

Intensification of Warfare between Government Forces and Moslem Rebels - Government Changes - Alleged Involvement of Foreign Powers

During the months from April to August 1979 the Government of Afghanistan, led since April 1978 [see 29037 A] by President Nur Mohammad Taraki, who was also secretary-general of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA or *Khalq* party), was increasingly faced with armed resistance by forces of a number of Moslem groups opposed to the regime.

According to a survey published in *Le Monde* early in August the internal warfare had by then made about 80 per cent of Afghanistan's territory insecure. Moreover, while the Government still exercised control over about half the country's inhabitants concentrated in the more densely populated areas, 30 per cent of the people lived in disputed areas (controlled by the Army during the day and by rebels during most of the night) and 20 per cent lived in areas under full rebel control. The Army of 120,000 men, directed by several thousand Soviet advisers and equipped with modern Soviet materiel, was engaged in warfare against rebels whose weapons were mainly those captured from government forces. Casualties in this war were said to amount to several tens of thousands, with hospitals being full of wounded soldiers, and many members of the armed forces were said to have doubts about the legitimacy of a regime which forced Moslems to shoot at other Moslems.

Among policies of the Taraki regime which had aroused widespread resistance were (i) the land reform [see 29198 A; 29641 A] which was opposed by landowners, many of whom had refused to plant crops, thus reducing further a harvest already badly affected by adverse weather conditions (with the result that Afghanistan was expected to require imports of grain during 1979), and (ii) the literacy campaign, which was also applied to women, and the proposed abolition of the payment of bride prices, both of which met with opposition from tradition-minded male Afghans.

The various Moslem rebel groups conducted their armed struggle independently of each other and without co-ordination, and they suffered repeated defeats at the hands of troops loyal to the Government and supported by superior Soviet equipment.

A new organization named as the *Teiman Atahad-Islami* ("those who have sworn to fight for Islam") was formed in Peshawar (northwestern Pakistan) on Aug. 11 by a merger of four groups—the National Liberation Front, led by the Imam Seghbatullah Mujjadedi—see 29641 A]; the *Jamaat-i-Islami Afghanistan*, led by Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani; the Movement for the Islamic Revolution, led by Maulavi Mohammadi; and a faction of the *Hizb-i-Islami*, led by Maulavi Mohammad Yunus Khales. The ultimate object of the new organization was the

establishment of an Islamic republic based on the Koran and Sunna (the great majority of Afghans belonging to the Sunni Moslem sect).

The *Teiman Atahad-Islami* did not include (i) the Afghan Islamic and Nationalistic Revolution Council, led by Sayed Ahmed Gailani, a religious leader; (ii) the faction of the *Hizb-i-Islami* led by Mr Gulbuddin Hekmatyar; and (iii) an Islamic Movement Organization of Afghanistan (*Harekat Islami Afghanistan*), led by Sheikh Mohammad Assef Mohseni, which in a message broadcast from Tehran on June 5 declared that, as Iran had "managed to put the demon of Western imperialism to flight", "so our nation is struggling against the aggressive Army of the criminal Soviet Union" and "will not rest until final victory and the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan").

Further Moslem movements were operating among tribes in the country's central, northern and western regions. These included an Alliance of Islamic Fighters (*Hedadia Mujaheddin Islami Afghanistan*), led by Mr Wali Beg (a former member of Parliament), formed in May 1979 among the Hazara tribes in central Afghanistan and reported (in mid-August) to have some 5,000 men under arms.

Leaders of several of these organizations made (apparently unsuccessful) attempts to obtain support from Western and Arab countries.

The Imam Seghbatullah Mujjadedi admitted in London on May 18 that it was difficult to raise money from Islamic and other countries, as some of them appeared to be afraid of offending the Soviet Union. He said that his movement had sufficient guns but was short of ammunition.

Many of the claims made by various rebel groups of military successes achieved and casualties inflicted on government forces were regarded by neutral observers as vastly exaggerated. By mid-May 1979 the fighting reported from several provinces involved indiscriminate killings on both sides, with insurgent Moslems attacking not only government forces but also the latter's Soviet advisers and officials of the PDPA, and with the security forces carrying out acts of retaliation with increasing ferocity.

In a report by a commission set up by the PDPA and the Government on the events of Herat in the latter part of March 1979 [see page 29642] it was stated on April 11 that more than 120 PDPA activists and members of their families had been "brutally murdered" and that there had been "mass shootings of [government] sympathizers and cruel massacring of those who refused to join the mutiny". The material damage caused by the rebels was estimated at 10,000,000 afghanis (£100,000). According to the report large caches of weapons of US and Chinese manufacture had been found after being brought secretly into Herat from abroad-which proved that "the Afghan counter-revolution is being directed from abroad".

In another mutiny, reported to have taken place at Jalalabad (eastern Afghanistan) on April 22, more than 150 mutineers were said to have been killed before the mutiny was put down by government troops.

On May 2 it was reported that a further mutiny by two battalions (one of whose commanders had shot dead the Governor and military commander of the province of Nangarhar) had been crushed by a commando unit from Kabul and a mechanized brigade.

On May 25 another mechanized brigade was reported to have deserted on May 17 and to have joined Pathan rebel forces near Gardez (about 65 miles south of Kabul).

On May 27 some 700 other Afghan soldiers (mainly of engineering units) were reported to have joined rebel forces while Pathan rebels claimed to have killed at least 500 soldiers, to have captured another 2,000 and to have taken control of the Bamian, Ghor and Urozgan districts (west of Kabul).

In Kabul an armed demonstration against the Government was crushed by government forces after five hours of fighting on June 23, and several hundred people were subsequently arrested, while at least 50 demonstrators were said to have been killed. The Government attributed the demonstration to "Iranian agents and paid servants of anti-revolutionary forces".

On June 30 rebels were reported to have taken Fort Gomal (150 miles south of Kabul) after it had been besieged for 2½ months and 250 Soviet advisers and PDPA members had been evacuated by army helicopters.

On July 22 it was reported that heavy fighting was taking place around an air base at Begram (about 36 miles north of Kabul) and also in the Panchir region (north of Kabul), where rebels were led by General Abdul Karim Mustaghani, a former Chief of Staff under President Daud [see 28224 B].

On July 30 Tass, the official Soviet new agency, published reports of the devastation of villages, massacres of women and children and the burning of crops allegedly carried out by Moslem rebels.

On Aug. 5 heavy fighting was reported to have broken out in Kabul from shortly after mid-day local time onwards. According to a Kabul broadcast at 10.20 p.m. (local time) on the same day "a number of Pakistanis and Iranians had infiltrated the city of Kabul with their subservient lackeys" but had been "very swiftly brought under control and eliminated" by security forces. Eye-witnesses reaching New Delhi stated later that at least 600 persons had been killed as a result of what had been a mutiny of regular troops at the Bale Hissar fort near the centre of Kabul. Renewed fighting was reported from the capital on Aug. 15.

In Kandahar (southern Afghanistan) more than 30 Soviet visitors to a Moslem shrine and 15 Afghan officers were said to have been killed by hostile Moslems who were subsequently forcibly subdued by troops on Aug. 12.

Mr Wali Beg appealed on Aug. 15 to the UN Human Rights Commission to inquire into "the regime of terror of the Afghan Army unleashed against the Moslem population". He claimed that his movement, which was "fighting against the regime in power aided by the Soviet Union", was in control of 10 per cent of the country's territory. In the *International Herald Tribune* it was

reported on Aug. 16 that 300 Hazara rebels had been executed near Kabul while being subjected to brutal atrocities.

A rebel source in Peshawar claimed on Aug. 16 that in the Razmak area Moslem rebels had taken the towns of Farsh, Nilap and Hiar and had set up Moslem revolutionary courts, one of which had condemned to death 34 active *Khalq* party members who had afterwards been executed. On Aug. 24 the same source claimed that between Aug. 10 and 14 a total of 900 government troops had been killed.

On Aug. 27 other insurgents claimed to have taken the town of Asmar (in Kunar Province, eastern Afghanistan), where the garrison was said to have surrendered and joined the rebels after a four-month siege.

Mr Barakullah Khan, information secretary of the Pakistan National Alliance, stated in Lahore on Aug. 21 that during the past 16 months 50,000 Moslems had been killed in Afghanistan by Soviet pilots flying bombing and strafing missions.

"For security reasons" the US authorities had decided on July 23 that the families of US nationals in Afghanistan should be evacuated. On the following day the Afghan Government asked the ambassadors of the United States (as well as of China and Pakistan) to reduce embassy staffs to make them proportionate to the aid given by their countries to Afghanistan and to comply with the principle of reciprocity.

Official Measures to counter Insurrection - Decision to create National Front Organization - Government Reorganization

Measures taken by the Government during this period of increasing internal unrest included both an amnesty and steps to strengthen the regime's powers.

President Taraki announced in Kabul on April 30 that he had released 1,300 political detainees and that only 1,000 persons still remained in detention on political grounds. He claimed that 98 per cent of the population supported the revolution and that opposition came only from a small minority at home and from "Iranian and Pakistani imperialists" whose countries were both interfering in Afghan internal affairs by sending troops disguised as civilians. He denied that there had been an army garrison mutiny at Jalalabad in the previous week [see above] and that bomb explosions which had taken place in Kabul on April 27 had been due to action on the part of rebels.

On May 6 the Government decreed a general amnesty for Afghan refugees in Pakistan, who were called upon to return to their country by May 28, 1979; on June 10 this amnesty was given an extension until July 1.

On May 27 the Government was reported to be building up a militia which would have training, equipment and facilities at least as good as those of the Army; which would be known as the *Khalqis* and be the military arm of the PDPA, with all its officers and men being required to swear obedience to the party's doctrines; and which would take orders from the Government.

On May 30 it was reported that the Government was setting up people's courts which would be headed by party functionaries and would deal with "counter-revolutionaries", including followers of the *Parcham* group (the wing of the PDPA whose leader had been Vice-President Babrak Karmal, who had been dismissed from the Government in July 1978—see 29198 A) and also of the (pro-Chinese) Communist *Shola Javed* group.

In broadcasts on July 13 and 18 Moscow radio reported that the PDPA political bureau had decided earlier in the month to set up a "National Organization for the Defence of the Revolution" which would bring together "all of Afghanistan's progressive public and political forces", and should include the PDPA itself.

The reports stated that the aim of the new front was "to rally progressive, patriotic forces for further action to advance the gains of the April revolution [1978], to defeat domestic and foreign reactionaries in their attempts to subvert these gains, and to carry on with the programme for building a society free from exploitation and oppression". In addition to the PDPA, the front would include trade unions, peasants committees, the People's Youth Organization, the People's Women's Organization, the Ulema Council and all other progressive forces "irrespective of their party, religious, national or social status".

In a cabinet reorganization announced on July 27 portfolios were newly distributed as follows (with previous responsibilities shown in parentheses):

Mr Hafizullah Amin (Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs)	Prime Minister and Defence
Dr Shah Wali (Deputy Prime Minister and Public Health)	Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs
Maj. Mohammad Aslam Watanyar (Defence)	Interior
Mr Sheryan Mazduryar (Interior)	Border Affairs
Dr Saleh Muhammad Ziray (Agriculture and Land Reform)	Public Health
Professor Abdurrashid Jalili (Education)	Agriculture and Land Reform
Mr Saheb Jan Sahra'i (Border Affairs)	Minister without Portfolio
Mr Muhammad Salem Masuri	Education

(According to rebel sources, Professor Mahmud Hashemi, the Minister of Water and Power, had been captured by rebels in mid-July.)

Under a decree of July 28 President Taraki assumed special powers to deal with the Moslem insurgency and was given responsibility for all questions of defence and of the command of the armed forces, while the Prime Minister would "execute the President's directives and supervise the Ministry of Defence".

During July and August both President Taraki and Mr Amin made numerous speeches at various localities throughout the country appealing for support even from those who did "not agree with our views 100 per cent" and claiming that the Government and the PDPA were in full control of all parts of the country and that resistance was coming only from groups of "extremists" sent into the country from Pakistan and Iran.

In the first few months after the revolution of April 1978 President Taraki's Government had repeatedly stated that it was following a policy of non-alignment, but since the signing of the Afghan-Soviet treaty of friendship, good-neighbourly relations and co-operation in December 1978 [see 29459 A]. Afghanistan had been increasingly integrated into the "socialist community" led by the Soviet Union.

In addition to the road shown from Herat via Kouchka (Kushka) to Chardzhou [see 20938 A], a link to the Soviet Union is also provided from Kabul through Kunduz via the Salang pass and road tunnel [see 20454 D] to Shir Khan Bandar/Qitil Qala on the Amu Darya river (Oxus); for proposed bridge across the Amu Darya, [see 29198 A].

Gen. Alexei Yepishev, USSR First Deputy Minister of Defence and general secretary for political affairs of the USSR Army and Navy (who had played a leading role in the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia—22744 A) and six other Soviet generals visited Afghanistan on April 5–11, 1979, to assess the country's situation. (Mr Thomas Reston, spokesman for the US State Department, said on May 16 that the USSR had recently provided Afghanistan with MiG-21 and SU-7 fighter aircraft, Mi-24 helicopters and T-62 tanks, but that there was no conclusive evidence that Soviet pilots were taking part in military operations against rebels.)

Afghanistan was represented as an observer (for the first time at conferences of this kind) at a "co-ordination meeting of national committees for UNESCO affairs of the socialist community" held in Ulan Bator (Mongolia) in May 1979 (for the principal purpose of discussing the supply of aid to Vietnam as a victim of the "barbarous aggression by the hegemonists of Peking"), and was also represented by an observer at the meeting held in Moscow in June 1979 to mark the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA or Comecon—see 29845 A).

On Aug. 14 it was reported that a total of 1,500 Afghan candidates for training courses were leaving Kabul for the Soviet Union.

Mr Amin (the Afghan Prime Minister) said on Aug. 19 that there were between 1,000 and 1,500 Soviet military advisers in Afghanistan; that his country was receiving wide-ranging financial help, and also military aid, from the Soviet Union; and that as a result of the Afghan-Soviet treaty "we can do anything to protect our revolution".

In the United States concern was expressed both at the alleged violation of human rights in Afghanistan and at Soviet interference in that country's internal affairs.

The US State Department claimed on July 22 that more than 3,000 political prisoners had been executed, while thousands of others were still being held in overcrowded prisons. Those

executed were said to be mainly military men, religious leaders, former politicians and landowners. It was said that, following unrest at Kandahar in October 1978, some 390 religious and middle-class leaders had been taken to Kabul, their property had been confiscated and they had been beaten and executed in groups of 10, their bodies being thrown into mass graves. Some 80 people were said to have been killed in a prison mutiny in May 1979, and the number of detainees at the Pol-i-Chakri prison in Kabul was given as 15,000.

In official US circles it was, however, thought that the Soviet Government had advised President Taraki to widen his political base (in order to prevent the collapse of his regime) and also to avoid large-scale "purges" among his supporters. (In this context he was said to have released some 70 *Parcham* followers detained on suspicion of plotting.)

Senator Frank Church, chairman of the US Senate foreign relations committee, appealed to the Afghan Government on Aug. 7 to cease its "campaign of murder and oppression" against its own people, saying that daily up to 50 political detainees were being executed, that 20,000 were being held behind bars, that torture was being applied and that a total of 125,000 Afghans had fled to Pakistan. Nevertheless, the Senator claimed, the anti-government insurgency was gaining ground in Afghanistan; the politicians of the world, he said, should exert pressure on the Kabul regime to end its "brutal procedure"; and every country should resist the temptation to exploit the situation for its own purposes and to intervene in Afghanistan.

Mr Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter's Assistant for National Security Affairs, stated on Aug. 2 that, in the same way as the United States had exercised restraint during the Iranian crisis, so it expected that others would "refrain from imposing foreign doctrines on profoundly religious and nationalist people".

Mr Hodding Carter, spokesman for the US State Department, said on Aug. 3: "The United States hopes that the principle of non-intervention will be respected by all parties involved in the region, including the Soviet Union. As already stated, we regard external intervention in the internal problems of Afghanistan as a serious matter."

The Government of Pakistan repeatedly denied both Soviet and Afghan allegations that it was backing rebel Moslems in Afghanistan, in particular by arming Afghan refugees in Pakistan; that it was allowing foreign powers to use Pakistani territory; and that its Army was planning to conduct raids into Afghanistan. It was pointed out in Pakistan (inter alia on June 1) that its Government adhered strictly to the five principles of peaceful coexistence and wished normal relations to be restored between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

In *Pravda*, the organ of the Soviet Communist Party, it was stated on June 1: "The attacks on the sovereignty of the young democratic republic, the intrusion of armed gangs on its territory from Pakistan and the attempts to create a crisis in this region cannot leave the USSR indifferent. There is in fact a conflict near our frontiers and aggression against a state with which the USSR has a common frontier." It added that the leaders of Pakistan could not be unaware of the arming, training, and financing of the Afghan rebels at their bases in Pakistan.

On June 6 the Pakistan Government denied an Afghan allegation that Pakistani military forces had launched an armed attack on Afghanistan and expressed the hope that peace and stability would be maintained in the region, where, it claimed, there had been "116 violations of Pakistan's air space and three incidents of Afghan artillery firing on Pakistani territory".

On Aug. 16 it was reported that, according to information given to a US congressional delegation led by Mr Lester Wolff (Democrat, New York), then visiting Pakistan, the number of Afghan refugees in that country had risen to 165,000, of whom 125,000 were in the North-West Frontier Province and 40,000 in Baluchistan.

A claim made officially in Kabul on Aug. 11 that Mr Mohammad Sadiq Shah, described as a member of the staff of the Pakistan embassy in Kabul, had asked for political asylum in Afghanistan and had subsequently "exposed an espionage network" of the embassy was on Aug. 12 denied by the Foreign Ministry in Islamabad (Pakistan's capital), which alleged that Mr Sadiq Shah had in fact been kidnapped six weeks earlier and was being detained illegally against his will. The Foreign Ministry's spokesman also said that 150,000 Afghan nationals, including a number of prominent persons (such as Mr Mohammad Hakim Sarbaland, former Afghan consul-general in Pakistan) had sought political asylum in Pakistan. (In addition, Col. Mohammad Sarwar, military attaché at the Afghan embassy in New Delhi, was on Aug. 17 reported to have fled to Pakistan and to have made a request for political asylum in that country.)

Notwithstanding the above and other mutual recriminations, Mr Shah Mohammad Dost, Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister, visited Pakistan on July 1–3 for talks with President Zia ul-Haq and several Pakistani ministers, with whom it was agreed that further high-level talks should be held in order to prepare the ground for a meeting of the two countries' Presidents. It was reported that the Pakistan side had agreed that the Afghan refugees in that country should return to their homeland as soon as possible on a voluntary basis.

In Iran the Ayatollah Khomeini, the religious leader, was on June 12 quoted by Iran Radio as having told the Soviet ambassador in Tehran: "We hope that Afghanistan, which is an Islamic country, will solve its problems through Islamic means. Soviet interference there will also have an effect in Iran, and we demand that the Soviet Union should not interfere in Afghanistan."

In China—which both Afghanistan and the Soviet Union had repeatedly accused of giving aid to the Moslem rebels—the Government for the first time rebutted such Afghan allegations on June 21, when Mr Han Nianlong (Han Nien-lung), a Chinese Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, handed a protest note to the Afghan charge d'affaires in Peking. The Chinese Government subsequently continued to accuse the Soviet Union of intending to expand its sphere of influence in the Afghan-Pakistani region.

As for India, the situation in Afghanistan was referred to in a joint statement issued in Moscow on June 14 and signed by Mr Morarji Desai (then India's Prime Minister and on a visit to the Soviet Union) and Mr Alexei Kosygin (the USSR Prime Minister) as follows: "India and the Soviet Union declare their desire to develop friendly relations and co-operation with the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. They express themselves firmly in favour of the aspirations of the people of Afghanistan for the preservation of their national independence and

their development. They oppose any interference by outside forces in the internal affairs of Afghanistan." It was later reported that Mr Desai had advised President Brezhnev (who had stated that the USSR could not "look on indifferently" if Pakistan continued its alleged incursions into Afghanistan) that the Kabul Government "should try to acquire credibility among the Afghan people instead of blaming Pakistani interference for its troubles". Mr Desai said after his return to New Delhi on June 25 that his Government was ready to mediate between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In Islamabad the Indian attitude was subsequently said to be "wholly in accord with Pakistan's position' '-(BBC Summary of World Broadcasts - Daily Telegraph - Financial Times -Guardian - International Herald Tribune - Le Monde - Neue Zürcher Zeitung - New York Times - Soviet Embassy Press Department, London) (*Prev. rep. 29641 A*)

Note. The replacement of President Taraki by Mr Hafizullah Amin as the President of Afghanistan in mid-September, and related developments, will be described in a subsequent article.

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