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## REFLECTIONS ON THE AFGHAN REVOLUTION

It has been five years\* since the Princely General Daoud was overthrown as leader of the Afghan government and replaced by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan. Events in the interim have brought to the fore a range of fundamental questions associated with the very nature of revolutionary transfer of power. Among the questions which the following analysis will address, in one or another form, are :

- Was the Afghan Revolution a genuine revolution, in Marxist terms ? If the answer is affirmative, has it remained so ?
- What is the relationship between subjective and objective forces ?
- How are historic stages to be identified ?
- How should revolutionary power deal with a feudal economy and social structure, especially under conditions where it coincides with the national (ities) question ?
- What is the relationship between the individual and history ?
- Has the presence of 100,000 troops from the USSR assisted in deepening the revolution or aided internal reaction and U.S. imperialism ?
- Can the USSR be considered culpable for the *Khalq* period ?
- Can a revolution be considered authentic if its very survival is dependent upon outside forces ? Or, should this be seen as a

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\* The paper was submitted for publication in early 1983. An update was subsequently added which is printed at the bottom of the paper.

necessary but temporary stage in the consolidation of revolutionary power ?

### Background

With the consolidation of British power on the Indian sub-continent, Afghanistan came to be seen as a buffer between two Empires, respectively those of the Royal Houses of the U.K. and Russia. This geopolitical concept of "buffer" remains a reality as long as two conditions remain fulfilled : (1) external forces accept its utility and are in sufficient balance not to threaten the status quo, (2) groups internal to the state, irrespective of their socio-economic base, are committed to buffer maintenance. In the modern period a number of states have been seen as fulfilling these criteria, among them Finland, Austria, Yugoslavia and Afghanistan. The Saur (April) Revolution, however, permanently removed the latter from this category. In some sense no buffers are permanent, as we can see from the Afghan experience. On the centenary of Britain imposing dependent status on Afghanistan through the 1878 treaty with Emir Yakub Khan, the Afghan-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighborliness and Cooperation was signed. Afghanistan as a true buffer can actually be dated only from the period when Amanullah Khan secured formal independence in 1919 from Britain coupled with the Soviet-Afghan Treaty of 1921. Reformism gained expression, if not political results, during the succeeding period, taking organized form with the revitalization of the young Afghan movement in 1929 (the movement having been founded in 1908). Contemporary reform, however, had to await the conclusion of World War II. In the late 40s and early 50s leadership centered around Mir Ghulam Mohammed Ghubar and Dr. Abdur Rahman Mahmudi.<sup>1</sup> Activists included Nur Muhammad Taraki and Babrak Karmal, the latter taking organizational control in 1949 and simultaneously editing the bi-weekly *Angar* (Embers).<sup>2</sup> Another group which emerged, *Water*

1 Anthony Arnold, *Afghanistan : the Soviet Invasion in Perspective*, Hoover Press, Stanford, 1981, p. 47.

2 Kuldeep Nayar, *Report on Afghanistan*, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1981, p. 99.

(Homeland) published its own journal with the same name, with Mahmudi publishing *Nida-i-Khalq* (Voice of the People).<sup>3</sup> In addition, Afghan military officers were spending several years each training in the Soviet Union.<sup>4</sup> During this same general period of the late 1940s/early 1950s, overtures by the Afghan government to the Americans requesting military equipment was denied by Washington. While I am not persuaded that American motives were intended to communicate to the Soviet Union a non-provocative attitude, given other events in Asia and Europe during the period, it is clear that a major consequence of the U.S. decision was to make Afghanistan totally dependent, by 1954, on the USSR for military equipment. In 1948 the mildly socialist Youth for Reform emerged from a strata of the elite. Their program was seen as disruptive and members were jailed in the early days of the first Mohammad Doud administration (1953).<sup>5</sup>

During the late 1950's a writers' and intellectuals' circle was formed<sup>6</sup> becoming the core of Taraki's organizational efforts which commenced in September 1963<sup>7</sup>, and culminated in the founding of the *Jamiyat-i-Demokratiki-yi-Khalq-i-Afghanistan* (People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan—PDPA) on 1 January 1965. During the same year reforms, which had been instituted in 1964 under the Zahir Shah government, resulted in the first elected Parliament with secret ballot and adult suffrage and in the election of 4 PDPA members. While conservative forces continued to dominate the political scene, with actually 20 per cent of the electorate voting, some cracks appeared within the elite. In October 1965 students and political activists demonstrated

3 Arnold, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

4 For a discussion of this point of view, see Nancy P. Newell, and Richard S. Newell. *The Struggle for Afghanistan*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1981, pp. 42-43.

5 *ibid.*, p. 59. All parties were banned.

6 *ibid.*, p. 60.

7 Arnold, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

8 Harkishan Singh Surjeet, *Developments in Afghanistan*, Communist Party of India (Marxist), New Delhi, January 1981. p. 4.

aiming at blocking Parliamentary ratification of the proposed Cabinet.<sup>9</sup> *Khalq* continued to criticize the royal family, called for radical social change, the elimination of western influence and closer ties with the USSR. After some issues it was banned and forced underground in the Summer of 1966.<sup>10</sup> Factionalism had emerged within the PDPA resulting in the establishment in June 1967 of the *Jamiyat-i-Demokrati ki yi Afghanistan* (Democratic Party of Afghanistan—PDA). The PDPA came to be known as *Khalq* (People's) with the PDA as *Parcham* (Flag). While there were unquestioned differences of personal style between Nur Muhammad Taraki who led the *Khalq* (Hafizullah Amin was at this time a minor *Khalq* figure), and Babrak Karmal who led *Parcham*, there were fundamental ideological cleavages of much greater importance. *Khalq's* basic line called for a clear identification of classes in an orthodox, but Afghan fashion while *Parcham* followed a more classically Soviet position in the Third World by placing primary emphasis on penetrating the conservative state structures viz a "united front from above."

The United Front, as a strategic concept, pre-supposes a number of conditions : (1) the economic base has not yet matured to the point where the struggle between labor and capital has reached the penultimate crisis state ; (2) while there is a dominant mode of production, it is not exclusive in the social formation ; (3) classes or fractions of classes have sufficiently diffused interests, that the dominant class, or fraction of the dominant class, can be identified and isolated as the primary adversary of subordinate class(es) and/or fractions ; (4) the proletariat is either numerically in the minority, or if it is in the majority, it remains below the threshold of consciousness. Each of these in turn reflect the fundamental internal class character of a society. The strategic use of the United Front as either an instrument of the foreign policy of another country, or a "boring from within" of the existing state structures, to the neglect of expanding organizational

9 Newell, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

10 *ibid.*, p. 67.

militancy, brings the entire strategy into severe question.<sup>11</sup> The former is nationalized in either regional or global terms, but basically alienates the workers' movement from the society, while the latter obscures both organizational and political growth of the general population, thereby delinking the workers' movement from the population, shrinking its composition to functionaries and intellectuals. These two distorted uses of the united front are both theoretically erroneous, and, where employed, have resulted in significant setbacks for the workers' movement.

On the basis of the above, we can reasonably conclude that *Parcham* during this period was aligned with the "united front from above" strategy, while *Khalq* was struggling for an internally consistent approach. As we shall come to see, it was this situation which proved to be central in explaining *Khalq's* predominance and *Parcham's* secondary position when Prince Daoud's 1978 government fell. *Parcham*, because of its close linkage to the USSR, undoubtedly expected to gain some spin-off influence from students who had been trained in the Soviet Union. There were, in addition, other factors which tended to reinforce the fundamental difference between the two groups. *Khalq* militants were basically drawn from the Chilizai tribe in the east and south of the country and were Pashto speakers, while *Parcham* supporters were in the main drawn from Kabul and were Dari speakers. The government further accentuated the differences between the two by permitting the *Parcham* newspaper to publish from March 1968, when it began under the editorship of Sulaiman Laeq and Mir Akbar Khyber, and 1969 when it was proscribed.<sup>12</sup> As the *Khalq* newspaper had been closed for some time, *Parcham* was accused by *Khalq* of being government stooges. It was during this period that the phrase "Royal Communist Party" entered the Afghan political vocabulary.

In many ways the post-1972 period reflects a crystallization of the problems facing the Afghan left. In 1973, during the King's absence

11 There is a consistent historic Soviet position on the form of the United Front in many countries all of which have failed (China up to 1927, Cuba before 1959, Iraq in the 1960's, Iran up to 1983 to mention just a few).

12 Arnold, *op cit.*, p. 51 and Newell, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-63.

on a European trip, Prince Daoud seized power and declared a Republic with himself as Prime Minister. During the next five years he received substantial support from *Parcham*, at the request of the USSR (united front from above).<sup>13</sup> Daoud repaid the favor by appointing 400 *Parcham* adherents to various positions within the state structure. Within short order, however, Daoud purged the cabinet of *Parchamis* (Ministries of Education and Agriculture and Frontier Affairs) and removed four of them from the Revolutionary Council. In addition, he first appointed then transferred Captain Zia Mohammadzai Zia, a *Parchami*, Commander of the elite 2,000 man Republican guard, subsequently placed under Iranian SAVAK supervision.<sup>14</sup> He then dispatched to the rural areas 160 *Parchamis* who had been taken on as agents by the Minister of Interior of the last Royal Government (hired by the Minister, Nehmatullah Pazhwak, who was himself a *Parchami*).<sup>15</sup> Notwithstanding these acts by Daoud, *Parcham* continued to support his government, thereby effectively undermining their mass support by mid-1975.<sup>16</sup> *Khalq*, on the other hand, began a serious drive for influence in the military and bureaucracy in 1973, and actually began to plan in 1976 to take power (although they claim in 1975).<sup>17</sup> *Parcham's* position is particularly difficult to understand in light of Daoud's shift to the right, both internally and externally. The Shah of Iran's 1974 credit of two billion dollars included an Afghan-Iran rail link.<sup>18</sup> The U.S. had previously turned down an Afghan request for a road

13 *Times of India*, January 31, 1980, Bhabani Sen Gupta. *The Afghan Syndrome*, Vikas, New Delhi, 1982. p. 225, no. 14.

14 Surjeet, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

15 *ibid.*, p. 57 and Newell, *op. cit.*, p. 46; some have suggested that the 160 entered the rural areas on behalf of the new government; in Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan under the Khalq, Problems of Communism*, Washington, July-August 1979, p. 39. More likely the truth is that he wanted them out of the Interior Ministry.

16 Louis Dupree, *The Democratic Republic of Afghanistan 1979*, American University Field Service, 1979, No: 33. Asia, Hanover, New Hampshire, p. 1.

17 Newell, *op. cit.*, p. 67 and Dupree (AUFS), *ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

18 Newell, *op. cit.*, p. 49 and Surjeet, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

link<sup>19</sup> which Daoud had wanted in order to extricate himself from the need to rely exclusively on the Soviet Union for the export of Afghan products should the 1961 and 1963 closure of the Afghan-Pakistan border reoccur.<sup>20</sup> This must also be understood against the background of Pakistan Prime Minister Bhutto's clandestine support for 5,000 Daoud opponents in the Panjsher Valley under Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Burhanuddin Rabani (see below) in 1973.<sup>21</sup> Bhutto initiated a "forward policy" in response to a longstanding Afghan "forward policy". (Each side in the Afghan-Pakistan dispute therefore ultimately held in reserve an equal number of armed opponents of the other side.) The resultant pressure this brought about on Daoud ultimately led to his willingness to arrive at an agreement with Bhutto whereby he would accept the Durand Line as the border demarcation, in exchange for Bhutto's implementation of a policy of regional autonomy in the North West Frontier Province and Baluchistan and the release from prison of National Awami Party leaders from those regions.<sup>22</sup> Notwithstanding Bhutto's overthrow in March of 1977 the arrangement seemed still "on track" just prior to Daoud's overthrow a year later. In April of 1978 Daoud visited Egypt and Saudi Arabia<sup>23</sup> and at the same time his government indicated its positive disposition towards new (western) foreign investment and the World Bank issued a two volume study on Afghanistan surveying prospective areas of mineral exploitation.<sup>24</sup>

By 1977, however, *Parcham* and *Khalq* reunited under the PDPA rubric. *Parcham's* isolation combined with a Soviet desire to increase pressure on Daoud were probably the two most significant factors

19 Arnold, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

20 See A.M. Manzar, *Red Clouds Over Afghanistan*, Institute of Political Studies, Islamabad, 1980, p. 44.

21 L. Lifschultz, Afghanistan The Not To New Rebellion, *FEER*, January 30, 1981, p. 33.

22 *ibid.*

23 *ibid.*

24 M. Richardson, Resource, Wealth and the Soviet Invasion, *FEER*, January 23, 1981, p. 29.

which brought about this reunification. It must be clearly stated at this point that both groups drew their ideological nourishment from the Soviet October Revolution and were equally committed to the USSR as the leader of the "Socialist Camp". The difference was, however, that *Khalq* arrived at this position on the basis of the independent convergence of analysis which implies that the analysis might in the future diverge, while *Parcham* had come to exhibit characteristics of what I shall call a mentality of revolutionary dependency.

In some ways the structural cracks in the Afghan social fabric can be said to have begun in the mid 1960s. The bourgeoisie had risen to between 60,000 and 100,000 and college graduates were only 100 per year.<sup>25</sup> A decade later, by the mid 1970s, 50 per cent of the 20,000 high school graduates per year were unable to find work<sup>26</sup> and by 1977 the percentage rose to 80 per cent.<sup>27</sup> In the same year, the industrial working class could be numbered at 38,205 (36,743 men and 1,462 women) employed in 174 units,<sup>28</sup> out of a total population of approximately 15,000,000. The general socio-economic profile during this period would have the following features : the population was rising faster than food production, 20 per cent of the work force (300,000) was unemployed, 100,000 Afghans were working abroad, the illiteracy rate was 95 percent (99 percent for women), per capita annual income was approximately 150 dollars, 10 per cent of the landlords owned 50 per cent of the cultivatable land with 61 per cent of peasant households owning 25 per cent, only 33 per cent actually cultivated on a regular basis (cultivable land is only 13 per cent of total land), and peasants retaining only 20 per cent of what they produced.<sup>29</sup>

25 Interview with an Afghan Marxist, in *MERIP Report*, No. 89, July-August 1980, Washington, 1980, p. 21 says 60,000, while the Central Statistical Office, Government of Afghanistan says 100,000 in Newell, *op.cit.*, p. 45.

26 H. Amin and G. Schilz, *A Geography of Afghanistan*, Center for Afghan Studies, University of Nebraska, Omaha, p. 169, in Newell, *op. cit.* p. 47.

27 Interview (Marxist), *op. cit.*, p. 21.

28 *ibid.* p. 21.

29 Nayar, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-16, and Sadhan Mukherjee, *What Is Happening in Afghanistan*, Communist Party of India, New Delhi, p. 17.



The overthrow of the Daoud government, resulting in his death, however, cannot be traced directly to a maturing of these social forces. On the political level, however, the revolution would not have succeeded in the absence of a single party. Two leadership factions within one party permitted rank and file unity not possible if there had been two parties. On 18 April 1978, Mir Akbar Khyber trade unionist and one of the founding editors of *Parcham* was murdered, probably by Daoud's Minister of the Interior Abdul Quadir Nuristani.<sup>30</sup> More than 10,000

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demonstrators went to the streets, led by both *Khalq* and *Parcham*, resulting in the jailing of Taraki and the house arrest of Amin. The latter's more lenient treatment may in large measure be due to his links with the military derived from his recruitment efforts therein. Whatever the actual reason, Amin took advantage of the situation, hurriedly drew up a plan of action, had his young children act as courriers, and the Fourth Armored Division under the command of Col. Muhammad Aslam Watanjar moved on the seats of power. While Amin's role at this critical juncture was undeniably pivotal, his subsequent assertion, used to justify inappropriate policies, that if he had not personally acted all PDPA cadres would have been killed and the revolution stillborn was excessive. This tendency to place the individual above, if not outside, of history is an unfortunate but almost natural tendency which emerges from the lack of prolonged struggle combined with a party of limited class base—irrespective of its professed ideology. There was a failure to appreciate that the successful implementation of a decision of one is predicated on the willingness

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30 Newell, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

to act by the many. While it is true that the masses without leadership and organization can at best react spontaneously, it is equally true that leadership without broad mass support and experience at best degenerates into employing indiscriminate repression. A break in the dialectical relationship between masses and leadership ultimately truncates both.

### The *Khalq* Period

With the overthrow of the Daoud government, Taraki was proclaimed President and Prime Minister, with Amin and Karmal as Deputy Prime Ministers. The twenty-one member cabinet contained 11 from *Khalq* and 10 from *Parcham* plus a thirty-five member Revolutionary Council (roughly 60 per cent *Khalq* and 40 per cent *Parcham*). In Taraki's first major news conference, held on 7 May, he declared a toleration for Islam combined with a policy based on nationalism and non-alignment.<sup>31</sup> The uneasy alliance between *Khalq* and *Parcham* was fractured rather quickly, as by late June Karmal and five leading *Parchamis* were "exiled" to Ambassadorial posts abroad—Karmal to Czechoslovakia, Noor Ahmad Noor to the U.S., Anahita Ratezbad to Yugoslavia, Dr. Najib to Iran, Abdul Wakil to the U.K. and Mahmoud Baryalai to Pakistan.<sup>32</sup> The implementation of government reform began, but from the outset *Parcham* failed to fully support the policy. Defense Minister Abdul Qader was arrested on 17 August with Chief-of-staff Gen'l Shapur Ahmadza and charged with attempting a *Parcham* restoration. *Khalq* subsequently claimed that documentary evidence implicated a foreign power (Soviet Union).<sup>33</sup> This further resulted in the arrest of the remaining two *Parcham* Cabinet Ministers, Lt. Col. Muhammad Rafi, Minister of Communications, and Sultan Ali Keshtmand, Minister of Planning.<sup>34</sup> By October, the

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31 *ibid.*, p. 73.

32 Nayar. *op. cit.*, p. 25.

33 Arnold, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-76. Ultimately led to the recall of the Soviet Ambassador.

34 Dupree (AUFS), *op. cit.*, p. 14.

six Ambassadors were labelled traitors and recalled home to stand trial.<sup>35</sup> Needless to say, they failed to abide by instructions and remained in Eastern Europe. On November 26 the *Kabul Times* announced Afghan foreign policy as one based on *strict* non-alignment. (emphasis added)<sup>36</sup>

Simultaneous with these events, the *Khalq* programme of reform was underway. A total of 8 decrees were initiated from April 30-November 28, 1978, with the following central features :

Religion—Islam was to be tolerated ; many leaders went to prayer

Rural Credit—Usury was eliminated

Marriage—Minimum age was set at 18 years, with the bride price reduced from its customary 1,000 dollars to the more historically symbolic amount of 6 dollars

Education—A plan aimed at total literacy in 5 years was adopted. School attendance was made mandatory for both boys and girls, with 50 per cent of the boys and 10 per cent of the girls actually attending school in the early stage.

Minorities Policy—local languages to be used in the media

Land Reform—All surplus above 35 *jeribs* were confiscated without compensation. (1 *jerib* equals 0.49 acres) 3 million *jeribs* were distributed to 296,000 poor peasants (822,500 acres to 132,000 families). 860,000 peasants had their land tax written off. The illegal possession of land was regularized. 1,210 agricultural cooperatives, plus 13 others, were organized with 183,000 members. Private ownership to a maximum of 30 *jeribs* was permitted with the rights of sale and purchase within those limits. Non-exploitative tenancy was permitted. Water rights were regulated retaining private ownership, but requiring government approval for its sale. (During the Karmal period this was criticized for not being radical enough.<sup>37</sup>) The purchase price for agricultural products was increased by one-third.

35 Newell, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

36 In Arnold, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

37 *ibid.*, p. 15.

Industrial Reorganization—Public sector involvement was as follows :

Gas, coal, oil and printing	100%
Power and engineering	97.6%
Woodworking	78.3%
Chemical industry	71.6%
Light industry	32.1%
Food	26.1%
Machine building	16.7%
Building materials	16.7%

While these appear to be modest attempts at restructuring the economic and social foundation of society, a number of problems did emerge. The subsequent condemnation of Taraki by the PDPA for prematurely ending the land reform in July 1979<sup>38</sup> is not well founded, as it appears that this was done at Soviet urging.<sup>39</sup> Taraki was responding to the argument that the revolution was proceeding too rapidly. He cannot be criticized for simultaneously going too fast and too slow. The basic question was how well the *Khalq* cadres understood the rural reality. While usury was banned, this was done in the absence of an effective rural credit programme, thereby denying many peasants the means to purchase seed.<sup>40</sup> The rural programme was implemented by recent school graduates whose enthusiasm was high, but regrettably this was neutralised by their equally low level of sensitivity. These factors were coupled with an inadequate level of discipline, a certain amount of corruption and the exploitation of kinship ties for family gain.<sup>41</sup> 7,000 families reportedly slipped through and avoided registering their land, while an additional 6,000 circumvented the limit. Government land revenue fell, as the former landlords were no longer willing to pay land tax and the new owners were unable to pay the

38 Mukherjee, *ibid.*, p. 16.

39 Gupta, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

40 Nayar, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

41 Interview (Marxist), *MERIP*, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

tax.<sup>42</sup> In the educational sphere, the abrupt introduction of co-education and the teaching of Darwin's theory of evolution, without adequate preparatory work, alienated sectors of the population. Inadequate preparation was equally exhibited when some poor peasants refused to accept land which had been confiscated from the landlords as running counter to Islamic concepts of property.<sup>44</sup> Inflation was 25 per cent and the Soviet Ambassador Puzanov, was reported to have complained that every time he wanted to discuss economic planning, he was given a lecture on philosophy.<sup>45</sup>

No revolution, especially in the early stages after taking power, is devoid of subjectivist errors. The basic question emerging from this reality is—Is the leadership sufficiently mature and is the organizational depth sufficiently strong to rectify these subjectivist tendencies? In order to properly understand this issue it is necessary to clarify the relationship between the subjective and objective as it relates to a revolution situated in a particular period of the society's development. Some would argue that in the absence of a minimum level of productive forces (objective condition), any attempt at bringing about a

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socialist revolution would inevitably fail, notwithstanding the subjective will of a conscious minority. If this were the case no socialist revolution would have taken place, as the final stage of capitalist crisis has failed to occur anywhere in the world. The nature of objectivity,

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42 Mukherjee, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

43 Nayar, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

44 Mukherjee, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

45 Nayar, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-28.

consequently, must be elaborated. Objectivity, for the purposes of revolutionary theory, includes : level of productive forces as first among equals, degree of development of revolutionary organization, internal class forces (contradictions), the location of a given society within the global political economy and history as human creation. The subjective, on the other hand, is the individual and collective perception of the objective. When that perception, or understanding of reality coincides with the objective we can say that the subjective merges with or becomes the objective. It is the human brain, acting within a context, that transforms the subjective into the objective. In the Afghan situation, for example, Daoud moved against the left, reflecting his perception of the class contradictions within society. This rendered it a historic-cum-objective fact. The choice was clear in April of 1978, either the left acted to take power, or it would have been destroyed, thereby setting back the revolutionary cause for many years. Notwithstanding the absence of a fully developed complex of productive forces, Amin acted within objective reality. A historic situation, in this sense, is part of objectivity which in turn leads us to recognize the dialectical relationship between the objective and the subjective. This relationship reflects human actions within history, upon history. In other words, the process of continuously testing our perceptions of reality against the objective reality permits human beings to accelerate the realization of the objective. The subjective is therefore not a factor to be suppressed or eliminated. There is, however, a subjectivist variant which is extremely damaging to the revolution. The subjectivist, rather than working within the inherited historic context and mapping out a strategy designed to realize socialism through successive stages, attempts to substitute and impose his perception of reality, untested by practice, upon the society. There is consequently no congruence between where society objectively is, along the continuum of social development, and the policies implemented to bring about socialist construction. The subjectivist jumps over the necessary stages of social growth. If he starts too far behind actual conditions, he encourages a restoration of the old economic

and political values, however, if he starts off too far ahead of actual conditions he alienates the masses, in whose name and on whose behalf the entire process is aimed at uplifting. Afghanistan in the middle of 1978 required a New Democratic Revolution. Both the level of productive forces and accumulation were relatively primitive, while the socio-economic structure was ethno-linguistic-feudal-tribalist. The positive benefits which mature capitalism would have brought to the society, a socialized productive process and a large, organized and conscious proletariat, now must be created without the necessity for passing through the capitalist phase. The negative consequences of capitalism are controlled, muted and ultimately eliminated. This is, in effect, the benefits of capitalism without capitalists.

A critical month in the history of the *Saur* Revolution is March of 1979. Taraki gave up the Prime Ministership to Amin, who concurrently was Foreign Minister, while retaining for himself the Presidency, Secretary-Generalship of the PDPA and Supreme Commander of the military. Three absolutely divergent interpretations of this event have been forthcoming : (1) Amin was more "servile" to the Soviet Union than was Taraki;<sup>46</sup> (2) the Central Committee of the PDPA had decided to remove Amin a year earlier, but delayed owing to a "lack of vigilance";<sup>47</sup> (3) Taraki represented a "soft line" backing away from some reforms, but lost out to Amin's intransigent "hard line".<sup>48</sup> During the same month forces opposed to the government physically occupied the city of Herat for three days and before being driven out perpetrated a series of atrocities upon Soviet personnel and *Khalq* cadres.<sup>49</sup> Simultaneously all remaining *Parchamis* were excluded from the Party and government.<sup>50</sup> The total exclusion of all *Parchamis* was seen by some as an assertion of independence vis-a-vis the Soviet Union by both

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46 *Daily Telegraph* in Arnold, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

47 Surjeet, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

48 Newell, *op. cit.* p. 88.

49 *ibid.*, p. 85.

50 *ibid.*, p. 74.

Taraki and Amin.<sup>51</sup> If this was the case in the earlier period, it would not be seen as true from 1 April 1979. The Government of National Deliverance of that date relied even more heavily on a Soviet military presence than previously. By the Summer 5,000 Soviet troops had moved to Afghanistan and Amin himself defined the country as similar to Vietnam and Eastern Europe during a speech delivered in Budapest.<sup>52</sup> During early September Taraki departed and returned to Kabul through Moscow with a delegation attending the Non-Aligned Summit Meeting in Havana. On route back meetings were held with Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko, from which known Amin loyalist delegation members were excluded. With Soviet encouragement, a rapprochement between Karmal and Taraki was apparently arranged to the exclusion of Amin. Some evidence suggests that Amin was to be disposed of at the airport on 11 September during the welcoming ceremonies for Taraki. All members of the airport guard reportedly were Taraki's men. When this came to Amin's attention, he ordered a guard change.<sup>53</sup> Three days later Amin received a phone invitation from both Taraki and Soviet Ambassador Puzanov inviting him to the Presidential Palace, with the latter providing an absolute guarantee of personal safety. Amin had been forewarned of an impending plot by Major Daoud Taroon, Chief of Security, who had accompanied Taraki to Havana. On entering the Palace grounds, with an armed escort, Amin's group was fired upon, Taroon was killed, and Amin escaped. The following day, 15 September, Taraki was arrested and subsequently executed.<sup>54</sup> In early October, Foreign Minister Shah Wali complained publicly to a group of East European diplomats in Kabul that the Soviets were unreliable.<sup>55</sup> This coincided

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51 A. Dastarac, and M. Levant, What Went Wrong in Afghanistan, *MERIP*, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

52 Newell, *op. cit.*, pp. 86, 75-

53 Nayar, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

54 Arnold, *op. cit.*, p. 81, based on internal *Khalq* documents, presumably leaked in early October in Dastarac, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

55 *The Economist*, November 3, 1979, pp. 22-3 in Newell, *op. cit.*, p. 89; presumably also leaked,



with the 6 October recall of Ambassador Puzanov at the request of the Afghan government. Notwithstanding all of these events, Amin, following another assassination attempt on 17 December, moved to the Darulaman Palace on the outskirts of Kabul on the advice of Lt. Gen. Victor Semvitch Paputin, Deputy Director of Internal Security Affairs, USSR.<sup>56</sup> On 27 December a Soviet Airborne commando unit attacked the Palace where Amin died.<sup>57</sup> Karmal was declared President.

### 27 December and the Movement of Soviet Troops

There is an enormous amount of confusion about events surrounding the Soviet decision to move 40,000 troops across the Afghan border on 27 December. They range from: (1) the Amin government (emphasis added) requested massive Soviet military assistance. (2) Amin began plotting with Pakistan which the Soviets felt necessary to thwart.<sup>59</sup> (3) Amin himself welcomed Soviet military aid in support of his regime in an interview published the day prior to the Soviet border crossing in the journal *Al Sharq Al Awsat*.<sup>60</sup> (4) Patriotic Afghan forces rose against Amin, the usurper.<sup>61</sup> (5) *Khalq's* Revolutionary Central Committee requested Soviet help and arrested Amin for treason.<sup>62</sup> (6) Soviet forces were required for peace and protection as the U.S., Pakistan and China were prepared to launch an attack on 6 January.<sup>63</sup> (7) Military aid was a consequence of the "internationalist policy and interest (emphasis added) of the Soviet Union".<sup>64</sup> (8) Amin was removed from power on 23 December 1979.<sup>65</sup> The sources for these obvious contradictions can be grouped

56 Dastarac, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

57 Newell, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

58 Dastarac, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

59 Gupta, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

60 Fred Halliday, *Threat From The East*. Penguin, London, 1982, p. 144, n. 11.

61 A. Petrov, *Pravda*, December 31, 1979, in Gupta, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-3.

62 *Tass*, January 4, 1980, in Newell, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

63 Gupta, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-9, Babrak Karmal.

64 Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine-Afghanistan Joint Statement, March 2, 1980, in *White Book*, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

65 Surjeet, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

conveniently into two categories—those friendly and those hostile to the Afghan government of the post 27 December period.

What are the facts? The initial broadcast announcing Soviet troop movements was transmitted on Kabul radio frequency from Tashkent,<sup>66</sup> at 1615 hours GMT.<sup>67</sup> Kabul Radio announced Amin's death at 2210 hours GMT, followed 15 minutes later at 2225 hours GMT by the announced request for Soviet assistance.<sup>67</sup> Subsequent Soviet assertions on 17 January 1980 that Amin was a CIA agent determined to reverse the revolution shed significant doubt on whether such an agent would have called in Soviet forces to assist him in the pursuit of this task. Amin's request to meet with Pakistani President Zia-ul-Huq in mid-December and his request to the U.S. to resume aid notwithstanding.<sup>68</sup>

What are the characteristics of the final stage of the *Khalq* period. Amin had become a target of Soviet policy not because he failed to admire the USSR or concur with the basic direction of its foreign policy, but rather for the fact that he chose an independent way of bringing about much needed social revolution in Afghanistan. Amin's rhetorical programme of maintaining small landlords, encouraging national capitalists and making overtures to the population's Islamic sympathies without sacrificing the revolution, differed little from rhetoric of the Taraki period.<sup>69</sup> This is of significance owing to the fact that the level of rural resistance to the revolution has not appreciably abated since 27 December 1979 and, if anything, has increased since that date. If we take at face value subsequent Afghan government claims that 15,000 cadres were imprisoned<sup>70</sup> by Amin and that 12,000 in Kabul alone were executed,<sup>71</sup> the basic question of responsibility

66 Newell, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

67 Nayar, *op. cit.* p. 7.

68 Arnold, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

69 Dastarac, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

70 Surjeet, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

71 Dastarac *op. cit.*, p. 12, n. 9.

emerges. While Amin must be held responsible, aiding in the establishment of the context which accentuated these errors must rest with the Soviet Union. Repeated attempts, with Soviet endorsement, to assassinate Amin demonstratively added to the paranoia of the period. His options were limited by growing resistance combined with increased Soviet interference. Ironically it was the month of July 1979 when Amin became concurrently Minister of both Defense and Interior, that was the beginning of his end. July 1979 was the month when the

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*The Soviet and Indian positions aimed at creating some potential difficulty on the Afghan-Pakistan border converged—India in order to draw off Pakistani units from her shared border, and the USSR as a means for exerting pressure on the Pakistan government.*

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first major Soviet airborne contingent arrived at Bagram Airport, near Kabul.<sup>72</sup> The invitation extended by both Taraki and Amin to the Soviet Union to deploy combat units was a fundamental mistake which resulted in the death of both. Once present in significant numbers, the Soviet military could both plan and execute what can only be called an invasion. It must be recognized that the initial movement of 40,000 ground troops, 1,750 tanks, 2,100 Armored Personnel Carriers and 400 aircraft<sup>73</sup> took some months to carry out, probably four—beginning with Amin's assumption of power. Immediately prior to the invasion, four incidents occurred to illustrate the detail of Soviet planning : (1) the Central Telecommunications Station in Kabul was blown up,<sup>74</sup> (2) summer batteries from all Afghan military vehicles had been removed on 27 December, on Soviet advice, in order to install winter replacements, (3) all Afghans who attended a 27 December reception hosted by the Soviet Minister for Communications, Talyzin, were arrested at the reception and (4) all Afghan officers from the Kabul Garrison who attended a 27 December party hosted by the Soviet

72 Gupta, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

73 Surjeet, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

74 *ibid.*, p. 37.

Military Mission were blown up immediately after their Soviet hosts departed.<sup>75</sup>

India's hands are not totally clean, which may be the reason behind the failure of both the lame duck Janata government as well as the re-elected government of Indira Gandhi to condemn the Soviet invasion. The Soviet and Indian positions aimed at creating some potential difficulty on the Afghan-Pakistan border converged—India, in order to draw off Pakistani units from her shared border, and the USSR as a means for exerting pressure on the Pakistan government. The points of that convergence, going back to the Daoud period, were (1) to strengthen the Afghan military, and (2) to cultivate the 4,000 Marri members of the Baluch nation who were based in Afghanistan after 1977, as well as Ajmal Khan Khattak's Pushtoon force also based on the Afghan side of the border. In order to coordinate at the highest levels the ranking Indian military officer stationed in Kabul was elevated from Colonel to Lt. General. Indian Embassy in Kabul reports predicting a Soviet invasion before the end of December 1979<sup>76</sup> were not merely a matter of insightful analysis. In the Spring prior to the invasion the Soviet Foreign Ministry called in the Indian Ambassador to Moscow and explained that the USSR was confronted with three choices in Afghanistan : (1) do nothing and permit the situation to deteriorate, (2) destabilize Pakistan by encouraging the Marris to cross the border and refire the Baluchistan issue, risking Pakistan's disintegration, (3) invading. Once accepting the premise that the Soviets would act decisively, option (1) was clearly out, option (2) would be too risky, as it might fan secessionism within India and, *en extremus* place the Soviet Union on India's border, leaving option (3) as the probable course of action. In the absence of any strongly expressed Indian opposition, the diplomatic message was clear.<sup>77</sup>

75 Arnold, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

76 Nayar, *op. cit.* P. 9.

77 Based on discussions between the author and a former member of the Indian government. This would seem to be corroborated by Salamat Ali, who, writing in the *FEER*, stated "Besides, the ambassador of a non-aligned country stationed in Moscow was told by the Soviet Foreign office months before the December 27, 1979 invasion that the Soviets might be forced to intervene in Afghanistan." Salamat, Ali, A Temptation That was Too Strong, *FEER*, January 23, 1981, p. 29.

Controversy also surrounds the physical location of Babrak Karmal on 27 December. Karmal himself claimed to be in Kabul for two months,<sup>78</sup> while others claimed he arrived from Tashkent on a Soviet transport after confirmation of Amin's death.<sup>79</sup> While uncertainty remains as to whether or not Karmal's message broadcast over Radio Kabul was tape recorded,<sup>80</sup> it is clear that background noises on the transmission were airplane engines.<sup>81</sup> It is also clear that Karmal did not physically appear in public until January 1, 1980.<sup>82</sup>

Karmal, upon assuming power, immediately changed the rhetoric of the revolution from one of tolerance toward religion to one of "respect for the sacred principles of Islam" and the safeguarding of private ownership.<sup>83</sup> He also took two steps to broaden *Parchami* support by (1) appointing seven *Khalquis* to positions of leadership, led by Assadullah Sarwari, Taraki's former Chief of Police, to the Deputy Prime Ministership, Muhammad Ismail Danish, Minister of Mines, Sayyied Muhammad Gulabzoi, Deputy Minister of Interior and Dastagir Panjshiri and Saleh Muhammad Zeari to the Central Committee of the PDFPA plus Aslam Watanjar and Shirjan Mazdorryar; (2) appointing five non-PDPA people to ranking positions, Muhammad Ibrahim Azim, Minister of Public Health, Fazal Rahim Mohamad, Minister of Agriculture, Muhammad Kanh Jalalar, Minister of Commerce, plus two Cabinet Advisors, Rawan Farhadi and Muhammad Siddiq Farhang<sup>84</sup> with the subsequent appointment of Dr. Seid Afghai as Chairman of Islamic Affairs.<sup>85</sup> Deputy Prime Minister Sarwari was subsequently posted as Ambassador to the Mongolian People's Republic after criticizing *Parcham* for being

78 Nayar, *op. cit.* p. 13.

79 Newell, *op. cit.* p. 119.

80 Manzar, *op. cit.* p. 55.

81 Nayar, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

82 Gupta, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

83 Newell, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

84 *ibid.*, pp. 20, 23.

85 *Afghanistan's National Fatherland Front*, Communist Party of India, New Delhi, 1981, p. 2.

overly dependent on the Soviet Union. Other *Khalqis* who have remained in the PDPA have reportedly continued to insist on a publicly announced date for the withdrawal of Soviet military forces.<sup>86</sup>

Politically the Karmal government euphemistically defined its task as "overcoming the people's wrong understanding of the government",<sup>87</sup> while economically it had to deal with declining production :

1979 Agricultural Production Compared with 1978<sup>88</sup>

Sown Area	down 9%
Grain Production	down 10%
Industrial Crops	down 30%
Per Capita Income	down 14%

Some recovery did take place in 1980 as compared with 1979<sup>89</sup> but remained below 1978 levels.

Cereal Production	up 3.5%
Vegetables	up 9%
Fertilizer	up 10%

Militarily, the situation was no better. Ten Divisions of the Afghan Army were disbanded<sup>90</sup> while casualties between the beginning of the Revolution, through April of 1980 were in the range of 100,000.<sup>91</sup>

The seemingly inextricable dilemma of the Afghan revolution deepens. As resistance grows, government rhetoric suggests a willingness to make some concessions to the more reactionary elements. This is seen as weakness and in turn fuels the resistance even further. While on the Second Anniversary of the Saur Revolution the Central Committee of the PDPA issued a thesis defining the "path of non-capitalist

86 Nayar, *op. cit.* p. 149.

87 Mukherjee, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

88 Afghanistan's NFF, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

89 Mukherjee, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

90 Kuldip Nayar, Indian Express in Gupta, *op. cit.*, p.

91 Newell, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

growth."<sup>92</sup> The meaning of this phrase was generally defined at the 3rd Plenum of the Central Committee as "making it possible for patriotic peoples, tribes and classes to live in freedom and preserve tradition".<sup>93</sup> In addition Islam was guaranteed immunity as a "sacred religion".<sup>94</sup> It is quite evident that the notions of preserving tradition combined with the sanctity of Islam were major attempts to decelerate the revolution. This presumably was based on the assumption that consolidation of the revolution required a "great leap backward". In the words of the founding meeting of the Fatherland Front "In

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*Parenthetically, it might be appropriate to note at this juncture that the "Fatherland Front" approach has been successful in Vietnam and Korea as rallying points for progressive and patriotic forces, but has been unsuccessful in Afghanistan.*

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order to win the confidence of the *alienated masses*" (emphasis added),<sup>95</sup> or what Karmal himself called "the evolutionary phase of the revolution".<sup>96</sup> Other policy changes calling for the right of pastoral peoples (i.e. the Kochis) to continue to freely graze their cattle<sup>97</sup> have proven to be equally ineffective. Parenthetically, it might be appropriate to note at this juncture that the "Fatherland Front" approach has been successful in Vietnam and Korea as rallying points for progressive and patriotic forces, but has been unsuccessful in Afghanistan. The fundamental explanation for this difference, is that in the case of the first two, the Front was employed as a rallying point in opposition to the

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92 *White Book, op. cit.*, p. 9.

93 *ibid.*, p. 17.

94 July 30, 1980, in *ibid.*, p. 17.

95 Afghanistan's NFF, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

96 Karmal's Message on Human Rights Day, September 12, 1981 in *White Book, op. cit.*, p. 26.

97 Statement of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan Government, January 17, 1981 in *ibid.*, p. 50.

presence of foreign troops, while in the latter there is an attempt to make it an instrument in support of a foreign occupation army. In other words, a patriotic position cannot be rendered consistent with support for foreign troops. Whatever other problems the Saur Revolution may face, "the ubiquitous Soviet military presence stood as an emotional barrier between the revolution and the people".<sup>98</sup> For those who may argue that the only two choices are support for PDPA or reactionary forces, let us briefly turn to the nature of the resistance.

### The Resistance Movement

The April Revolution met with obvious immediate hostility from the combined elements—who had been linked in one or another way with the Daoud regime the ultra-orthodox religious supporters as well as those associated with the exiled Royal household. Most other Afghans could be grouped from supporters on one end of the spectrum, to benignly non-hostile neutralists at the other end. The first signs of hostility to the revolution can be traced to the ultra-orthodox Islamicist elements, fired in part by the resurgent neo-traditionalism of neighboring Iran. This was exacerbated by the *Khalqi-Parchami* conflict with its regional-linguistic overtones in addition to their differences of policy. Supplementing these factors was the overzealous inexperience of the young cadres who fanned out across the country to make revolution under their new red and gold banner. As the land reform began to take hold, feudal exploiters joined the counter-revolution. Feudal exploitation was, however, linked to the entirety of the ethno-linguistic social structure of contemporary Afghanistan. Class and tribe were indistinguishable. A proper revolutionary policy would have been to begin the process of separating the masses from the feudal tribal leadership so that their consciousness of exploitation would have come to predominate over tribal loyalty. Failure to systematically undermine the traditional social structure resulted in a blurring of class consciousness, whereby tribal loyalty not only remained dominant, but was reinforced. The first major uprising by the Nuristanis,

<sup>98</sup> Gupta, *op. cit.*, p. 100.



in March of 1979, followed by similar movements in fourteen of the remaining twenty-eight provinces<sup>99</sup> attests to this reality. The most extreme example of insensitivity may be reflected in the policy of the *Khalq* towards the Baluchis. Notwithstanding the fact that since 1975 the Afghan government invested 875,000 dollars per year in support of some Baluch leaders against Pakistan, immediately after the April Revolution the government pursued its reforms without consulting these same Baluch leaders. Jumping over the leadership without first undermining their authority was a critical error. The following two quotations effectively demonstrate shifting Baluch perceptions. In April 1978 at a meeting in Quetta, Pakistan of the Baluch People's Liberation Front, Chairman of the Revolutionary Command Ramkhani said: "Before we Baluch can walk, we may have to be carried on the feet of others".<sup>101</sup> Subsequently, however, a Baluch spokesman, Mir Hazar, whose guerrillas were given sanctuary in Afghanistan, commented in March 1980 "You need help, but when you accept it, they feel they have their investment and they take you over". The Baluch people think, "I don't like the Punjabis, so let the Russians come". But those with a higher responsibility have to think, "If the Russians come, what share do I have",<sup>102</sup> In the first quotation we see admission of an inability to break out of the shackles of national oppression by themselves and a willingness to ride along on others' coat-tails. This resulted in a policy based on the view that any change brought about from any quarter would be preferable to the existing situation, even one brought about by relying on someone else to do the job. The second quotation, on the other hand, expresses recognition that if someone else does the work, it is they and not you who will ultimately control the destiny of the nation. For the Baluch, as for others, it became clear that trading one form of oppression (Pakistani) for another form of the same phenomena (Soviet) is not acceptable.

99 Dupree, AUFS, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

100 Gupta, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

101 Selig Harrison, in *Afghanistan's Shadow*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, New York, 1981, p. 50.

102 *ibid.*, p. 51.

The opposition block grew, as PDPA policy increasingly alienated potential allies, especially in the rural areas, by failing to break the traditionalists' hold on the masses. Subsequent to the deployment of Soviet combat troops the opposition block consolidated with the addition of the patriotic element. While it is clear that the ultimate destiny of the masses is to break out of the traditional structure and take command of the fruits of their own labor, the strategic miscalculation of the Taraki government has further consolidated the domination by the feudalists. Social revolution has been pushed into the background, and replaced with a struggle against an administration whose only claim to legitimacy is the military power of a foreign country. Progressive movements have been successful when they have combined the leadership of the social movement with the national movement. When either historically conditioned weakness or errors in praxis have permitted the reactionary elements to dominate the national struggle, the social struggle is at best thwarted and at worst perverted. To argue that the objective choice may be between perversion and reaction avoids the fundamental question.

Opposition to the Taraki administration increasingly covers a broad front ranging from former exploiters to feudal-tribalists, to ultra-orthodox Islamicists, to the masses who have been driven into the arms of these three groups, to patriots, to progressives. To argue, as the Taraki government does, that the opposition is to be equated with the exploiters<sup>103</sup> is simply factually inaccurate. A brief enumeration of the opposition movements follows<sup>104</sup> :

*Jabhay-yi-Nejat-i-Meli* : National Liberation Front led by Hazrat Sibghutullah Muhadidi. Based in Peshawar, Pakistan as a coordinating body without an independent military, characterized by some as "modernists" and by others as "religious nationalists".

103 U.N. Speech of DRA Delegation, November 17, 1980, *White Book*, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

104 These are composite descriptions based on all of the references plus interviews,

*Ettehadi-Ingelabi-Islami-wa-Meli-Afghahistan* : Islamic Revolutionary Front of Afghanistan led by Sayyied Ahmed Effendi Gailani, who is Landlord, Pir and Pushtoon in family origin. The Movement is business-landlord linked with some monarchist tendencies.

*Hizb-i-Islami* : Islamic Party led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a former engineering student. It is linked to the *Ikwan-i-Musalamin* (Moslem Brothers), doctrinaire in outlook, anti-monarchist and urban bourgeoisie in persuasion with the largest number of troops in the field.

*Jamiyat-i-Islami* : Islamic Party led by Burhanuddin Rabani as a splinter from the *Hizb-i-Islami* linked to its sister organization in Pakistan and fundamentalist in outlook.

*Harkate Islami* : Islamic Revolutionary Movement led by Maulavi Muhammad Nabi Mohammadi, is supported by Pakistan.

*Jabhai-yi-Nejat i-Meli (II)* : National Liberation Front (II), led by Abdul Sayef (veteran of *Ikwan-i-Musalamin*). This attempt to bring together Muhadidi, Gailani and Rabani soon failed and the Front was dissolved.

*Mumasilla Jirqa* : Provisional National Council led by Judge Muhammad Omar Babrakzai, originally linked to Gailani and a secularist.

*Sholae Jowid* : The Eternal Flame evolved in opposition to *Khalq* led by Muhammad Osman and Sadeq and Akram Yayari, coincided in its analysis with that of China, but broke into competing factions by 1977.

*Sazman-e-Azadbakash Mardom-e-Afghanistan (SAMA)* : Organization for the Liberation of the Peoples of Afghanistan. Regroupement of Sholae Jowid elements as an underground Marxist movement, with strength in Kabul and urban centres.

*Setim-i-Meli* : Against National Oppression is a *Parcham* break-away led by Taher Badadkshi with strength in Badakshan, Anti-Pushtoon, attempting to combine Shia Islam with social revolution. Parenthetically, they were also responsible for the kidnapping of

the late U.S. Ambassador Dubbs. It may also have strength in in the Tadzhik, Uzbek and Hazara areas.

*Jebheye Mobarizin Mujahid-i-Afghanistan* : National Front of Afghan Militant Combatants, was responsible for the August 6, 1979 Bala Hisar mutiny in the Kabul Garrison, and has some regional strength in other parts of the country. Politically it is Marxist-Leninist with a critical attitude towards Soviet revisionism.

*Grohe-Inquilabi-Khalgaie Afghanistan* : The Revolutionary Group of Afghanistan is active in the rural areas as a Marxist-Leninist organization.

*Millat* : The Nation. With uneven strength and a Marxist political position which is linked neither to the People's Republic of China nor the USSR.

The actual strength of the last six of these organizations is difficult if not impossible to portray, as they function exclusively within Afghanistan and are divorced from the international media. The announced execution of some of SAMA's leading members combined with the

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*The precondition for the arduous process of social transformation is a sovereign Afghanistan learning from every experience of socialist construction, but dependent for its legitimacy on itself, not an army of foreign occupation.*

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PDPA public attack on them suggests that they have had some operational success. It is clear that the political labels among the non-doctrinaire Islamicist groups are, to say the least, somewhat fluid, with inter-group relations plus relations with external groups, ethno-linguistic, and sub-strata factors more predominant than ideology. In addition, the Afghan reality renders the use of "Islam" somewhat elastic. Everyone from Karmal to Hekmatyar have placed themselves under it, as if it were a rubber umbrella. The trend which appears to have emerged is that subsequent to December 27th, nationalism and

Islam have become interchangeable, in a manner not dissimilar from the same phenomena in Poland linking the Solidarity trade union movement with the Roman Catholic Church. Religion is more of a symbol of national identity than a doctrine of belief. In the name of national survival (liberation) differences blur and refocus around that issue common to all. This is a new and in some sense, difficult and confusing problem for progressives who have traditionally understood religion as a means of perpetuating obscurantism and mysticism. With both Karmal and the ultra-orthodox explicitly working within the context of "sacred Islam" we are required to understand the role of religion with a new optic. The line of demarcation between progressives and reactionaries can no longer be drawn on the axis of hostility to or support for religion. This being the case we must look to another arena in order to differentiate between the two. That arena is the socio-political, where each of them stands on the issues of independence and social progress. The precondition for the arduous process of social transformation is a sovereign Afghanistan learning from every experience of socialist construction, but dependent for its legitimacy on itself, not an army of foreign occupation. The struggle itself will have a profound effect on the ultimate political orientation of the resistance. The actual lines of demarcation are less than fixed.

### **Pakistan and the United States**

There is no doubt that the Taraki-Amin-Karmal-Soviet policies have provided fertile terrain for reactionary mischief. As of September 1981 the U.S. had pumped one hundred million dollars into combined military and civil assistance for the Afghans,<sup>105</sup> funnelled mostly through Pakistan. Three major consequences flow from this situation : (1) a *lumpen* semi-criminal element has emerged, among both Afghans and Pakistanis, of smugglers, war profiteers (relief supplies on the tables of Pakistani homes in the Cantonments), and shadow organizations which siphon resources in the absence of a base within Afghanistan (*Harkate Islami*) ; (2) reactionary elements are immeasurably

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105 Carl Bernstein, *The New Republic*, July 17, 1981, *White Book*, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

strengthened by dominating the flow of support from Egypt, Iran, the Gulf, as well as Pakistan and the U.S. ; (3) in exchange for hosting the resistance movement, the Zia-ul-Haq administration has consolidated its own external lines of support, thereby strengthening the internal apparatus of repression.

While some elements of the U.S. and Pakistani ruling class welcome the consequences of Afghanistan's distorted revolution, there appear to be three missed opportunities to remove western capitalist intrusion: (1) Five months after the Saur Revolution, in September of 1978, Pakistani President Zia-ul-Haq visited Kabul for discussions with Prime Minister Taraki on normalization of relations. It appeared at that time that the Pakistani government was prepared to distance itself from the internal affairs of Afghanistan in exchange for stability. These exploratory talks were at least guardedly non-belligerent. With the Fall opening of the United Nations General Assembly, however, the Afghan delegation raised the issue of Baluch and Pakhtoon "self-determination".<sup>106</sup> Pakistan saw this as a threat to its own national integration and as a declaration of intent to destabilize the Afghan-Pakistan border ; (2) On March 6, 1980 Zia, in a speech before an Islamabad meeting of municipal councillors, offered to permit the stationing of a United Nations supervisory group, including Indian representatives, on the Pakistan side of the border with Afghanistan to guarantee Pakistan's non-support for the Afghan belligerents.<sup>107</sup> This proposal was sent on to the USSR by the Government of India,<sup>108</sup> and to date there has not been a response. While the logistics would strain a modern Hannibal, it would have certainly been less expensive than the human and material cost incurred by all sides since that date ; (3) By June of 1980 the Carter Administration had clearly signalled its willingness to accept a Marxist government in Kabul if the Soviet Union militarily withdrew.<sup>109</sup> The modalities for implementing a policy along these lines were never effectively explored.

106 Gupta, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

107 Manzar, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

108 Gupta, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

109 *ibid.*, p. 84, and Interview with Feroz Ahmed, *MERIP, op. cit.*, p. 19.

None of these three lost opportunities were advanced out of a genuine concern for the welfare of the Afghan people. The Zia regime, for its part, was certainly concerned with the disruptive potential of the border peoples, the ever present threat from the Pakistan People's Party, and by disquiet among some elements in the military, concerned that their home villages would be destroyed if conflict spread across the Afghan border. On the U.S. side a *quid pro quo* with the USSR to maintain their respective spheres was surely the main motive. They saw themselves as giving away very little anyway, as Afghanistan was considered by U.S. strategic planners as part of the Soviet sphere ; whether under the King, the Republic or the PDPA. In some ways the PDPA government's policies, which precipitated a resistance movement and stability was not seen by the U.S. in its long term interests, I would almost dare to suggest that a relatively stable PDPA administration would have been welcomed by the U.S., notwithstanding short term propaganda rhetoric to the contrary. Once these possibilities were lost the Reagan administration naturally took full advantage of the PDPA/Soviet difficulty. The opportunity was handed to them.

### Conclusions

What conclusions and or lessons can we draw from the experience of the Saur Revolution. While there is absolutely no doubt that a social revolution was necessary in Afghanistan, its outbreak and subsequent success was to a significant degree fortuitous. The PDPA reacted to the initiative of the Daoud regime. Their success was a direct consequence of the work of Taraki and Amin, the latter especially in the military. The failure of the Daoud government to neutralize Amin as part of the repression following the demonstrations associated with the murder of Mir Akbar Khyber, provided the opportunity. The historic moment gave little room for choice ; the options were either acting with decisiveness, or probable annihilation. The objective conditions can be summarized as (1) a movement armed with proletarian ideology, (2) veteran-disciplined cadres whose organiza-

tional base had extended to sections of the military and the petty bourgeoisie, (3) historically imposed necessity. The objective weakness of the movement can be seen as (1) factionalism between the *Khalq* and *Parcham* groups, with all of the overtones previously discussed, (2) the absence of a rural base with the associated experience, cadre development and analysis of concrete reality, (3) an underestimation and over-simplification of the impact of traditional ideology and social structure on the masses, be it Islam or the hegemony of feudal loyalty, and (4) the embryonic level of the proletariat. Do these weaknesses impose the imperative of failure? The clear answer to this is no. Did the Revolution truncate after its initial success? With equal clarity, the answer must be yes.

The Saur Revolution was an authentic revolution, however, within short order the illusion began to predominate that change can be brought about by decree rather than by mobilization and education. A certain degree of euphoria and subjectivism might be expected, but in a mature Party, mechanisms have evolved to rectify perception back into conformity with objective conditions. The principle of consolidating political power is not sacrificed by a careful analysis of the consequences of the historic legacy as it impinges on the present. A meticulous assessment of the economic, social, ethnic complexities of the society reflected in its stage of development is the *sine qua non* for the elaboration of a scientific programme. In the absence of such an analysis the repressive apparatus of the state becomes the mediator of change. While the socialist state strips away the old repressive structures and constructs its own, this only establishes the context for a change of consciousness. Consciousness does not change either automatically or apocalyptically. The view that it does reveal a form of mechanical materialism, long repudiated by both Marx and Lenin. The result is a theoretical error of major magnitude leading to equally erroneous policies. The most grievous of these errors is the division of society into two groups: "the people" and "the enemy". The problem is that the "people" are still under the structural and ideological dominance of the "enemy". Rather than



developing a clear but complex policy designed to fracture this domination and isolate the real enemy, the "people" come to be seen as the "enemy". The Party thereby increases the gulf between itself and the people but still attempts to act as the sole repository of popular aspirations. The notion of "the people" becomes an abstraction divorced from live human beings who are situated in a historically determined setting. The consequence of this is that rather than winning over the masses, old ways are reinforced and subordination to the reactionaries continues. The tragedy is, that once this error has been committed, the only way the state can deal with the "enemy" is by revolutionary violence. In the name of freedom people are forced to be free, in the

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*Revolution comes from neither duplicating machines nor the armies of a foreign messiah, but rather through long and arduous labor deep within one's society. This lesson has not to this day been understood by some.*

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name of the masses the masses are repressed. The 29 signed agreements between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan between April and December 1978 surely makes the Soviets culpable for what transpired during this period.<sup>110</sup> The argument made by some, who have attempted to justify Soviet intervention, that the Taraki period was genuine, distorted by Amin, thereby requiring Soviet help to return the revolution to its proper course, is not validated by the facts. Structuring the issue in this way is in itself inappropriate, for it presupposes the right of a foreign Party to be the arbiter of the Afghan revolution. The line of demarcation between Taraki and Amin was one of degree not kind. The basic theoretical and policy errors were common to both. Taraki and Amin delegitimated the revolution, while Taraki has abdicated it.

The logical, and historically verifiable, result of this process, is an increasing isolation of the leadership from the masses. As the internal

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110 Gupta, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

base of support withers, the choices become threefold : (1) counter-revolution succeeds, (2) the Party changes its basic outlook on how to bring about revolutionary transformation, or (3) external forces further distort the process by introducing their military power and perpetuate the initial error. To the misfortune of the Afghan revolution option (3) was imposed. A "revolution" which sustains itself on the power of 100,000 deployed foreign combat troops has lost its authenticity, it is not a socialist revolution. The New Democratic Revolution designed to accelerate the productive and ideological development of society to the pen-ultimate stage of crisis capitalism is totally inhibited.

Does this negate the concept of internationalism. Surely not. True internationalist policy will, among other things, provide political, economic, logistical and training support, but most importantly will assist in establishing the regional or global environment which will make it possible for the forces internal to a society to successfully carry out their revolutionary task. The external factor can and must be an ingredient, but it can never be substituted for those factors internal to a society. The external helps shape the context for change, but the cause of change must be internal. The Nicaraguan, Vietnamese, Cuban, Korean and Chinese revolutions all attest to the validity of this proposition.

Whatever may be the ultimate destiny of the Afghan revolution, the necessity for progressives in the Third World to study and learn from its errors is imperative. Revolution comes from neither duplicating machines nor the armies of a foreign messiah, but rather through long and arduous labor deep within one's society. This lesson has not to this day been understood by some. The Bangladesh Communist Party's declaration in January of 1980 welcoming an Afghan style revolution makes a mocking caricature of the heritage of Marx. Proletarian leadership gives organizational expression to the aspirations of the people to shed their pre-history and to create a truly human history. This cannot be achieved by a foreign army.

## Recent Events

Within the last six months a number of major trends can be identified.

*Military* : Soviet forces have stabilized at approximately 113,000 troops, backed up by Afghan forces estimated anywhere between 35,000 (western) to 70,000 (official Afghan).<sup>1</sup> Air support is provided by helicopter gun-ships, TU-16("Badger") high altitude bombers and SU-24 ("Fencer") ground attack low level fighters.<sup>2</sup> A major offensive was launched in early April on the guerilla forces of Ahmad Shah Massoud in the Panjshir Valley 50 miles north of Kabul. Since early 1983 a truce existed in the valley between Soviet occupation and resistance forces which was not renewed by Massoud. While Soviet strike force has been massive with considerable casualties taken by Massoud's forces, his unwillingness to renew the truce is indicative of PDPA political failure and a stiffening of military resistance.

*Economic* : Official figures from the Afghan government reflect a dual picture. On the one hand the claim is an increase in the GNP of 6 per cent and an increase in wages of employees and workers of 18 per cent, while on the other hand loss to the economy of the war is estimated at 24 billion Afghanis (\$40 million U.S.).<sup>3</sup>

*Parcham-Khalq Factionalism* : While it is very difficult to accurately assess the full scope of continued rivalry between the two factions, occasional reports suggest that *Khalq* supporters have not been fully neutralized. At the very end of 1983 the PDPA structure was severely undermined in Pakhita-Paktika, when local *Khalqis* either deserted to the resistance or totally disassociated themselves from the administration.<sup>4</sup> This situation adds yet an undetermined strength to the

- 1 Selig S. Harrison, Moscow builds loyal Kabul machine, International Herald Tribune, Paris May 16, 1984
- 2 Drew Middleton, key Afghan area is reported lost by the guerrillas, New York Times, April 25, 1984
- 3 Press Release No. 22/84, Information Division (ID), permanent mission of the DRA to the United Nations, New York (nd.)
- 4 Far East Economic Review, December 29, 1983

left-section of the general resistance movement. If it is accurate that some *Khalq* elements established a line of communication in 1979 with *Shola-i-Javid*<sup>5</sup> this could have long term consequences.

An official hint of the seriousness of this problem as viewed by Karmal can be found in reports of his speech to the 13th Plenum of the PDPA Central Committee

Babrak Karmal noted that the most important issue for the party is to ensure the organic unity of the party, to eradicate apathy *petty group interests, and the obstructionist attitudes, lack of cooperation, selfishness, ambitiousness and obstinacy which unfortunately still exist.* (emphasis added)<sup>6</sup>

The report goes on

...Babrak Karmal stressed that the creation of new local organs and the drawing of the extensive masses of the working people in daily activity is a necessary task *in order to expose the counter-revolution who have covered their faces with masks, to take them out from their hideout and to emascumate their ominous plots.* (emphasis added)<sup>7</sup>

This attack on the *Khalqis* is minimally disguised.

### The Great Leap Backward

Two components of this process have not only been continued during the recent period but have deepened. The first relates to Islam, while the second to the tribal-feudal alliance.

*Islam* : Previous failure to identify and adequately deal with the religious question has resulted in frantic and probably transparent attempts at reconciliation with some elements within the religious establishment. Stipends are to be paid to Mosque functionaries and land belonging to religious dignitaries have been exempted from land reform.<sup>8</sup> Karmal has continued the practice, carried over from the Amin period, of having all government statements and decrees begin

5 Beverly Male, *op cit.* p 4

6 Press Release No. 22/84 (ID), p 2

7 *Ibid*, p 3

8 Selig S. Harrison, *op cit.*

with the phrase "In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful."<sup>9</sup> The General President of the Islamic Affairs Department, Mawlawi Abdul Wali Hojat, has been quoted as saying "The party and state of Afghanistan not only are not opposed to the Sacred Religion of Islam, but pay deep respect to it by all means."<sup>10</sup>

*Tribal-Feudal Alliance* : In the name of decentralization, a plan has evolved under which extensive local power has been granted to the tribal Chieftians. A system of tribal proportional rerepresentation has been initiated with the PDPA agreeing not to field candidates below the *woleswali* (district) level. Cash salaries are to be paid to the tribal leaders who are to be exempt from both taxation and conscription. Once local governments are established land-lords who are in Pakistan are to be invited to return to their holdings. If they fail to return the land is to be given away. Much of this is motivated by an attempt to out flank ex-King Zahir Shah who is planning to convene a *Lai Jirga* (Grand Assembly of the Tribes) in Saudi Arabia. Karmal himself has established the direction of this attempt : "We know that the party and the state can not do anything without the help of the elders of the country."<sup>11</sup> Attempts are also being made to assuage the few remaining capitalists by guaranteeing private property and granting a six year tax holiday plus right to bring machinery into the country free from duty.

This new direction has been referred to by Karmal as the "evolutionary phase of the revolution".<sup>12</sup> If it shows anything, it is the inability of the PDPA to, in any fundamental manner, transform Afghan society. Leaping forward over stages can not be rectified by a gigantic leap backward. By their errors the PDPA has forced an accentuation of the political vocabulary of Islam. Their own record of attempting to manipulate Islam is understood by most to be bogus and has encouraged the right wing within the resistance to make military pressure will put the genuine left through its most enduring test.

9 Beverly Male, *op cit*, p 212

10 Press Release No. 34/84, (ID) p 1

11 Selig S. Harrison, *op cit*.

12 Press Release No. 12/84, (ID), p3