The Soviets in Afghanistan: The Anatomy of a Takeover

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The official announcement of the change of government in Afghanistan with the aid of Soviet troops in December 1979 took the world by surprise. And yet, the systematic increase of Soviet personnel in the country and the development of relations since 1956 was a clear indication of the consistent interest of the Soviet Union in its southern neighbour.

This article aims to give information on some little known aspects of the history of Soviet influence in Afghanistan, concentrating on the mechanism of control in the Soviet and Afghan government and its apparatus in Kabul. The collected evidence is the result of many discussions with Afghan refugees from Pakistan, India and Western Europe. The presentation will include a chronology of the most significant events of the last 20 years as seen through the eyes of these Afghan intellectuals.

This is not the place however for an exhaustive analysis of Afghanistan's history during this period nor will there be any discussion of the armed resistance.

SOVIET ADVISERS AND TRENDS IN AFGHAN POLITICS BEFORE 1973

After September 1956 when Prime Minister Daoud visited the Soviet Union on the invitation of Krushchev and Bulganin, Soviet advisers began to arrive in Afghanistan, cautiously at first and in small numbers. They came as aids to the military and as civilian advisers. In the military, the Soviets had the monopoly of advice to the Afghan army. Every year since 1956 some 100 young Afghans went to the Soviet Union for military studies where they were trained to use Soviet arms. Some of them were also studying military tactics and strategy at a high level. At this early stage Tajik interpreters helped in their training. From 1960 onwards Soviet instructors began to
arrived in Kabul to teach at the military academy. The same year Afghanistan signed an agreement with Czechoslovakia for cooperation in armaments techniques, maintenance and repairs. Some Afghan cadets went to study in Czechoslovakia and Czech instructors also came to Kabul. Soviet military instructors in Afghanistan were exclusively "Europeans". There were no Central Asians among them - not even as interpreters.

During this period the first projects in Soviet-Afghan cooperation were launched in road building, irrigation, motor repairs (at the Jangal factory in Kabul), then later in geological research and agriculture. Soviet advisers and technicians came to Afghanistan on short-term assignments to work on projects such as the Salang highway and Ningrhar irrigation. These missions were composed mainly of Soviet Slavs, but there were a good number of Tajik interpreters among them. Uzbeks, Azerbaijanis, Georgians and Armenians were also seen together with the Russians, Belorussians and Ukrainians.

The members of the Soviet missions specialising in road building, agriculture and geology were able to visit every corner of Afghanistan but their contacts with the Afghan people remained limited in spite of the fact that Afghans were not discriminating in their attitude towards foreign advisers of different nationalities - Western or Soviet. In the 1960's the number of American, West German, British, French and Dutch advisers was still significant (members of the Peace Corps began to arrive in Afghanistan in 1962), and the Afghans were struck by the fact that the Soviets did not have full freedom to mingle with them or accept private invitations while the Westerners could and did.

By the end of the 1960's the number of Soviet projects in Afghanistan had increased to such an extent that there were five times more Soviet advisers in Afghanistan than the total number of Westerners. By then the Soviets were arriving with their families, their own interpreters and commissariats, and were beginning to socialize; some selected young Afghans were invited to vodka parties and were given liqueurs as gifts. A rare case of cooperation was noticed at the end of the 1960's and early 1970's in the Ministry of Planning where Soviet economic advisory missions were working in cooperation with U.S., West German and Indian missions to formulate the Afghan five year plan (1967-1972).

The increasing contact between the Tajiks of the Soviet civilian missions and the Afghan population during this period began to have some notable side-effects. The Soviet Tajiks regained much of their lost cultural patrimony through contacts with the Afghans. They began to study literary Persian, to acquire a new vocabulary and compiled glossaries of technical words. The impact of this new trend on the development of the Tajik language in the Soviet Union became obvious in the 1970's. During the same period, Afghan students were sent to the Soviet Union to study agriculture, geology, engineering and technical subjects as well as economics and literature. Approximately 100 at first, then 150, Afghan students were sent every year to Moscow or Tashkent. Contrary to the generally accepted opinion, young Afghans who had studied in the Soviet Union were not usually in favour of the Soviet influence in Afghanistan. It was standard knowledge among them that some students were specially selected "favourites" - who were recruited by the Soviet intelligence services - such as the KGB. Abdul Qader, later to become Chief of the Air Force under Mohammad Daoud Khan and Hamid Mohbat, a Panshir who later participated in Daoud's conspiracy in 1973.

The period from 1963 to 1973 was marked in internal Afghan politics by a growth in left-wing trends and the consequent conflict between fundamentalist and communist factions. Left-wing parties took advantage of the freedom of activity allowed under the Afghan Constitution of 1963 to organize and publicise their views - Khalq was the first party to bring out its own newspaper on 11th May 1966. The extreme freedom given to the left-wing parties to publicise their anti-religious views soon provoked a reaction, initially among the intellectuals of Kabul University who formed a progressive, fundamentalist, anti-communist movement comparable to that of the Muslim Brotherhood. The response of the left was voiced by Babrak Karmal - then a member of Parliament - when he replied to criticism of his anti-religious stand, "Don't use this old sword (shamshir-e kohna) against me".

The conflict between the fundamentalist and communist tendencies took on a new turn in April 1970 when the government took part in the 100th anniversary of Lenin's birth. They adopted the slogan "Lenin's friendship with Afghanistan", Karmal and his Parchamis friends chose the slogan "Lenin - leader of the toiling masses" and a leading article in Parcham reproduced a huge photograph of Lenin with the caption "dorud (greetings) to Lenin". The use of the sacred word dorud, used in Afghanistan exclusively in a religious context to praise God, in relation to Lenin further alienated the religious elements in the country. As a result, the mullahs came together to form a movement and convened their own congress in Kabul in March 1970.

Faced with two opposing movements, the government of Prime Minister Nur Ahmad Etemadi opted to protect the communists and disbanded the mullahs' congress. The mullahs then moved to the Laghman and Shinwar provinces to continue their protest. The government was aware of the influence the mullahs might have on the population. They feared for the safety of a Soviet mission working in the Shinwar province but could not prevent the lynching of
one young Afghan communist in the Laghman province. The Government defused the situation through negotiations with the Shinwaris and the mullahs of Ningrahar. The governments of Dr. Abdul Zaher and Musa Shafiq from 1970 to 1973 adopted a more favourable attitude towards the religious groups to maintain a balance between the two movements, but the communists continued to enjoy full freedom of action and were strengthening their influence among young intellectuals in the provinces and army officers.

THE GOVERNMENT OF MOHAMMAD DAOUD KHAN, 1973-1978

The Marxist-supported coup of Mohammad Daoud in July 1973 brought an end to Afghanistan's experiment with constitutional monarchy. It became clear that the coup had been planned over the previous two years, since the resignation of Prime Minister Etemadi, with the help of the Marxist elements in the army and some pro-Daoud civilian groups. For the first time, Marxists were to have a share in government - Daoud's cabinet was made up of his own supporters and communists of the Parcham party (the Khalq party was represented by one cabinet member). It was also the first time that Afghanistan experienced an administration using tough police methods. During this period the communists intensified their propaganda among young army officers.

For the first three years of Daoud's government relations between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union were consolidated and expanded. As soon as he came to power, Daoud asked for high-level Soviet military advisers to work with the Ministry of Defence. Whereas previously the role of the Soviet advisers was confined to teaching, they now worked directly with the Afghan army - from 1973 every battalion had Soviet advisers attached to them. The advisers to the Ministry of Defence and the army were exclusively Russians or Soviet "Europeans" (including Ukrainians and Belorussians) and most of the interpreters were Russians who had learned Persian in military language courses in Moscow with only a small number of Soviet Tajiks among them.

The coup of 1973 initiated changes in the constitution of the Afghan personnel in the army. Leftist officers were given greater responsibility and Khalq and Parcham communist parties were allowed to recruit freely among the young officers, including those who had not been trained in the Soviet Union. The Khalq party had already been recruiting members in the military school of Mahtab-Qala since 1965 and began thus to consolidate its predominance over its rival party. This recruitment was supposed to have been done secretly, but it was an "open secret" to most of the Afghan population. Daoud's own Pashtun nationalist inclinations and belief in racial superiority helped to promote the Pashtun elements in the army and led them into a close identification with the Khalq party recruits (non-Pashtuns were only accepted on the basis of restricted regional quotas from Kabul, Herat, Badakhshan etc.). Thus the notion of communism became synonymous for many officers with Pashtun nationalism from this time onwards. This identification was as real as it was perceived: the Pashtun military faction, which had helped Daoud come to power, later helped to assassinate him and continued to play a pro-Khalqi role through the rule of Taraki and Amin and after the Soviet invasion.

In general, people realised that communism would come to Afghanistan if the army became communist but nobody had taken account of the extent of communist infiltration, despite the "open secret" of Khalq recruitment.

The growth of leftist elements in the army was paralleled by an increase in the appointment of left-wing candidates to the secret police. These were to be found in the newly-created organization within the Ministry of the Interior together with pro-Daoud supporters. This organization was created to supersede the existing organization for national security, Masuniyat-e Milli which had been formed in the last years of the monarchy and was run along Afghan lines with no foreign assistance. (It had inherited the administration of the late Hashim Khan's Riasi-e Zapt, Ahwali of the 1930's. After July 1973 Masuniyat-e Milli was maintained under the administration of General Ismail.)

Daoud had always maintained an anti-religious attitude and was particularly opposed to the young Muslim fundamentalists and the Mojaddidi and the Gailani families. This attitude appealed to the Parcham communists who took up the slogan "Daoud's friends - our friends; Daoud's enemies - our enemies". In 1975, he arrested all the young Muslim intellectuals in the University of Kabul after the Panshir uprising of July. Some were executed and some received prison sentences of several years in Deh-Mazang prison in Kabul. Many managed to escape to Peshawar where they began to form Muslim resistance movement against Daoud. Their activities were restrained by the Pakistan government in 1976, when Daoud's relations with Pakistan improved.

From 1975 onwards Daoud began to change the direction of his domestic and foreign policy and opened an ambiguous phase in his relations with the Soviet Union. The predominance of the Parcham party was broken as ministers and administrative officials were dismissed. Daoud began to favour nationalist elements which also made
cooperation difficult with the liberals, democrats and technological intelligentsia. Nevertheless, the Parchamis continued to support Daoud, claiming that his rule was only a transitory phase, and the recruitment of new members to the Khalq and Parcham parties went on unaffected by Daoud's new stand. The Minister of Education, Abdul Qayyum Wardak, a man of Pashtun nationalist inclination, continued to appoint Khalqis to important positions in the Ministry of Education and the University of Kabul, provided that their leftist views were not generally known. The coup of April 1978 confirmed all of these appointees in their positions.

Daoud's new anti-leftist policy at home was accompanied by an attempt to improve relations with the West. He went to Iran in 1976 where he had been promised an important loan for building Mashad - Herat - Kabul - Peshawar railways. He also went to visit Anwar Sadat in Egypt in 1977, General Zia ul-Haq in Pakistan and to Saudi Arabia. All along, he saw no contradiction in his policy of rapprochement with pro-Western states and good relations with the Soviet Union.

However this new phase of Daoud's regime was impeded by lack of resolution. Daoud had lost the capacity to make decisions. A few of his ministers offered their resignations but were persuaded to carry on with their tasks under the promise that reforms would be undertaken.

The Soviet attitude in response to Daoud's new ventures was cautious, but in July 1977 the Soviet Communist Party secretly instructed the Khalq and Parcham parties to reunite. Both were pro-Soviet but previously opposed to each other. The reunion was not a genuine change of heart but proposed for practical reasons. This marked the beginning of preparations for the coup of April 1978 although officially the Khalq and Parcham parties continued to support Daoud. Meanwhile, the number of Soviet advisers in the country was constantly increasing.

Daoud's new policy was to be put to the test at the conference of ministers from non-aligned countries scheduled for May 1978 in Kabul, prior to the meeting of the non-aligned heads of state in September 1979 in Havana. It was common knowledge in government circles in Kabul that the ministerial meeting would be used by Afghanistan to initiate a movement against Cuba. The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Wahid Abdullah, visited Jakarta in April and made statements to foreign diplomats, including those from pro-Soviet countries, that the role of Cuba among non-aligned countries had to be checked. He repeated these views on a later visit to New Delhi. When Cuba sent a mission to Kabul in the middle of April 1978 to prepare for the Havana meeting, it got the worst possible reception. Junior officers were sent to receive the Cuban delegates and they were unable to meet anyone at government level. It is thought that this was the point when the Soviets began to see cause for alarm in developments in Afghanistan. Ironically, the Minister of Defence, General Rassuli, his acting Foreign Minister, Wahid Abdullah and the Minister of Interior, Abdul Qader Nuristani, were all of the opinion that the Soviet Union remained friendly towards Daoud's government.

At this stage it must be remembered that every regiment in the Afghan army and airforce had Soviet advisers among them who were fully informed of all developments within the armed forces. The infiltration of the Afghan army was perfect - nothing was done without the knowledge of the Soviet advisers who knew in detail the day-to-day movements of the army. In spite of his new right-wing inclinations, Daoud had done nothing to prevent the spread of influence of the Soviet military advisers, as he was convinced that the Soviet Union would never let him down and that his anti-Cuban stand would be tolerated.

The prelude to the coup came on 17th April 1978 when the communists officially launched their opposition to Daoud in response to the murder of Mir-Ali Akbar Kheybar - a Parcham theoretician. Nearly 11,000 people attended the funeral - Khalqis, Parchamis, other communist sympathisers and also many who were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with Daoud's rule, which they saw as a brand of fascism and immovability. On 24th April, Daoud reacted and imprisoned some Khalq and Parcham leaders, among them Babrak Karmal and Nur-Mohammad Taraki. Hafizullah Amin escaped until the next day which gave him time to alert the armed forces. On 26th April, Watan-jar moved a column of tanks into Kabul and Abdul Qader brought in the airforce to strike against Daoud's palace and to immobilise the regiments which could have helped Daoud. Most regiments backed the coup however, not always aware that this was a communist coup d'état and not merely a move against Daoud's personal rule. Daoud and his family were executed on the morning of 27th April.

The truth behind the organisation of the coup has remained a major topic of discussion among Afghan intellectuals to this day. There are two theories: firstly, that the April coup was organized by the Afghan communist officers Abdul Qader, Aslam Watan-jar, Lt.-Colonel Rafi, and others, with the support and approval of the Soviet advisers who were present in Aslam Watan-jar's No. 4 Regiment, in other garrisons and in the military airports of Khwaja-Rawash and Bagram and secondly, that everything was engineered by the Soviets who instructed their agents (Abdul Qader et al.) to launch the coup. Whatever the truth may be, the Soviet Union welcomed the coup and
responded immediately. A few days later, Afghan officers at the military airport in Bagram were surprised to see large Soviet military transport planes unloading all kinds of armaments under the pretext that they might be needed in case of possible uprisings. This seems to indicate that the coup had the backing of the Soviet Union from the outset.12

APRIL 1978 TO DECEMBER 1979

After their release, the new leaders Nur-Mohammad Taraki, Hafizullah Amin and Babrak Karmal, met to organize the new government. Their first public declaration was made in Pashto (read by Taraki) and then read in Dari by Karmal. The speech emphasized that religious traditions would be respected under the new regime and that the new era would bring an end to injustice, fascism and the remnants of monarchistic elements of Daoud’s rule. May 1978 passed in an atmosphere of reassurance and there were relatively few executions. Among them were the Minister of Defence, General Ghulam Haidar Rassuli; the Minister of Justice, Wafizollah Sami'i, a Muslim of discreet fundamentalist tendencies; General Rokay Solayman, a cousin of Daoud; General Khaliq who had studied in the USA; the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Wahid Abdullah; the former chamberlain to King Zaher Shah, Mohammad Rahim; the former Prime Minister, Musa Shafiq and army officers who had resisted the coup. About 3000 soldiers were killed during the armed confrontations of 26th and 27th April.13 By the end of the month the government was beginning to tighten up on all religious elements: some religious leaders were arrested in Logar and Ghazni. Young fundamentalists who had been imprisoned by Daoud and were due to be released, were transferred from Deh-Mazang prison in Kabul to Pul-e Charkhi. They were to be kept there under very tough conditions until their sudden execution in June 1979. Protest meetings in Kunar were savagely crushed.

The coming to power of the communists in April 1978 changed the number, role and position of Soviet advisers in Afghanistan. The new government asked for Soviet specialists in all possible fields, including religion. One week after the coup, Soviet advisers – usually ethnic Russians – began to arrive in Kabul. The number of Soviet military advisers increased greatly, particularly after the beginning of the resistance in Kunar (late April) and Badakhshan provinces (August 1978).

After the coup, Kabul witnessed the arrival of Soviet advisers in two new fields of security: into the Afghan police force, which had been trained previously by West Germans and into the intelligence services, which was the first time any foreigners had been involved in this area of security. The Soviets reorganized the intelligence services: the former police of the Ministry of the Interior – Masniyat-e Milli – and the Prime Minister’s secret police were amalgamated into a central organisation, Afghanistan de Gatō Sazmān or AGSa (in Pashto “Organization for the Interests of Afghanistan”), which in turn was divided into three departments for internal, foreign and military intelligence. This organisation was headed by Colonel Assadullah Sarwari in 1978 and 1979 and played an important role in the arrest, imprisonment and execution of all those suspected of opposing the government. Torture became the rule and from January 1979, when the government was confident it did not require any more “public” confessions, torture was applied as a form of punishment.

Lists of people to be killed were often not prepared or sometimes “disappeared” in the case of summary executions. Many Afghans think that the Soviets engineered these summary executions although nothing conclusive is known about their involvement apart from one clear fact – their presence in the AGSas enabled them to know everything that went on. The Soviet government was fully informed about the executions. When the US ambassador, Adolph Dubs, was taken hostage in February 1979 the role of Soviet advisers was well observed by US diplomats at the time. After the Soviet invasion however, his murder was blamed on Amin and his chief of police, Colonel Sayyid-Daoud Taroon. On 4th September 1979 Taroon was killed in a shoot-out and therefore unable to provide any further evidence in the matter.

After the death of Taraki there was an attempt at a clean sweep in the intelligence services. Colonel Sarwari disappeared (it was known he was hiding in the Soviet Embassy) and was replaced by Amin’s nephew and son-in-law, Assadullah Amin. Amin declared that Sarwari had been responsible for all the tortures and executions despite the fact that everyone in the administration knew that he had acted with the full knowledge and support of Taraki and Amin. Amin changed the name of AGSas to KAM, Kargarāndé Ettelā’āt Mo’nassessa (Workers’ Information Organisation, in Pashto) and under this new title the organization continued to carry out torture and killings.

Party organization was one of the spheres of activity opened up to Soviet advisers after the coup. Numerous advisers were sent immediately to help organize the Hezb-e Demokratik Khalq-e Afghānistān (“Democratic Peoples’ Party of Afghanistan”). The Soviet advisers became active in the political bureau of the Party’s Central Committee and in organizing provincial and district branches. They also took charge of organizing sazmāns which were modelled on the Soviet communist youth, pioneer and women’s organizations,
When Taraki and Amin first came to power they declared their government to be democratic and pro-religious and encouraged the mullahs to continue in their jobs. While maintaining this stand throughout their rule, measures were taken against religion which followed the pattern of the Soviet Union's anti-religious campaigns in Central Asia. Children were encouraged to disobey their parents if they were reactionary; women's liberation was encouraged and plays were shown on television with schoolgirls in suggestive situations. Young people were sent to the countryside to promote the literacy programme and land reform. Individual mullahs were then accused of resisting the establishment of the kolkhoz and liquidated. But it also worked the other way round - many of these young people were killed on the spot by the local population. Most importantly, the wholesale s'laughter of religious families, Shia clergy and young Muslim fundamentalists began. The Mojaddidi family, for example, were accused of being CIA agents and supporters of the Shah of Iran.14

A chronology of the internal politics in Afghanistan shows that the forces which had united to accomplish the coup gradually became more unstable. At the beginning of July 1978, friction between the Khalq and Parcham parties became so strong that co-operation was no longer possible. The Soviet Union decided to back the Khalqis because of their predominance in the army and accepted Babrak Karmal's exclusion from the government.15 Karmal was sent to Prague as ambassador and his close friends received diplomatic posts elsewhere. The campaign against the Parcham party was stepped up at the end of July when the government declared that it had discovered a plot by Major-General Abdul Qader to overthrow the regime. Abdul Qader, Mohammed Rafi', Sultan-Ali Keshmand and many other Parchamis were arrested and imprisoned. Liberals, university professors, Muslim fundamentalists and nationalists were also arrested. It became obvious that the Qader plot was a pretext to imprison anybody of influence by accusing them of being a Parcham supporter. Many of the imprisoned were later tortured to extract confessions. In September 1978, Karmal and his Parcham colleagues were accused by Amin of being allies of the Western imperialists, CIA agents and servants of the deposed king. They were summarily expelled from the Revolutionary Committee of the Party, according to a well-tried earlier Soviet pattern. There was no reaction from the Soviet Union other than to provide them secretly with help in the form of money and visas.

Having been accused by the Parchamis of betraying the revolution, Taraki and Amin adopted the red flag as the national emblem. On 7th November Amin welcomed the anniversary of the October Revolution with a speech proclaiming "Our revolution follows the great Soviet Revolution". The change of the national flag together with this declaration provoked a reaction from the Muslims, who began to organize themselves into an anti-Soviet movement. The Tajiks and Uzbeks of Badakhshan and Nuristan were among the first to become active. Resistance was also being organized in Peshawar by, among others, Gulbuddin Hekmat-yar (Hezb-e Islami), Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani (Jamiat-e Islami)16 and Sebghat-ul-lah Mojaddidi, who had fled at the time of Daoud's anti-religious campaign. The reaction by the government to the news of resistance was immediate. People were brought to Kabul to be executed: in January 1979, all the men of the Mojaddidi clan were secretly assassinated in one night on the order of Taraki and Amin and all the women and children rounded up and sent to Pul-e Charkhi prison.17

The fall of the Shah and the rise of Khomeini in Iran contributed to the general unrest in Afghanistan. Troubles began in Herat (14th March 1979), which is 60 per cent Shia Muslim: 25,000 people were reported killed. From then on the Hazaras and other Shias living in Kabul were brought under suspicion. Later in the month there was a general drive against all the religious groups in the country and once more against the Parchamis. Sunnis, Shias, both fundamentalists and intellectuals, were rounded up until on 21st March, the Muslim New Year, Taraki and Amin felt confident that they had the country under control.

Amin was nominated Prime Minister and Watan-jar, a Khalqi, Minister of Defence. Amidst the systematic killings which began at that time, the government celebrated the first anniversary of the revolution in April with a Moscow-type parade, distinguished only by stringent security measures. In the dawn of 4th June 1979, the young Muslim fundamentalists previously imprisoned by Daoud were transferred from block No. 2 to No. 1 in Pul-e Charkhi prison and executed en masse. These executions and the reputed invocations of Allah and curses against communism by the young men in their last moments had a tremendous impact on public opinion in Afghanistan. Uprisings began in protest against the land reform and communist propaganda and the first organized Mujahideen groups started their operations in Afghanistan. It appeared that the government was losing ground. Before passing to the events of the summer of 1979 it is worth noting a curious phenomenon which occurred during this period in the distribution of power among the tribal federations of Afghanistan. By August 1978, the Dorrannis who had ruled Afghanistan almost without interruption for the previous 150 years were replaced by the Ghilzais.18
Afghans consider that the government's lack of control by the summer of 1979 was obvious in its handling of a few incidents. On "Chendawal Day", 23rd June 1979, a demonstration was planned in the Shia district of Chendawal in Kabul which houses many proletarian Hazaras. People were loaded into trucks in this district and executed on the same day as agents of Khomeini. It was assumed that the demonstration was in direct response to Khomeini's request to the Soviet Union to liberate Soviet Muslims. On "Bala-Hissar" Day, 6th August, 1979, M-24 helicopter gunships were used for the first time to quell an uprising in the citadel housing the Kabul military headquarters. Another move worth mentioning is the execution of the former Prime Minister Nur Ahmad Etemadi because it illustrates the effect of foreign broadcasts in such an unstable political situation. In early August, the radio station, Voice of America, broadcast a long analysis of Afghan affairs. Amin and Taraki were accused of blundering and the suggestion was made that only one man could save the situation as a potential leader, namely Etemadi. On the 27th day of Ramadhan, Etemadi was told that he was to be released but was then taken away and executed secretly.

The period between September and December was marked by a high degree of instability. Discipline in the army had collapsed by the end of July and only Khalqi officers could be relied upon to carry out orders. But even the Khalqis stopped obeying orders by September as a direct result of the rift between the Taraki and Amin factions. Between September and the Soviet invasion in December discipline was only enforced by pro-Amin Khalqis. At the end of August Taraki went to Havana for the meeting of the non-aligned heads of state. He returned through Moscow where he met Brezhnev. It is possible that he was advised to get rid of Amin and recall Karmal to reunite the Party. It is likely that there were agents in his entourage who in direct response to Khomeini’s request to the Soviet Union to liberate Soviet Muslims. On "Bala-Hissar" Day, 6th August, 1979, M-24 helicopter gunships were used for the first time to quell an uprising in the citadel housing the Kabul military headquarters. Another move worth mentioning is the execution of the former Prime Minister Nur Ahmad Etemadi because it illustrates the effect of foreign broadcasts in such an unstable political situation. In early August, the radio station, Voice of America, broadcast a long analysis of Afghan affairs. Amin and Taraki were accused of blundering and the suggestion was made that only one man could save the situation as a potential leader, namely Etemadi. On the 27th day of Ramadhan, Etemadi was told that he was to be released but was then taken away and executed secretly.

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By September 1979, Amin alone was left in power. Despite assurances of Soviet understanding, he was afraid nevertheless, and made pro-Soviet gestures in praising the red flag and in his declarations every day ("Friendship with the Soviet Union is an integral part of our nationalism", "Our revolution is the revolution of Lenin", etc). His lack of confidence was shown further in the execution of 52 formerly influential people after a special celebration for the flag day anniversary. The victims included intellectuals and religious leaders, as well as some Marxists of Maoist inclinations including leaders, as well as some Marxists of Maoist inclinations including

The Soviets in Afghanistan

From the Soviet Invasion to the Present Day

After the Soviet invasion and assassination of Amin by a Soviet KGB commando, Babrak Karmal returned and took up the position of Prime Minister, President of the Revolutionary Council, Secretary of the Hezb-e Demokratik Khalq-e Afghanistan and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces.23 Many others returned including Major-General Qader, Lt-Colonel Rafi, Sultan-Ali Keshtmand (a Hazara Shia) and Colonel Sarwari who was now considered a patriot and promoted to Deputy Prime Minister. Amin was accused of having been a CIA agent and was blamed for all the previous killings, especially of the former Prime Ministers, Shafiq and Etemadi.24 Most of the prisoners were released and Jabha-ye Mell-e Padar-Watan ("National Front of the Fatherland") was created for people without specific political affiliations and for those of a religious persuasion.25 The freedom and protection of religion were promised and Karmal's first move upon his return was to send a message of praise to Ayatollah Khomeini ("flattering him in words of servile respect"); he received no reply.26

After the invasion the number of Soviet advisers in the Kabul administration increased once more. Excluding the Soviet troops, there are now approximately 3000 Soviet advisers in Afghanistan divided equally between military and civilian affairs. They are to be found in the office of the Prime Minister, in all ministries, in the Party and its front organizations, in the judiciary, in trade and in many other fields. Only the geological and agricultural missions which operated in the countryside have been withdrawn because of the lack of security in the provinces. Each Afghan institution is supervised by the corresponding Soviet institution, for example, the Afghan Foreign
Office is supervised by the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Afghan army is controlled by the Soviet army, the Hezb-e Demokratik Khalq-e Afghanistan is supervised by the Communist Party of the USSR and the Bakhtyar News Agency is supervised by Tass. The Soviet institutions do not coordinate in Kabul as everything is centrally controlled from Moscow. 27

A corps of Soviet military advisers controls and decides every move of the Afghan army. Every morning they study all the reports on clashes with the guerillas which are sent to the Ministry of Defence. Afghan leftist officers, who have usually studied in Moscow, are active in every department of the Ministry. The Ministry of Defence has a 24-hour communication link with Moscow. All the communications are in Russian.

After the invasion the intelligence service was to be renamed once again: it is now called “KHAD” (“Khedamát-e Etelá’at-e Dawlati” - “State Information Service”). It is administered by Dr Najib – a young Parcham friend of Karmal. The three main departments remain: internal, foreign and military. It is understood that the military department is headed by a Khalqi and the other two by Parchamis. The role of the Soviet advisers in the intelligence service is extremely important. They look after the major affairs of KHAD and train young Afghans for spying, investigations and torture, as well as recruiting candidates for special training in the Soviet Union – usually in Tashkent. KHAD’s communications with Moscow and Tashkent are in Russian. Since January 1980 KHAD has continually expanded. It now controls hundreds of corporations such as for example the Kabul taxis (many young Kabul contacts of the Mujahideen have been arrested thanks to them and have been either jailed in Pul-e Charkhi or executed). KHAD is generally hated and its expansion has created animosity in the ranks of the few remaining civil servants. The majority of KHAD’s officers are former police officers and militant communists. New members include young people fresh from the Kabul lycée. KHAD also trains communist girls specially for questioning, searching and torturing women. From time to time, KHAD introduces people to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to be sent as attachés – under diplomatic status – to the Afghan embassies in Tehran, Islamabad, New Delhi, Baghdad, Kuwait and the Afghan consulates in Mashhad, Bombay and Peshawar. These people who have received secret training in the USSR are completely unknown to the personnel department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They liaise directly with KGB representatives in Soviet embassies and consulates and their role is to work on their host countries where, as Afghans, they can pass unnoticed.

The new Soviet ambassador, Fikret Ahmedzhanovich Tabiev, a Russified Kazan Tartar, probably a Mishar, rarely meets the Afghan Foreign Minister. Turkish diplomats in Kabul report that he understands a little Turkish. Diplomatic parties given by the Soviet Embassy have become rare under his ministry when compared with the days of the monarchy. 28 Tabiev is only the second high-ranking Muslim diplomat to be posted to Afghanistan. 29

The most prominent Soviet adviser in Kabul is most certainly Safranchuk, a Ukrainian and former ambassador in Africa. He speaks fluent English and French and is described as being “suave”. His daily duties begin with a drive in an ordinary car (without diplomatic plates) to the Soviet Embassy where he receives his instructions directly from the Soviet government through a telegraphic link which operates 24 hours a day. From there he goes on to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs where he has the freedom to enter the office of Shah-Mohammad Dost, the Minister, at any time. He hands him texts of the telegraphs from Moscow in English which are to be announced later in the evening as the official declarations of the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs. His other duties include accompanying the Minister during his visits to the United Nations, where he also gives him the text of his speeches. In the middle of 1982 Safranchuk was replaced by Gavrillov, a diplomat, who has spent many years attached to the Soviet Embassy in Kabul. Soviet advisers in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs deal with international economic relations and agreements. They come also as professors and lecturers to the Diplomatic Studies Institute where only young communists are now trained as diplomats. No decision of any importance is taken in Kabul however, not even by Safranchuk or now Gavrillov. He sends his advice to his government and in turn receives instructions.

The Soviet advisers to the Hezb-e Demokratik Khalq-e Afghanistan belong to the International Department of the Communist Party and are all Soviet “Europeans”. All communications between the Hezb-e Demokratik Khalq-e Afghanistan and Moscow are in Russian and include Karmal’s statements and official speeches. The statements are translated into Tajik by Tajiks from Soviet Central Asia, then “re-worked” into Dari by Afghans. The Afghan leaders may be allowed to add a few words to provide some “local colour”, but even these are sometimes telegraphed from Moscow.

Two Soviet advisers from TASS, both English speakers, work permanently with the Bakhtyar News Agency. There is a special telegraphic link between TASS and Bakhtyar which is used to telex all TASS communiqués immediately to Kabul. Bakhtyar then drafts its own commentaries with the help of the two advisers from TASS. In the evening, the mass media bases its reports on material taken from Bakhtyar. All newspapers are owned and controlled by the govern-
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...authorities consider their own Muslim Central Asians to be totally unreliable, a fact which Afghan communists are fully aware of. In this respect, the present Soviet leadership is even less confident than Stalin, who for all his belief in Russian superiority was able to use Central Asians for intelligence work.

Before the invasion, there were some attempts to introduce Soviet elements into secondary education. Under Taraki and Amin, lectures on politics were standardized in all secondary schools; Russian textbooks were translated into Dari for this purpose. The Ministry of Education began to publish text books for Uzbek and Turkmen children similar to those in the Soviet Union in 1978. But progress was so slow that by the time they were published, Amin ordered them to be hidden as they carried photographs of Taraki. Most of the professors were communists – former primary school teachers.

Since the invasion the role of the Soviets in education as a whole has been surprisingly small. Religious books used in schools at the time of the monarchy and during Daoud’s rule are still in circulation. Political science courses in secondary schools are now considered unproductive because of the general animosity of the students to the subject. They have been suspended in many schools. The government has been discouraged from pursuing revolutionary propaganda in schools since the schoolgirls’ demonstration in February – March 1980 when many girls shouting “down with the Soviet Union” were killed. When Russian and other Soviet “European” professors and doctors arrived in Kabul after the invasion, they asked to see the university curricula. They were shown the syllabuses by the Afghan professors, most of whom had studied in the West, and it was found that in most cases the Afghan curricula were far more advanced than those of Soviet universities. The Soviet Union holds no prestige among Afghans in academic and scientific fields. There is a general disenchantment among Afghan professors who are gradually leaving the country. The latest reports tell us that Soviet professors are unable to teach anywhere other than in their own polytechnic in Kabul “having become victims of their own ignorance and bating by the students”. It appears there is little confidence in the ability of Soviet professors, doctors or technicians.

Afghan students have been sent to the Soviet Union in larger numbers in the last three years. In 1980 there were approximately 600 Afghan students in Tashkent. About half were Communist Party students and the other half were recruited by KHAD. Since then the number of students in Tashkent alone has increased to 5000. Throughout 1982 there have been 25,000 Afghan students in the Soviet Union. Most are happy to go as a way of avoiding military service. Three political trends are predominant among Afghan students...
in the Soviet Union: the nationalist Muslims, forming the majority, who do not publicize their anti-Soviet feelings, the Khalqis, and the Parchamis. The majority of students sent by KHAD to train in intelligence work are chosen from families who have close links with Parcham leaders. These form the majority of KHAD recruits and consist of few Pashtuns. Pashtuns are normally to be found among the military recruits from KHAD, dominated by Khalq families. (Under Taraki and Amin most students in the Soviet Union and Bulgaria were Pashtuns who had been chosen by the Khalq party.) As a rule when a ministry is controlled by Khalq, students selected for study will belong to families close to the Khalq tendency. As a result there are frequent clashes between the two factions - Khalq and Parcham. Many casualties were reported in 1981 from such fights in Tashkent.

The students sent by KHAD to Tashkent are isolated from their compatriots, they are taught exclusively by Soviet “Europeans” and have their free day on Monday rather than Sunday so that they may not meet with their fellow Afghans around the town. There are also about a hundred Afghan students in Dushanbe studying agriculture, economics and literature.

The presence of 5000 Afghan students in Tashkent has had significant repercussions on the native population. Some Afghans are Uzbek speakers which has permitted many contacts between them and the local Uzbeks. Although the majority of the students are communist recruits there are also Muslim fundamentalists among them posing as communists. The Afghans have given information to the Uzbeks about the real situation in their country and have explained the activities of the Mujahideen. The Soviet authorities have tried to stop these contacts but with little success. An attempt has been made to transfer all Afghan students to Moscow and Leningrad but has met with strong opposition from the Uzbek Premier, Rashidov, who insists that Tashkent is the natural place to train Afghans.

He also proposed the reopening of the Afghan consulate in Tashkent which existed under King Aminullah but was later closed in 1938 by Stalin. These moves show an interesting feature in the balance of power in Tashkent. That Rashidov should feel confident enough to insist on the privilege of training fellow Muslims testifies to the growth of the political strength of this strategic borderland region.

Since the invasion the Kabul government has continually reassured the public that freedom of religion is allowed and even guaranteed that no mosques will be closed. Anti-religious declarations are restricted to internal communist meetings. Nevertheless, Karmal has followed the Soviet line on Islam - he differentiates between “good” and “bad” Muslims. Afghanistan should try to follow the example of Libya, South Yemen and Syria (see appendix for extracts from Karmal’s speech to the Party Congress in April 1982), while the Mujahideen’s brand of Islam is considered to be a reactionary movement of bandits subsidized by the CIA and China. The government created the Council of Islamic Affairs in 1981 but found only a few unknown mullahs to be members. The president is Said Afghani, a former student of the prestigious Al-Azhar University in Cairo, who is considered to be of mediocre abilities. This organisation has done very little since its creation and is used mainly for contact with Soviet Islamic organizations. Mufti Ziauddin Babakhanov was invited to Afghanistan and Afghan mullahs visit Tashkent and Bukhara regularly. The Council of Islamic Affairs is also in charge of Haj affairs. The Saudi government gives Haj visas to Afghans but does not recognise the official missions sent by Karmal to Jeddah and Mekke. In September 1981 the Soviet government asked the PLO to assist the official Afghan Haj mission in Saudi Arabia but seeing Saudi displeasure at this proposal the PLO declined. The Kabul Government knows that many hajis choose not to return, but because it needs to show readiness in assisting religious rituals it cannot prevent people going to Haj. (In October 1982 one third of the hajis refused to return to Afghanistan. Officials of the Council of Islamic Affairs were among those refugees who sought asylum in Saudi Arabia and later in Pakistan.)

All the efforts of the Kabul government to make themselves appear as protectors of Islam have gone in vain. The Afghan population knows that Karmal and his associates, from both Khalq and Parcham tendencies, have been campaigning against Islam for years. Although the leaders, Taraki and Amin for example, have followed the tradition of the Afghan kings by participating in the prayers of the Ids (Id-e Ramadhān and Id-e Qorban) they have been considered hypocrites and renegades even by their own families. Karmal is considered no better as he continues in the same tradition. His gestures are considered counter-productive at best, as it is considered a blasphemy if an “unclean” person enters a mosque and pretends to pray. The government’s present efforts to find some kind of compromise with Islam come too late as most of the religious activists who have survived the persecutions of the Taraki–Amin period are now redoubling their efforts from Pakistan or from the ranks of the resistance.

CONCLUSIONS

What does the Soviet Union plan to do with Afghanistan? According to Afghan intellectuals implementation of any of the possible solutions - annexation, Mongolization or Finlandization - is becoming increasingly difficult.
annex Afghanistan and turn it into the 16th republic of the USSR was considered unwise by the Soviet leadership. The addition of 15 million Muslims to the fast growing 45 million strong Soviet Muslim population made this solution an unlikely choice in the early stages. This option has become purely academic since it is clear that the Soviet Union could not control the country militarily.

Some Afghans think that Mongolization was Moscow's original choice. But there are two major differences between Mongolia and Afghanistan: religion did not play such an important role in Mongolia and secondly, the Soviets were seen as a genuine protection against China, whereas Pakistan has never posed a threat to Afghanistan. Also the Soviet Union is militarily unable to seal the border with Pakistan and Iran.

Finlandization might allow Afghanistan's status to revert to what it was under King Zaher Shah - that of a friendly unaligned country with no Western military bases. But the volume of anti-Soviet feeling in the country makes an "honourable" settlement unlikely. In Kabul the BBC, Voice of America, Deutsche Welle and radios Iran and Pakistan can be heard. The Afghan people have been able to make their own assessments of what is happening in their country. For Afghan intellectuals and the population as a whole, everything that has happened since July 1973 - the atrocities and the invasion - is due to the Soviets. They alone are deemed responsible for the destruction of the country.

Since Andropov has succeeded Brezhnev, there have been no basic changes in the Soviet attitude. Any change would require that the Soviet Union recognize that the April 1978 coup d'etat was not a revolution and that Karmal is no more an Afghan leader than Taraki and Amin were; admit that the Afghans have the right to have a non-communist regime; and finally admit that the resistance is not a tool in the hands of Pakistan but a genuine Afghan movement. The Soviet Union really has no other solution but to talk with those who are fighting.

This article does not represent a complete spectrum of Afghan refugee opinion. The interviewees represent the moderate, nationalist and religious intellectual elements. The more radical religious followers of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and the left-wing anti-Soviet communists of Sho'le-ye Javid, Sama etc. are not represented here, neither are the guerrilla leaders. The people interviewed were high-ranking diplomats and former government officials who emigrated recently.

APPENDIX

Extracts from a report of the Central Committee, presented by Babrak Karmal at the General Conference of the DPPA. The full text appeared in the Kabul newspapers on 21st April 1982.

... Thanks to the glorious Saur Revolution, our beloved, ancient and proud fatherland follows the great path of democratic development. ... Since then, the prevailing influence of the great feudal landlords and money lenders has been abolished. Agrarian reforms have been passed in favour of the farmers and the nomads. The state sector is developing industry and transport. The Party and the Government continue to promote an atmosphere of legality and respect for the rights and liberties of the citizens. The basis necessary for a free practice, without obstacles, of religious rites by the believers (mo 'menan), exists. . . .

The revolutionary departure in Afghanistan, from an out dated situation, towards general progress, has provoked the savage anger and resistance of the imperialists and the reactionaries. They have mounted a massive intervention in our internal affairs and induced terror, killings and war among brothers. This is why the social and economic evolution is less rapid than expected and there are serious difficulties in the field of industry, agriculture, transport, energy . . .

Our duties are as follows: to suppress the survivals from feudal and pre-feudal times, to limit large land estates, to distribute land to those farmers with little or no land, to improve the national economy and the standard of living, to sponsor the cultural development of the nationalities, peoples and tribes of Afghanistan and to democratize deeply and continuously our social and political life.

At the same time, our Revolution has a national character. The national particularities reflect the deep religious feelings and the spiritual values (ma'asai) of the people living in our united country - Afghanistan. We respect these traditions and values and simply preserve and promote everything created by the past generations when these creations are good (khiub) and progressive (motaraqqil).

Our Revolution has inherited the long struggle of the patriots of Afghanistan for a better and happier future. These struggles had intensified because of the radical changes which had taken place almost 65 years ago thanks to the success (ba barakat-e) of the great October Revolution and the changes that it brought about in the balance of power in the world in favour of peace and progress in all fields. . . . The problems facing Afghanistan are greater than in other countries. As well as economic, social and cultural difficulties, national, religious and tribal problems must also be solved. This demands a moderate and flexible approach on the part of the Party and the Revolutionary Government. . . .

The Revolution is going on in a country where the majority of the people are adepts of the sacred (moqaddas) Islamic religion. The reaction inside and outside the country has always made, and continues to make, efforts to fire hatred towards the Revolution and the Democratic Peoples Party of Afghanistan among Muslims who are attached to the religion (motadaayyen). Therefore the Revolution must be made to be understood (ta'lim) by those Muslims attached to religion. . . .
The other particularity of our Revolution is that it is going on in a country which has a complex (moghlaq) national and tribal structure (tarkib). A just national solution must therefore be found to this complicated problem that we have inherited from the past.

Our problems cannot be resolved at once... they can only be resolved step by step... The enemies of our country and our Revolution try to twist the nature of our policy towards Islam and the Muslims... They resort to lying. Does Islam reject progress? Is Islam against justice? Does Islam condemn that one should spill the blood of Muslims? Our Revolution reflects (monukes)... the revendications of the Muslim masses of Afghanistan for the establishment of social justice and real equality. This tendency (tamăyol) is one of the great values (azpesh) and one of the most important traditions (sonan) of the sacred religion of Islam.

The experience of Islamic countries such as... Algeria, Libya and the Democratic Peoples’ Republic of Yemen and finally our own experience, shows that revolutionary developments are not in contradiction with the social tenets of Islam and its historical appeal (da'wat) to justice, equality and opposition to exploitation (estetmâr) of man by man. On the contrary Islam provides the right background for the establishment of these principles (ahkâm) according to the historical wishes of the vast Muslim populations for a better understanding (dark) and a just use (estefâda) of Islam.

Our Party will not compromise (szâesh) with the efforts of the enemies of our Peoples’ Revolution who want to use the sacred religion of Islam to divert Afghanistan from the path (raḥ) that it has chosen. In practical terms, we are going to prove that social progress is not in contradiction with Islam, but that it is, on the contrary, the criminal activity of those elements who do not want, or cannot understand (dark) Islam, which is opposed to Islam... It is necessary to have a united front for the defence of the Revolution and of the people, composed of the army, police, of the groups of the “defenders of the Revolution”, of the tribal militias, the local resistance contingents (qeta‘ât) etc. We must be more firm and audacious when forming or strengthening the groups of patriots who could be active in each province and district... so that the earth should turn into fire (zamin ba atâsh mobaddal garbar) under the feet of the bandits, the employees (mozdur) and the allies of international reaction and of all those who disrupt the peaceful and tranquil life of our beloved Fatherland!

NOTES

2. Muslim intellectuals were the first to notice these communist trends because some young communist activists in the Kabul lycée were outspoken in their anti-religious views and used to ask embarrassing questions about religion to their teachers. The Muslim intellectuals then alerted the Sunni clergy.

3. Since 1947 Afghan leftists have used the vocabulary of the Iranian Tudeh Party. The word dorud (“greetings”) has been desacralised in Iran but not in Afghanistan where it means “praise”.

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4. Khalq officers insisted in January 1980 on hanging Taraki’s portrait in the military headquarters even after the leadership of the army was given to a Parcham, General Gul Agha, a Tajik from Kabul. Reports say that Khalq officers have obtained the removal of General Gul Agha in the summer 1982 and that the Soviets have agreed to it.

5. It is worthwhile here to give a brief biography of two men who were to play an important role in the coup of April 1978: Abdul Qâder, a Sunni, Persian speaker from Herat province, accepted in the Military Academy on the basis of the quota from Herat. He went to study in Moscow where he already expressed his leftist ideas. He was recruited by the KGB (whose primary objective in recruiting people is not always, incidentally, to make good communists out of them). Because of his academic success in the Soviet Union, and because as a Persian speaker he was more sophisticated in his grasp of politics and administration than his Pashtun colleagues, he was proposed for the post of Chief of the Air Force in 1976. There was some resistance at the time to his nomination from conservative elements within the army.

Mohammad-Aslam Watan-jâr, a Pashtun of the Andar branch of the Ghilzai tribe, from Zormat in Paktiya province. Watan-jâr finished the Military Academy of Bâlâ-Hissâr but did not go to the Soviet Union to further his military education. He was appointed Chief of Staff of Kabul Regime No 4 (tank) in 1975. General Ghulam Haidar Rassuli, a MohammadZai Pashtun - the Minister of Defence under Daoud - considered him as a son and gave him free access to his house.

6. The regular police under the king had become active thanks to West German technical assistance with a number of officers trained in West Germany.

7. The main religious authority in Afghanistan belongs to religious families, as a rule descending from the Prophet or the first Caliphs and whose heads are also often the heads of Sufi brotherhoods such as the Naqshbandiya and the Qadriya. The Soviets ignored the importance of these families and never tried to co-opt them as they did in the Caucasus and Central Asia in the 1920’s. They allowed (or maybe advised) Taraki and Amin to destroy them later on. Ordinary mullahs have no nationwide authority in Afghanistan.

8. Pul-e Charkhi jail was still under construction.

9. Daoud’s official visit to Iran where he met the Shahanshah was considered by Afghans to mark an important stage. On his return he expressed his opposition to “imported” ideologies.

10. That the order for Khalq and Parcham to reunite was given by Moscow was confirmed in private conversations by Parcham leaders jailed by Amin in 1979, who confided in non-communist fellow prisoners known to the author.

11. It is not known to this date who was responsible for his murder.

12. Afghans also consider the fact that the Soviets ordered Khalq and Parcham to reunite in 1977 to be a proof of their involvement, if not initiative, in the preparation of the coup.


14. In the last days of his rule Amin organized a congress of Muslim clergy in the hope of obtaining a confirmation of his dictatorship.

15. The Soviets had several options in Afghanistan: they could have chosen to co-opt the Pashtuns as well as the non-Pashtuns; they chose the Pashtuns. They had the option of choosing between the communists and non-communists who were also ready to cooperate. Among the communists they chose Khalq - at Parcham. The only factor which can explain why the Soviets decided
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secret negotiations between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan in 1970 to free them.

31. The communist government has never been powerful enough to forbid religious teaching in government schools.

32. Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan are equally despised. They are often drunk or drugged, and appear to the Afghans like something from outer space. Their impunity in collecting Japanese watches, transistor radios, etc. and admiration for Western gadgets, suggest to the Afghans that the Soviet Union is a backward country.

33. Afghan students in the USSR often pretend to be Syrians or Indians to avoid insults from Russians such as: “You cowards, why can’t you defend yourselves against the imperialists?”, “Why should our young boys die to defend you?”

34. Fights between communist and non-communist students were also reported in Dushanbe in the summer of 1982. Some were apparently killed.

35. According to Afghan students, this also provides some protection for KHAD students against being knifed by their compatriots.

36. The “contamination” of Central Asian students does not only happen through contacts with Afghan students in Tashkent or Dushanbe. It also happens when Central Asians go to study in Moscow where they meet many students from Muslim countries who are not communists and whose influence is just as important as that of the Afghans. Thus “contamination” by ideas and ideologies from the Middle East can also filter to Central Asia through Moscow.

37. Said Afghani’s deputy Tawakkoli is a Shia Hazara.

38. An intense effort is being made by the Soviets to attract the mullahs. Hundreds of them were constantly touring Central Asia in 1980-1981. They are usually from modest rural backgrounds and of low intellectual ability. When travelling to Central Asia they bring in large numbers of Qorans which are printed specially in Pakistan by “Tadj Publishing House”. Their price is about U.S. $2 in Kabul but reaches 200 rubles in Central Asia. In October 1980, the Turkmen government offered to buy all the stock of Qorans from the Afghan mullahs visiting Ashkhabad at black market price. On their return to Afghanistan, the mullahs stated they had the impression that Turkmen officials had the intention of “re-using” the Qorans rather than destroying them.

39. Munafiq – hypocrisy is a major sin by Muslim standards.

40. Among the many psychological errors made by the Soviets, we can mention the use of the expression “Elder Brother” (baradar-e qalan). The expression “Muslims are brothers” appears in the Quran and the Hadith. For Afghans baradar-e qalan (in Persian) or asha bey (in Turkish) has a religious connotation. The elder brother is the guardian of the family honour and of the sacred. The expression therefore, cannot apply to a Russian kafir. It would be an insult to Islam. The expression “Our Soviet Brothers” (baradar-e Shuraviye-ma) began to be used under Karmal. In 1980 a mullah criticized the governor of Kunduz for using this expression, saying: “the Muslims are our brothers”. In government circles the expression has now been replaced by “Our Soviet Friends” (dustan-e Shuraviye-ma).

41. In the summer 1982 in Dushanbe, a Tajik speaking to Afghan students referred to Afghanistan as the 16th republic of the Soviet Union. He was found stabbed to death the next day.

42. Further information based on Afghan witness accounts can be found in: Afghanistan en Lutte, Documents et Sentence, Ire Session du Tribunal
Abdul Kayum Al-Nasyri: A Tatar Reformer of the 19th Century

CHANTAL LEMERCIER—QUELQUEJAY

(This article marks the beginning of a series devoted to important Muslim modernist thinkers of the Russian Empire, or jadids. We intend to present articles about other jadids in subsequent issues. - Editor)

The present article is a modified and enlarged version of the one published in French, several years ago, in the Cahiers du Monde Russe et Soviétique, Vol. IV, 1-2, pp. 117-142, under the title: "Un reformateur tatar au XIXe siècle -Abdul Qajum al-Nasyri". Since then, several Soviet books and articles have been devoted to the Tatar jadid movement, in particular the excellent book of Yahya Gabdullovitch Abdullin, Tatarskaja Prosvetitel'naia Mysl' (Kazan, 1976; 320 pages, 3000 copies) of which we made use to bring our analysis up to date; also a less scholarly work by Z.A. Ishmuhametov, Sotsial'naja Rol' Evolutsiia Islama v Tatarii (Kazan, 1979) - (Author).

By the middle of the 19th century, Kazan, the former rival of Moscow, had definitely lost its Tatar flavour and become a large Russian city, proud of its university, founded in 1805, and of its brilliant intellectual life, which had reached an astonishing level of development for a provincial town. The population of Kazan was for the most part Russian, whilst Muslims lived mainly in the outlying districts and in the suburbs, where their presence nevertheless gave a slightly “oriental” character to the city as a whole.

These two communities had lived side by side for centuries without mingling or even becoming acquainted with each other. As far as Russians were concerned, a “Tatar” was a being that belonged to a strange and little known species, often ridiculed and given various more or less insulting nicknames: poganyi (impure, unclean), basurmanin (disparaging reference to Islam), khalatnik (“long-clothes”). At best, he was viewed with a mixture of condescending pity and curiosity. On the other hand, that Tatars, whose Weltanschauung was dominated by the opposition between the Dar ul-Islam, their own world, and the Dar ul-Harb (the World of War), the arena of an endless