status as a 'front line' state would be dramatically diminished. The public rationale for the massive rearmament and economic assistance programme that has sustained the military regime would ebb. There are, thus, reasons from the point of view of the Pakistani Army to prevaricate on negotiations and make progress a drawn out matter.

However, there are also real potential costs to Pakistan's military government should it be too coy for too long. The Soviet Union is unlikely to court Pakistan for an indeterminate period without making a serious evaluation of the realities underlying the entire prospect of a negotiated settlement. If a negotiated withdrawal of Soviet forces becomes impossible due in part to equivocation on Pakistan's side, then the Soviet Union may be compelled to enact a severe and dramatic shift in its entire approach to Pakistan, so as to relieve pressure on its forces in Afghanistan. A wide array of potential strategic alignments exist which could readily encompass a spectrum of forces within Pakistan which have never been, nor are ever likely to regard themselves as Soviet proteges, but are never-

theless, prepared to make alliances of a united front character against the military regime in Islamabad.

INDEPENDENT BALUCHISTAN

It is here that the Baluchistan question presents itself with its potential force. Within this broader context Ataulah Mengal's declarations regarding independence must be assessed. In Mengal's own judgement, if circumstances compel an alternative approach, then the Soviet Union might at first seem to prefer a pro-Soviet Pakistan, rather than to have an independent Baluchistan or a balkanised Pakistan. But future attitudes on their part, he argues, will depend on how far the Soviet Union is forced to weigh factors as they emerge and how actual forces mature within Pakistan. "As far as we are concerned," he says, "the Communists frequently claim that they believe in the rights of nationalities. We believe that within this overall situation the Russians will in the end have no objection as far as the emergence of an independent Baluchistan is concerned. We are trying our best to be 'non-committed' to any power. The interest we are committed to is that of our own people. That is our priority. But, we have objectives and we would certainly accept any aid that comes from any quarter without committing the integrity of Baluchistan". Mengal spoke of efforts he and Khair Bux Marri, former President of Baluchistan's National Awami Party and Sardar of the 1,35,000 strong Marri tribe, had made to persuade members of the US Congress not to support a comprehensive military aid agreement for an undemocratic regime in Islamabad. In 1981 they had a meeting in London with a delegation of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. According to Mengal: "We spoke with them at some length and told them our views of the political repercussions such a major aid programme would have within the country. Most of the delegation seemed determined that Pakistan must get this aid. They had preconceived ideas and their interest in our opinions seemed only a formality. Again like the past their concern seemed to be more for the Russians on the Northern border than with the people who live within Pakistan."

Mengal has alleged that new contingency arrangements exist between Pakistan and the United States for the use of base facilities now being developed in Baluchistan. He claims facilities are under construction at Gwadar in south-western Baluchistan and elsewhere in the province which would be made available to units of the American Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) should the contingency arise in a

regional crisis. Gwadar overlooks the Strait of Hormuz, entryway to the Gulf, and lies within eighty miles of Iranian naval facilities at Chah Bahar. Access agreements for RDF forces already exist with Oman which stands on the southern flank of the Strait. The RDF itself has (as of early January) been integrated into the newly formed United States Central Command for South West Asia. Its commander has a military status comparable to commanders of American forces in Europe and the Pacific.

"It must be understood that Baluchistan is the only part of Pakistan that has special significance for the Americans. It now fits into American plans with regard to their approach to Gulf Security", says Mengal. "We apprehend that the point where the RDF will come and land if a regional crisis develops will be near Gwadar. As the elected representatives of the Baluch, we object fundamentally to any bases being set up in Baluchistan. I have no desire for Baluchistan to become the battleground for the big powers".

A spokesman for the Pakistan government, Qutubuddin Azia, has called Mengal's allegation 'baseless' and stated that the United States is not building a military base in Gwadar or anywhere else in Baluchistan. The question of the possible existence of contingency arrangements for RDF access to Pakistani facilities under crisis conditions has not been answered. Spokesmen for the State Department have categorically denied the existence of any American facility at Gwadar.

Mengal's life in exile has not been without incident. On May 12 last year his residence in London was fire-bombed by a Molotov cocktail in the middle of the night. A week later one of his sons was seriously beaten by toughs in the local village and had to be hospitalised. He has accused the Pakistan government of having been behind both incidents. A spokesman for the Pakistan embassy categorically denies any association with either event. Local police have attributed both incidents to racial attacks.

In February 1976, while Mengal was in prison, his eldest son, 21 year old Asadulla, was shot and abducted in front of his Karachi residence in full view of local residents. According to a former member of Prime Minister Bhutto's cabinet charged with investigating the incident and interviewed by this writer in 1980, Mengal's son died soon after the shooting while in the custody of a unit of the Army's elite commando formation, the Special Services Group (SSG). The SSG had carried out the action. The boy's body was never returned to the family;

nor was that of Ahmed Shah, a member of Mengal's National Awami Party, who was killed at the same time. Although Bhutto is said to have deeply regretted the affair, no action was taken against the Brigadier in charge, since it was believed at the time that a court martial would have had an unsettling effect within the Army—something Bhutto could little afford as time would demonstrate.

Within Pakistan Ataulah Mengal's 'declaration of independence' will be regarded by some merely as a 'maximalist' position, which following the potential collapse of the military regime, an elected civilian government might still be able to negotiate with, and still find a basis for national reconciliation. However, none of the principal civilian parties who might constitute such a new regime have ever considered the minimum position put forward by the Baluch political leadership, that of reforming Pakistan into a confederation of associated republics based on the boundaries of the existing provinces. Mengal, who sees no imminent or permanent return to democratic institutions in Pakistan, claims such an option no longer exists.

By thus challenging the Pakistani authorities, Mengal has introduced a new and unsettling element into the politics of a region already buffeted by the Iranian Revolution, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Iran-Iraq war, and an accelerating arms build-up throughout the Gulf. With their border extending from the southern reaches of Afghanistan along the eastern borders of Iran and across the northern tier of the Gulf, the Baluch are at the vortex of the region's conflicting currents. Having now issued a 'declaration of independence', Mengal and the Baluch he represents have yet to demonstrate that they have the capability of forging the necessary alliances and the force within their own nationalist movement to achieve their goal of a new state in Central Asia.

Interview with Ataulah Mengal

Ataulah Mengal, former Chief Minister of Pakistan's Baluchistan Province, has been in exile since 1978. From his home in London he spoke with Lawrence Lifschultz about his years of conflict with authorities in Pakistan, and the strategic dilemma of Baluchistan in the present Soviet-American confrontation in Central Asia.

LIFSCHULTZ: How would you distinguish between the policies of General Zia-ul Haq's government towards Balu-

chistan and those of previous regimes in Pakistan?

MENGAL: In our view there has been no basic change as far as the attitude and motives of the present government when we compare it to previous regimes. Their approach to the Baluch question has been essentially the same. From our point of view they have one precise motive and that is to colonise Baluchistan; to extract and plunder the maximum they can get out of it. Whether a regime enters into a series of military operations, or whether it does it through peaceful means, as far as our interests as a nationality are concerned it has come to one and the same. The Baluch interest was in danger in the beginning of Pakistan and it is still in danger. The attitude of various governments towards the Baluch national interest has been one and the same right from the beginning. There has been no change.

About the Baluch one thing must be kept in mind. The methods have been changed but the object has been the same. There were military operations against us even in Jinnah's time. People were killed even back in 1947. Military operations were going on in Baluchistan a fortnight prior to Iskandar Mirza's departure from power in 1958. Then in Ayub Khan's time there were major military operations and people were imprisoned and hanged. Then Bhutto and the Shah's military actions you saw. We were also imprisoned during that period (1973-77).

So that is that. Whether it has been through bullet or through the gallows the policy has remained. Death has been offered us by every regime which came to power. Bhutto offered death through bullets. Ayub Khan offered bullets and gallows. Jinnah gave us bullets. Zia's regime so far has offered us gallows. So Pakistan from the Baluch point of view has shown us one common face. There has been no basic change by the Pakistanis toward the Baluch. Zia-ul-Haq's order to hang the young student whom the High Court had declared was wrongly convicted was a continuation of what we have seen and expect from Pakistan.

Zia has claimed various motives at different moments. On the one hand he says he does not want to adopt a policy of harshness and high-handedness toward the Baluch. He wanted to say to us that he was a thorough gentleman, and at the same time he wanted to impress upon the Americans his capacity to be harsh and ruthless if called upon. When the American Under-Secretary of State, James Buckley, arrived in Pakistan last year to negotiate the military aid agreement, they chose the day of his arrival to execute Hamid Baluch. This act was the first hanging of a political prisoner in

Baluchistan in nearly twenty years. So how is Zia better for us?

LIFSCHULTZ: How can the 'national question' in Pakistan as it regards the Baluch be solved? Is it still feasible to resolve it within a reconstituted democratic structure in Pakistan, or can it be solved within a framework of martial law? Or, in your view has the point been reached that the problem can no longer be solved within the framework of Pakistan?

MENGAL: Actually, we have tried our best over all these years to find a solution to the issue within the framework of Pakistan. It is the reason why we have been fighting for provincial autonomy and democracy at the national level. Little did those in power know or comprehend that by advocating provincial autonomy we in fact were calling for the solidarity of Pakistan. We can now say this no doubt was a mistake on our part. Rather, it was a blunder. It was a blunder which we came to realise as time went on; not during the earlier stages. But when East Pakistan was kicked out of Pakistan in such a brutal way, the Punjabis refused to learn a lesson from it. When they pounced upon Baluchistan in 1973 and started their military operations, then we realised that the issue was not as simple as we had thought at the beginning. It was not because of one 'bad' government or a few 'bad' elements within a government that we were being deprived of our rights. Rather it was part of a clear and calculated policy on the part of the dominant Punjabis that no rights would be allowed to the 'minority' nationalities, or indeed the 'majority' nationality in the case of the Bengalis prior to 1971. 'One Unit' under Ayub was a move towards the direction of total denial of 'national' entities and only because of pressure from East Pakistan, Pakistan had to abandon 'one unit' and restore the provinces. They claim to believe in only one thing and that is to create a new nation, an artificial nation, on the name of the Muslim nation. And on that name they believe they have the right to dominate and exploit the smaller provinces and nationalities. They believe in only one principle: that everything that belongs to you is mine; whatever I have already is already with me, and that is mine too. Now they don't believe in the principle of 'let live'; they know only 'how to live'. And, they choose to live off others. Now with that type of thinking, with that concept, it is very difficult for us to adjust.

LIFSCHULTZ: But for a long while you believed that the national problem could be solved within the framework of a 'democratic' Pakistan. Do you no longer believe this?

MENGAL: No, I don't. Because, I have come to the firm conclusion that Pakistan is a country which exists only to maintain the privileges of its Army. Rather, it is one of the countries in the third world where society is coerced so as to maintain the domination of a single institution and the coercion is done by the same institution, the Army. Normally armies in other countries are there to protect and maintain the integrity of the country, but Pakistan is a country where the society is condemned to obey and serve the Army's dictatorship. The moment, in fact, a part of the country or the public is no longer willing to obediently accept the Army's privileged status, then as it happened in East Pakistan in 1971, it will be the Army itself which will be the first to do away with its opposition, whatever the cost.

LIFSCHULTZ: You say that East Pakistan (Bangladesh) was "kicked out" of Pakistan. Some people in Pakistan would say that East Pakistan had seceded. How would you make a distinction between the two?

MENGAL: I would disagree. It is well known that Mujib did not want independence initially. I believe it was on March 7 (1971), if I am not mistaken, that he held a public meeting in Dacca. Everyone was expecting Mujib would announce the independence of Bangladesh, and there was a great deal of pressure on Mujib from many quarters to make such an announcement after the Army had postponed the convening of the National Assembly and had virtually cancelled the election results. Still, Mujib refused to announce independence. Mujib was pushed into a corner where he had no option left. He had won the election with 99.9 per cent of the votes in East Pakistan and constituted thereby a majority in Pakistan. Never in the history of any country was there such a measure of support.

The Army knew that if the election result was honoured and implemented in toto and its powers were handed over to a civilian government led by the Bengali majority in the National Assembly, then the minimum the Bengalis proposed to do was to implement parity in the Army and other state institutions after so many years of neglect and discrimination. They would ask for 56 per cent representation in the Army. The Army would not accommodate itself to the consequences of a democratic election. The Army would have had to accept parity as would have the civil servants. But, they would have none of it. They were not prepared to give a proportionate quota to the Bengalis. This leaves aside the Army's apprehensions that Mujib was not even prepared to

retain the bloated scale of the Army itself. They feared he might cut their budget size. Mujib had said that in such a poor country there was no need for such a 'white elephant'. Mujib wanted to have good terms with India and with all states neighbouring Pakistan. In such a context there was no need to have such a 'white elephant' like the existing Army which was consuming over 60 per cent of the entire national budget.

At the beginning of the negotiations with the Army after the elections Mujib was forced into a compromise. He was asked to give a guarantee that he would not touch the Army and he did agree that for five years he would not touch it. The Army didn't believe him. They thought that Mujib was only making a tactical concession and was not going to stick to his word. Once power was handed over to him, once he became Prime Minister of Pakistan, it would be extremely difficult for the Army to control him. So events were soon manipulated. You will remember that Yahya Khan called off the meeting of the National Assembly. This was uncalled for on Yahya's part. There had been fair elections which all parties recognised. But when the Assembly was due to meet, the Army simply refused to allow it to convene. The Army did this with the full connivance of Bhutto who was out for power himself. This is the background to what preceded the crackdown in Dacca. Can there be any doubt the Bengalis were 'kicked out' of Pakistan after having won an election?

LIFSCHULTZ: If you no longer believe that the national question for the Baluch can be solved within a renewed democratic framework in Pakistan, what now is your standpoint in terms of a solution to the national question?

MENGAL: We have opted for a very difficult path. But for us there is only one way left. If the Baluch are to survive, then we must struggle for an 'independent' Baluchistan, outside the framework of Pakistan. We are conscious of ourselves as a national entity. If the present situation is allowed to prevail, then that entity will be lost. Efforts are being made in Pakistan at the moment to draw us with an influx of refugees and immigrants. The authorities in Pakistan want to outnumber the people of Baluchistan by bringing settlers from outside Baluchistan into the province as labourers, peasants, and businessmen. The goal is to bring people in and force the Baluch out.

LIFSCHULTZ: So you now stand unequivocally for independence?

MENGAL: Yes, we are now absolutely out for independence.

LIFSCHULTZ: In all these thirty years you have until now refused to take such a

stand. Why at this moment have you chosen to issue a declaration of independence?

MENGAL: There are three aspects of this question. The simplest of all is that the consequences we have suffered in our struggle for provincial autonomy and democracy would not have been worse than what we would have suffered had we been struggling for an independent Baluchistan. Bangladesh suffered a terrible massacre only for asking for the implementation of the election results and the formation of a government which had been elected to take over Pakistan. The punishment rendered for asking merely for democracy within Pakistan was not less than what would have occurred had they set out from the start with the goal of an independent Bangladesh. From 1973 to 1977 the Army's operations in Baluchistan has made clear to us that even if a demand for provincial autonomy is made within a democratic structure, it will be met with the same violence from the Army which is more or less comparable to what we would have faced had we opted for independence. If at all the result we face is the same violence whether we want autonomy or independence, then why should not one go for the graceful and dignified course— independence? That is number one. Secondly, it is my firm belief now that the Baluch will never realise their rights within the framework of Pakistan. By Pakistan I mean the Punjabi ruling elements. Whenever I refer to Pakistan I mean the Punjabi ruling class. Had Pakistan accepted the concept of nationalities within Pakistan, and the rights of those nationalities as partners within the boundaries of Pakistan, one could have said, "Yes, adjustment is possible". But, right from the beginning there has been a denial of the rights of nationalities, as far as it concerned the Punjabi ruling class. They have always denied the existence of such rights. Not only that, but on a number of occasions they have dubbed demands for the recognition of such rights due to the nationalities to be treacherous demands. We who have always tried to plead the case of the provinces, have been labelled as traitors. You will never point out to me a single Punjabi politician in Pakistan who has been labelled a traitor. No matter what language he might have used in his political speeches, or what demands he put forward, or actions he may have taken, he will never have been labelled anti-state. This attribution has been specified and reserved exclusively for those who belong to the smaller provinces. At one time when there was an 'East Pakistan', it was also reserved for the political leaders of the

largest province. Now, all this has a definite motive behind it. If these small provinces were left alone to look after their own problems and destinies, where would the Punjabi ruling class go as far as its future programmes and plans are concerned? The Punjab must resettle and deploy its population somewhere due to the crisis within the province. The Western countries will not permit anymore immigrants from the region. Punjab is bursting as far as the population to land ratio is concerned. From the perspective of the Punjab their population has to be resettled or employed elsewhere. It already employs nearly 4,00,000 with the Army itself. But, they are looking for land and resources elsewhere to expand into. Baluchistan is minerally a very wealthy area and has a great deal of potential. It potentially could accommodate hundreds of thousands of people coming from outside were these resources to be fully exploited. But in the process they would ruin and destroy us as they are already doing. It is this we have cast the die against.

LIFSCHULTZ: Under the provincial autonomy arrangements guaranteed under the 1973 Constitution, would you have been able to restrict the type of immigration and cultural destruction you have described?

MENGAL: If provincial autonomy had worked, our objective would have been to rehabilitate and develop the economy for our own people first. We would have parted only with those resources which are surplus with regard to our needs. We would not have let our people look for a loaf of bread and give better things to our neighbours. No, certainly not!

LIFSCHULTZ: For many years you maintained that a fully democratic and constitutional set-up in Pakistan could resolve the national question. But, you are now saying after the four year civil war (1973-77), you have abandoned any such hope.

MENGAL: Yes, that is correct because we have had the bitter experience of that period. The 1973 Constitution used to be a sacred document which a variety of politicians, and even Zia-ul Haq, used to refer to concerning its guarantees regarding provincial autonomy. Somebody has to go and ask them, where is that wretched 1973 Constitution now! It has been completely abrogated. Yet, the military governors enjoy referring to the righteous promises of autonomy in this document. Where is the rest of this sacred Constitution of 1973? The part concerning the judiciary has been torn to pieces and thrown into the dustbin. The part which concerns the western democratic

concept of elected government has been torn to pieces with the enthusiastic support of the West itself. The National Assembly is completely gone. Zia-ul-Haq being head of state today is nothing less than high treason according to that Constitution. All these concerns have been thrown into the gutter.

The only part which the authorities say is still intact today is the Constitution's provision regarding autonomy. Why do they even bother to refer to it at all? The reason is simple: the actual provisions, whatever the appearance, provided virtually no autonomy whatsoever. The essence had been drained away before it was enacted. This is why all of them, not only Zia-ul-Haq, but even opposition parties declare, "In the 1973 Constitution all political parties settled the issues of provincial autonomy, so it cannot be reopened".

LIFSCHULTZ: You are saying the 1973 Constitution provided *no* guarantee whatsoever for provincial autonomy?

MENGAL: It did not. But, we did give a fair trial even to their so-called autonomy provisions, even though it was utterly against the concept we had been seeking in the constitution of our party. We gave it a fair trial. Our own party Constitution reserved three subjects for the jurisdiction of the Federal authorities. These were defence, foreign affairs, and currency. All other provisions were reserved as the responsibilities of the provinces. In the 1973 Constitution there are two 'lists': one is the 'Federal'; the other is the 'Concurrent' list. The 'Federal' list, of course, is precisely those areas of responsibility reserved for the Federal government. The 'Concurrent' list is one dominated by the Federal authorities with the concurrence of the provincial government. I also call it a Federal list. But, there is a 'third' list, which does not specify anything exactly which is what I call the 'residue' list. Whatever is left from these two lists—the Federal and Concurrent—is the rights remaining unto the provincial government. But, if you examine it all minutely, there is nothing left out of the first two lists. We even agreed to that wretched list and said, all right, let us give it a fair trial. If the Punjabis have got no ulterior motive, well we can work out problems in the future. But, they did not even allow us to function within those provisions. Even those crumbs their hunger could not spare for long.

LIFSCHULTZ: At one stage co-operative relations existed between democratic forces in Baluchistan and certain democratic political parties from other provinces. Now that you have given a call for the independence of Baluchistan do

you envisage any possible co-operation which could be sustained with democratic elements within Pakistan?

MENGAL: As far as other democratic organisations and movements are concerned, we can only co-operate when we find a common ground for co-operation. When we speak of an independent Baluchistan, as we do now, there is hardly any ground left for those parties or organisations which still believe in the concept of Pakistan to meet with us on. According to the general concept of secession, you have to think of disintegrating a country to bring into being a part of it as an independent nation. Under these circumstances no organisation bearing allegiance to Pakistan will accommodate us nor will we be able to accommodate them. At one stage there certainly was a possibility for co-operation and indeed there was co-operation. Within Pakistan there are many people who have a soft corner for the plight of the Baluch and would like to search for a way back. But, I am afraid it is rather late. It would only be possible if these elements had a real say in the affairs of the Pakistani state. Nor, do they have much prospect of political power.

We also could not be persuaded to go down the old road of Constitutional guarantees. Three constitutions have been abrogated in toto—the '56, the '62, and the '73 constitutions have been completely buried. So there is no question of trusting any constitutional guarantee, when the constitutions as a whole do not count. So, what guarantees could be given for provincial rights. If constitutional guarantees are not worth anything, then verbal guarantees certainly do not count.

For us a guarantee now could lie in only one of two ways. First is to form a confederation of states similar to the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Secondly, if they think a confederation is too much to speak of at this stage, then let them accept an equal division of power at the level of the Federation. This could have been another alternative. Under a confederation four independent states would exist in association. They would be the four provinces of the present federation of Pakistan. In this arrangement the four independent states could live comfortably and in peace. As I said, something like the UAE.

Most people said that this is too much at this stage to ask for. They say nobody is going to agree. 'Nobody' means the Punjab and its Army. Earlier we also suggested having an equal division of power at the level of the federation. This would have been the only guarantee which would have allowed the rights of the

country's nationalities to have their rights safeguarded. But, if you give the gun to the Punjab and at the same time you designate 56 per cent of the seats in a National Assembly to the Punjab, then how can there be any safeguards for provincial rights? Now all three provinces together could not beat the Punjab in such an Assembly. When there was East Pakistan the votes would have been overwhelmingly against the vested interests of the Punjabis. In this sense we constituted a clear majority in the country. It is precisely for this reason that the Army would not abide by the 1970 elections and kicked East Pakistan out of the Federation. Now all the guns lie with the Punjab. The Army and the civil service are overwhelmingly Punjabi. In the beginning if the Punjab had accepted these terms, the provinces could have been satisfied. But today they are not prepared to listen to anything beyond the 1973 Constitution. As far as we are concerned, that is point zero.

LIFSCHULTZ: I am not clear on this point. Are you saying you are still prepared to consider the possibility of a 'confederation', or has the situation gone beyond that point also?

MENGAL: I said that if at an earlier stage the Punjabis had the vision, a confederation could have been a solution. But at this stage if I can be independent, I would not choose a confederation. In order to have avoided an independent Baluchistan, or an independent Paktoonistan, or an independent Sindh, the Punjabis could have offered such a solution. But now they have lost their credibility. Or, as I have said, they could have brought forward a proposal offering an equal division of power with the context of Pakistan. But, they are not going to part with anything. They want to have the full cake and eat it at the same time.

LIFSCHULTZ: Baluchistan is now situated in an important strategic crossroads between the Soviet Union in Afghanistan and the United States' own heavy commitment to the military regime in Islamabad. How will the specific nature of your geo-political location between two major blocs in confrontation affect your own goal of achieving an independent state?

MENGAL: As far as our situation in Baluchistan is concerned, it has a dark side and a bright one. There is no doubt that Baluchistan today has a strategic attraction for the Soviet bloc as well as the American bloc. Now in that case one stands to be a loser as well as a gainer. Loser, in the sense, that whatever goes in the interest of one bloc will force the other bloc to use all its forces and resources to stop the success of its antagonist. I can

say that the present geo-political situation in the region is certainly going to create a great many hazards and problems for us. It already has. But we are hopeful that a stage will come, or rather a situation will develop, where Baluch independence will become an inevitable and acceptable reality even to those who at present would prefer our movement not to gain ground. It will leave them with no other alternative, but to accept the real fact, that once this idea has entered into the minds of the people of that area, and once they are determined to achieve it, history shows that they cannot be denied this right. When the Americans come to this conclusion, they will perceive their own interest differently than they do now. At the moment it is not suitable to the Americans that Baluchistan should have its own aspirations. The United States has selected Pakistan as a whole to use in its conflict against Russia. In time they will come to the conclusion that they are just beating a dead horse. And, that will be for us to demonstrate, once the independence movement is launched and fully developed.

Pakistan's strategic importance exists only because of Baluchistan. If you take Baluchistan out of it, Pakistan is not worth two pennies. Once it is established that Baluchistan is going to get its independence under any circumstances, I think at that stage the venues of sense will not be shut, as far as the American mind is concerned. This is what I hope. However, it usually takes a very long period for sense to prevail in American quarters, but I hope it will at that stage.

LIFSCHULTZ: Is it also possible that it may not be in Soviet interests that an independent Baluchistan emerge?

MENGAL: According to my assessment, Russia would prefer to have a pro-Russian Pakistan, than to have an independent Baluchistan or a Balkanised Pakistan. But future attitudes will depend on how far the Russians are forced to weigh factors as they emerge and how actual forces mature within Pakistan. The Soviets now face Pakistani involvement with various forces opposing their own position in Afghanistan. Much depends upon the patience of these Russians. At the same time, a complicated game is being played from the Pakistani side. When the Russians lose their patience and believe Pakistan is making things rather difficult for them, then the Russians will come to certain conclusions of their own. What I mean is that Pakistan is adopting a strategic role which is becoming a permanent menace as far as Russian interests are concerned.

As far as we are concerned, the Communists frequently claim that they believe

in the rights of nationalities. We believe that within this overall situation, the Russians will have no objection as far as the emergence of an independent Baluchistan is concerned, unless they feel it is specifically against their interest. There is no doubt that every state has to look after its own interest and for that matter the Soviet Union cannot be expected to ignore its own interest. We as Baluch have tried to make a comparison between the Soviet attitude and the American attitude as far as their past actions in regard to us are concerned. What we can see is that there are bullet marks in the dead bodies of the Baluch from bullets that were made in America. Someone has to point out a bullet mark made by the Russians against the Baluch. Someone has yet to point out to us Russian roubles flowing into Pakistan to aid the anti-Baluch gunmen in Pakistan. Someone has yet to show us Soviet manufactured aeroplanes, helicopters, or military pacts like those with the Shah which were used to aid the Pakistan government in its attempt to crush us in 1973.

There is no doubt the Soviets are a big power and like all big powers they wish to extend their influence. But, we are trying our best to be nobody's pawns; to make Baluchistan 'non-committed' to any power. The interest we are committed to is that of our own people. That is our priority. We have no desire or intention to commit ourselves to any power. But we have objectives and we would certainly accept any aid that comes from any quarter without committing the integrity of Baluchistan or allowing ourselves to be used as anyone's pawn.

LIFSCHULTZ: While no one can point to a Soviet bullet in the body of any Baluch or of any Soviet roubles financing military operations in Pakistan, one can hardly regard the Soviet Union as purely beneficial in the region. After all there are plenty of Soviet bullets in the bodies of Afghans and there is a civil war in Afghanistan.

MENGAL: This is precisely why we do not want to be the pawns of any power. If we become the pawns of one, then certainly the Baluch will find the bullets of the other in his body. We have not been the pawns of the Soviets, yet still we have the bullets of the Americans in our body. If we become the pawns of the Americans, as some of the Afghans have, in particular some of these mullahs, then we will find Soviet bullets in Baluch bodies. But, the blame will not only lie with the Soviet Union, the blame will lie with us also because we have thrown ourselves into the American lap. If we throw ourselves into the Soviet lap in toto, then the Americans might be justified in their way

of thinking. But so far over all these years the Americans have had no such reason to inflict their bullets upon our people, but they did! So there is a difference between the two from our point of view. We have been no one's pawns. We have stood for ourselves. But, for no rhyme or reason the United States has allowed their bullets and weapons to be used again and again against the Baluch people. How can the Americans justify this?

LIFSCHULTZ: How is it possible given the strategic position of the Gulf and the existing oil interests that the major powers will cease their confrontation and withdraw to leave the smaller nations and societies in the region to the resolution of their own affairs without outside interference? Are there any conditions which might allow such an improbable situation to arise? Is it possible or is it naive to imagine you will be left alone?

MENGAL: In our view a situation will emerge which will warrant a sort of settlement between the Soviets and the Americans in the region. They will each reach the conclusion that any move from either side could bring them to the brink of World War or nuclear war. I believe they will avoid such a situation and a settlement will emerge.

LIFSCHULTZ: But for societies in areas like Central Asia where you are in Baluchistan, such a settlement could mean just a redrawing of the line of control between two spheres of influence. In your view could any conditions emerge where the major powers might withdraw to leave the nations such as the Afghans and the Baluch to resolve their own affairs and exist without outside influence?

MENGAL: To a certain degree this depends on ourselves and how our own forces develop and take hold of the situation. But I don't think either power is satisfied with the present situation neither the Russians nor the Americans. If both powers come to the conclusion because of the actual situation that they are each going to lose a great deal from further confrontation and escalation, the conditions for a settlement could emerge. Then our stand will have to be taken into account.

LIFSCHULTZ: Last autumn the United States initiated a \$1.2 billion military aid programme for Pakistan. What is your attitude toward this development and the Reagan Administration's Pakistan policy in general?

MENGAL: I can say this is a most condemnable act. But, I don't believe anyone in Baluchistan appreciates or respects this American move. Now there are two aspects to this issue. There is first the general attitude the Americans have towards a regime like the junta in Pakistan. It is really surprising for us to

watch how the United States has moved to support this regime, but also previous regimes of a similar type. Somehow the Americans have become fond of supporting unpopular regimes throughout the world and Pakistan is no exception. Unfortunately, the United States has two yardsticks: one for their country and the other for the third world. In the third world or the underdeveloped countries, they support dictatorships and brutal regimes. They have a soft corner for this type of regime. The United States professes a pure form of democracy, but its actions have been ones which have destroyed democratic rights in countries like ours. In the long run American foreign policy has never gained. Policies of this type have gained the sympathies of those within the dictatorship, but they have always lost the sympathies of the people within these countries. This will be the final result of American policy in Pakistan. This is my firm prediction.

We in Baluchistan have seen American support to previous regimes like the one we have now. I remember the 1964 military operations. Even before that, also in 1958 there were operations against us, and at that time we told the Americans directly, "Look here your arms are being used against us which you always claim to have given to Pakistan to use against Communism. But they have been using them against the people within this country." Now again the weapons Reagan is giving to Pakistan will be used against the people of Pakistan as a whole. It is completely ridiculous to assume these arms could be used against a Russian attack. If it at all takes place, these arms will be of no use. They will be worth two pennies against the Soviets. They are not meant to be used against India. So where will these arms be used? These arms can only be used for internal purposes, that is at any time they feel there is an insurgency in Pakistan then they will be used. In Pakistan the main apprehension is about the Baluch. Americans know it and the Pakistanis have been claiming so. You can see Zia-ul-Huq's interview with the American writer Selig Harrison. Zia leaves no doubt about his anxiety over Baluchistan. It is clear these weapons will as in the past be used against us. That is why for us the new military aid agreement is the most condemnable act on the part of the Americans.

Reagan tries to play upon the American people's minds and fears over the Russian bear. The Reagan administration says only one thing to the American people and Congress with regard to Pakistan. Here is the Russian bear to the North. We must deter it! We must deter it! But, at what cost to people in Pakistan!

LIFSCHULTZ: Before the military aid agreement was voted by the Congress did you have any communication with representatives of the American government concerning your own views? Did you not meet a Congressional delegation which was enroute to Pakistan to investigate the merits of such aid?

MENGAL: Yes, we did indeed. The Congressional delegation which was due to go to Pakistan stopped here in London. They did contact us and Khair Baksh Marri and myself met with them. We spoke with them at some length and told them our views of the political repercussions such a major aid programme would have within the country. I don't know why, but most of the delegation seemed determined that Pakistan must get this aid. They had preconceived ideas and their interest in our opinions seemed only a formality. The reasons for this is best known to them. Again like the past their concern seemed to be more for the Russians on the Northern border than with the people who live within Pakistan.

LIFSCHULTZ: To your knowledge has the US asked for any bases in Baluchistan?

MENGAL: According to our information Pakistan has agreed to allow the use of Baluchistan to the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF). Facilities are now under construction in Gwadar and elsewhere. It must be understood that Baluchistan is the only part of Pakistan that has a special significance for the Americans. It now fits into American plans with regard to their approach to Gulf security. This is why we apprehend that the point where the RDF will come and land if a regional crisis develops will be near Gwadar. Normally people talk of military bases and think in terms of the old type. But, there is a new military concept which was not there in the old days. Previously airfields had to be built and all venues had to be ready and open. But now with the RDF the only thing you need is for the material support requirements of the RDF to be stored and ready for the moment when the RDF will land for its operations.

I know for sure that this material is being landed at Karachi port. Radar and other electronic facilities are under construction at Gwadar. There is an enormous peninsular rock face, the hill top of which overlooks the Gulf. It projects out from the coast and main town of Gwadar for about two miles. For the first time ever civilians have been banned from entering the area. There is a constant traffic in helicopters from ships offshore. Construction of a base facility is under way. Besides Quetta these days is filled with American military and 'civilian' personnel. People are saying that Quetta is

looking like the 'old' Quetta as far as the Americans are concerned. The 'old' Quetta was when they secretly operated their base at Badebar from where the U-2 planes flew.

What is happening is not a secret to us although people in Pakistan and America may not know much about it. The Americans have themselves said in so many words that Pakistan has agreed to extend certain concessions to the United States in return for the military and economic aid that has been given. Now what concessions could Pakistan give in return?

LIFSCHULTZ: If these facilities are actually based in Baluchistan, as the former Chief Minister of the province, do you have a position regarding whether these facilities should be located in Baluchistan?

MENGAL: Certainly, we object fundamentally to any bases being set up in Baluchistan. I have no desire for Baluchistan to become the battleground for the big powers. We will stand to be crushed between them. Suppose these big powers come to a head-on collision and the fighting ground is Baluchistan, then who will die? Other than those in the paid forces, the normal man who will suffer will be the Baluch, not any other Pakistanis. Why should we suffer? Why should we bear the miseries of Pakistan? Why should we suffer for their military alliances? Why should we suffer for Pakistan from which we get nothing? All that we have received from Pakistan has been bullets, prisons, torture, and killings. Should we suffer for that? There is no justification in it.

LIFSCHULTZ: You have argued that the Americans lack any perception of the Baluch issue. Do you have any anxiety or fear that a movement for independence could in the midst of a military conflict with the Pakistan Army find itself up against American forces? Do you have any fear that the United States and its Rapid Deployment Force might conceivably intervene on the side of the Pakistan government against your movement in Baluchistan?

MENGAL: As long as there is a government in power in the United States of Mr Reagan's type, then one could expect anything from them. All I hope is that the people in America will at one stage succeed in stopping their government from aiding dictatorships like that in Pakistan which stand against movements which are genuinely fighting for democratic rights. It is our hope that one day the Americans will succeed in having a government of that sort. But, as far as the present administration is concerned, they are there to help Pakistan and they will certainly come to Pakistan's aid even

against the Baluch.

LIFSCHULTZ: In your view how long will the United States continue to identify its own regional policy with Pakistan's military authorities?

MENGAL: It is my assessment that Zia's regime is rapidly approaching the moment when it will have outlived its utility. The Americans will not repeat the mistake they made in Iran. Sooner or later they will try to put pressure on Zia to accept the so-called transfer of power to so-called public cum American nominee politicians (mainly from a selected group within the People's Party), because the Americans fear that if they do not manipulate a change of their own choice, they cannot stop the replacement of Zia by someone whose alignments could hardly be predictable. After the bitter experience of Iran, Americans are in no position to take a chance with Pakistan which is their only potential proxy on that side of the Gulf. Zia has undoubtedly all along been a very faithful servant of the Americans, but this does not qualify him to gain preference over American interest. Therefore, Zia's replacement through a deceptive democratic manoeuvre has more or less become an inevitable option.

It will be very difficult for Zia to agree to the proposition of a transfer of power to elected representatives. He is being haunted by Bhutto's ghost and for the transfer of power the facade of an election is bound to take place for which the 1973 Constitution will be reactivated. Zia knows that the 1973 Constitution has a provision where the imposition of Martial Law is an act of high treason and is punishable by death. And, at the same time there is no guarantee that after the transfer of power the Americans will go out of their way and stop the successive (sic) government from invoking that very provision of the constitution. Therefore, it will be difficult to satisfy Zia on this point. The only other alternative left will be to have Zia replaced and to achieve that goal the Americans at the appropriate moment may make things difficult for him. It is merely a matter of time before the ball will be set rolling in Pakistan.

LIFSCHULTZ: What do you anticipate the attitudes of other states in the region will be towards your independence? What response do you anticipate from the Arab states? Do you hope to secure their acquiescence their neutrality, or their co-operation? Or, do you expect their antagonism given their current alliance with Islamabad?

MENGAL: Actually our own attitude toward the Arab states is in principle quite friendly. There are many Baluch working in these states. But, unfortunately

many Arab governments do not make their policies on an independent basis. Regarding Pakistan they follow the Americans. It is our hope that these states will realise the situation in Pakistan and at least cease their anti-Baluch aid which they are currently providing to Pakistan. So at the moment all we have seen and are seeing is the antagonism on their part. At the moment there is no co-operation, but we hope in the future that they shall realise we are potential friends within the region, and that as such they will at least cease to aid the enemies of the Baluch.

LIFSCHULTZ: Do you believe India will be neutral, antagonistic, or sympathetic?

MENGAL: It all depends on a number of factors. There are negotiations going on between India and Pakistan at the present. One cannot say where they will end. But, if the negotiations fail then at least Pakistan will not have a big sympathiser like India in that region and that will be an indirect help to the Baluch cause.

As far as Baluchistan itself is concerned, we might have expected quite a lot from India. However, the experience of Bangladesh has turned out rather differently than hoped for by the Indians. India went out of its way and came to the assistance of Bangladesh. In return India now faces at the United Nations and elsewhere another representative of a so-called Islamic country voting against India and rebuking India. What is the guarantee that there would not be an American backed *coup d'etat* in other countries which became independent, as in Bangladesh?

But, we can say one thing for certain. If the present relationship between India and Pakistan continues to be one of antagonism, then India will certainly not feel unhappy if a part of Pakistan became an independent state. This is our presumption about India. But, India will definitely not play any positive role in the game. She does not want to be sorry again for her own efforts. However, if Baluchistan became independent by its own means, I do not believe India would bear us any grudge.

LIFSCHULTZ: When you speak of an independent Baluchistan are you speaking exclusively of the territory that is now part of Pakistan, or do you refer also to areas in Iran and Afghanistan?

MENGAL: I can wish for all Baluch, but can only speak for the Baluch in Pakistan. It is certainly my hope that people who live in other Baluchistans will be thinking in the same terms. If they think in the same terms, then I think it will be rather good news for me. But, I cannot speak for people in other countries.

As far as Afghanistan is concerned, we

do not have any territorial claims. All that we can say is that the boundaries could be redemarcated. There is Afghan territory in Baluchistan which Afghanistan claims to be its territory. There are areas in Afghanistan which the Baluch think to be their area. So there could be an arrangement and a redemarcation in certain areas. Certain areas can go there and certain areas can come here.

Iran is another matter. Iran for a long time has been helping the Pakistan government to crush our people in Baluchistan. They have not only been crushing people on our side of the border, but have also been crushing their own Baluch which is a considerable population. So we have been bearing this brunt of Iranian might right from the beginning. But, anyhow even then it is not we who are going to decide, it is the people of that Baluchistan who will decide. We can only wish that they do so.

LIFSCHULTZ: You have also formed an organisation called the Baluchistan Liberation Organisation (BLO). Can you outline its objectives and the contents of its social and political programme? What is the BLO's attitude and your own attitude towards the traditional role of the Sardar, the future role of the Sardar, and the structure of tribal organisation in an independent state?

MENGAL: The basic aim of the BLO is to organise and to supervise the armed struggle in Baluchistan toward the objective of an independent Baluchistan. Once this is achieved we will implement a series of fundamental social reforms.

The "Sardari" by itself is not a system. The system is the tribal system. The Sardar is the by-product of the tribal system. Such a system can only be changed when it is replaced by some other social system, not just by the stroke of a pen. Only social and economic changes in the system can do away with the Sardar.

I will give you an example. There are still Sardars in the Punjab, although officially they do not exist. The Mazari area of the Punjab still has a Sardari system. Officially the Mazari Sardar is no longer there. But, the Mazari tribe still accept the Sardar, because no form of official reforms have brought a basic change in the tribal structure in the Mazari area. When there are serious disputes, people still go and seek solutions from their Sardar. Unless a better substitute is provided people will continue to go to men they are traditionally familiar with. The substitute, the present government and state are providing can hardly be considered better. It is a worse substitute and people will not opt for a worse substitute. A substitute should only be a better one. Now if you ask people to change from the Sardar to

the present legal system as it is being operated by the military and civilian officials at the local level, what do you expect people to do? Whenever someone goes to a government official with a problem there will only be talk of money. When people see official selling justice, selling permits, selling their executive powers, then certainly a tribal man will prefer to go to his Sardar. When he goes to the Sardar he will get justice, whatever be the kind of justice, or whatever be the mode of the justice, but he will get it with no cost and quickly. So at this level no better substitute has been given.

When social and economic changes which are superior are brought into socie-

ty, the Sardari system will automatically vanish. Yet, as long as the tribal structure is not replaced by a better system, things will continue to work as they are until better means are introduced. But, this has to be replaced. It cannot go on for long. Our system is an old system and wherever there has been a tribal system anywhere in the world it has operated in similar ways. But it has to go and it must go.

LIFSCHULTZ: So you believe that you are the last of the Sardars?

MENGAL: I hope so. I hope Baluchistan will become independent in my age and that will bring an end to the Sardari system.

Walchand Hirachand Centenary

THERE is a Jonathan Livingston Seagull in all of us. It is this spirit which inspires some of us to dream what others have never imagined, and to do what others have only dreamt. Walchand Hirachand, whose birth centenary year has just drawn to a close, was one such. The foundations of the industrial empire that he built in the short span of 34 years testify to the spirit of his enterprise and sweep of the canvas he worked on.

At a very early stage of his career, Walchand Hirachand took up the construction of the Bhor Ghat tunnel, defying skeptics. It is interesting to note the choice of his ventures. Without the background and experience of a Tata, he stepped into the core sector industries, where technological problems were bound to deter any other ordinary person.

In his times, a developed capital market was non-existent. The attitude of the British government was invariably hostile. There were a number of ways to beat down the native entrepreneur. Yet Walchand Hirachand moved from one idea to another, one activity to another with remarkable speed and organisational capacity. Not surprisingly, he often sparked uneasiness amongst his family members and partners. None of them, bound by their traditions, could have understood the panorama of his vision.

Before starting the shipbuilding yard at Visakhapatnam, he had carefully gone into a detailed process of site selection, generating local enthusiasm, obtaining meticulous cost estimates, taking care even to provide work shelter for all engineers and workers. And yet there are examples of instant decisions after which there was no stopping him in the speed of his execution. A chance meeting with a British engineer on a railway journey from Delhi to Bombay brought him the

information that a passenger ship was up for sale in Bombay. Directly he alighted from the train, he went to the docks to examine the ship. This was February 16, 1919. Within a matter of a few days Scindia Steamship Navigation Ltd had been registered, finance had been arranged, the ship purchased and on April 5, 1919, it sailed for Europe and England on its maiden voyage for the company.

His untiring efforts at building the shipping industry brought him the realisation that shipbuilding was as important. The Imperial Government thwarted his repeated attempts to select a site or give financial assistance. Undeterred, Scindias started work at Visakhapatnam in 1941. The Japanese bombing of this port city forced him to transfer men and machines to Bombay. But with bulldog-like tenacity, he was back on the scene in 1946, after the war, to complete three berths and two steamers by 1948, despite massive losses. He knew that a task as massive as this could not be undertaken without the government stepping in and on March 1, 1952 the infrastructure he had created became the nucleus of Hindustan Shipyard Ltd.

Only a Walchand Hirachand could perhaps have dreamt of setting up as sophisticated an industry as aircraft manufacturing in India in the year 1939. Again a chance meeting with an American launched him into a new exciting flight. With characteristic stubbornness, he prodded the government until it came forward with a challenge to establish the factory in six months. The Scindia shareholders were wary but he managed to secure the Maharaja of Mysore's participation. By December 1940, the company had been formed and by July 1941 the factory was ready. Though he had to pull out of this industry soon as the govern-

ment's war-time demands required a different approach, he had, all the same, once again opened a totally new vista for the young engineers of the country. It is this same unit that is now known as Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd.

Walchand did not lose sight of the importance of agriculture in the Indian economy. He acquired 1,500 acres of arid land at Ravalgaon in 1923, and later, more at Kalamb (Walchandnagar), where he introduced scientific methods into farming. Within a short space of time, Ravalgaon and Kalamb were transformed into lush, green fields of sugarcane that have set records in yield per acre, sugar content and quality of cane. Keeping in mind that processing the raw materials from his farms was a vital step towards self-sufficiency, he set up a factory at Ravalgaon from where some of the country's finest confectionery is produced.

Finding that dependence on suppliers for spare parts and machinery for his sugar factory at Walchandnagar was disrupting his production routine, Walchand decided to manufacture these locally. Accordingly he set up a workshop at Walchandnagar which specialised in the manufacture of sugar machinery. The workshop grew rapidly; expertise was acquired in fields other than sugar machinery and today the company is known as Walchandnagar Industries Limited, an industrial giant with a turnover of Rs 60 crore.

Adept at recognising a venture with potential, Walchand gave a new sense of direction to two companies which were undergoing temporary setbacks—Cooper Engineering and Indian Hume Pipe Company. Walchand's principal objective in taking over the management of Cooper Engineering (now a division of Walchandnagar Industries) was the indigenous manufacture of internal combustion engines. Under his guidance, the company commenced production of horizontal cold-starting single cylinder engines for industrial use and electricity generation. As for Indian Hume Pipe, the company's technical prowess has now made it an acknowledged authority world-wide on concrete pressure pipes.

Walchand Hirachand did not need sales tax incentives to establish a sophisticated industrial infrastructure in Kalamb, in the interior of Maharashtra. He chose highly technology-intensive industries when he could have easily established jute and cotton mills. Every area of his work demanded the building of an organisation to continue the task after him. Long before the term professionalism was understood, he gave freedom to his managers on their projects. The broadness of his vision and nationalistic approach made his and their objectives common.