BOOKS:

Afghanistan: Mullah, Marx, and the Mujahid,
by Ralph H. Magnus and Eden Naby

Review by M. Hassan Kakar


I imagine that Afghan readers concerned with the history of modern Afghanistan are familiar not only with the writings of the authors of this book, but also with the authors themselves. Both have travelled to Afghanistan, not only when it was a haven for tourists, but also during the troubled times of the last two decades. They have, actually, coauthored the book because they had been "...convinced not only of the injustice of the [Soviet] war, but also of the amazing perseverance of the Afghan Mujahidin." (p. xiii) Both supported the Afghan resistance, and Dr. Magnus testified to this effect before the U.S. Senate when it held hearings after the Soviets had invaded Afghanistan in 1979. Among American authors Eden Naby is conspicuous for her fluency in the Afghan Dari language, and Dr. Magnus is known for the intimate knowledge of the Afghans that he has acquired from studying their history and politics, and from his many personal interviews with Afghans of note in Afghanistan as well as abroad. Their present book is not only a productive example of integrated scholarly efforts, but also a kind of abstract of their writings, and the views and insights that they have articulated about Afghans, their society, their history, and in particular about their current affairs. Hence the significance of the book.

With an Introduction, the book has been organized into seven chapters: Afghan History to 1973, Geopolitics Then and Now, Traditional Afghan Islam, Marx Among the Afghans, Holy Warriors, Mujahidin, and Fighting for Islam, and Beyond War: Afghanistan in Post-Cold War Central Asia. The main features of their work thus are that it is a study of contemporary Afghan politics, not in isolation, but in the context of their neighbors, especially the Central Asians, and that it is a study devoted to the activities of the mullahs motivated by the religion of Islam, of the Afghan communists activated by Marxism and Leninism, and of the anti-Soviet fighters activated by religious and other impulses.

The first comment that can be made about the book is that even though its subject is "the dynamism of the resistance" (p.145) it is devoted mainly to the impulses of religion and ethnicity in explaining events (pp.141-148) almost to the exclusion of the impulses of nationalism. Specifically, it is not a study of the activities of a people devoted to their fatherland, its independence, and their desire to have rulers of their own, nor is it about their concern for their traditional individual freedom, or what is sometimes called their rugged individualism. Indeed, the title itself precludes a study of this dynamic aspect. This omission is due probably to the strange view that Afghanistan is "... a country... not yet a nation." (p.99) The authors should have based this statement on evidence. They should also have defined what a nation is, and why the Afghans -- who in overwhelming numbers opposed the Soviet invaders and their puppet regime, organized themselves in predominantly ethnically mixed, nationwide Islamic organizations, and most determinedly fought the aggressors throughout the length and breadth of their fatherland -- are still not a nation. If the Afghans were not a nation then why the use of such phrases as "... national sensibilities"? (p.92) True, not much literature is available on this subject as virtually all sources are descriptions of the activities of the fighting Afghans as "mujahidin " in the misleading sense of "religious warriors," or "holy warriors," but even from the available sources, especially my book Afghani stan (1995), enough can be gleaned to show that the mujahidin were likewise motivated in their activities by the forceful impulse of nationalism.

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The most important feature of the book is its style -- interpretive, analytical and expository. This type of approach, of course, requires years of work on the subject, abundant source materials to base statements on, and breadth and depth of knowledge to call upon. Unlike a narrative account, which is a story of what happened, the analytical style requires the authors to take positions. The temptation then to fall into subjectivism is strong, and it is to the credit of the authors that they have come out of this delicate task standing tall. However, it would be unrealistic to expect consensus on all the positions taken in the analysis, particularly on the following: "...the extreme Pushhtun nationalists of the Afghan Millat" (p. 125), "...the historical animosity between Pushhtuns and non-Pushhtuns" (p.141), the rivalry between the forces of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Ahmad Shah Mas'ud as a "...naked ethnic war." (p.164) Again, for today's skeptical readers the authors should have backed up such statements with evidence. Some of the predictions in the book may also not impress historians, especially when some of them are contradictory. (pp.166 -167).

For an analysis to be sound it must be based on solid data. In the main this work is, but not in its entirety, and the following corrections are offered: The name Afghanistan was in use before the eighteenth century, and does not date from the eighteenth century (p.11); Amir Dost Mohammad Khan adopted the title of amir in 1834, not after 1837 (p.33); Amir Sher 'Ali Khan's second reign began in 1868, not 1869 (p.34); the British did not replace Amir Sher 'Ali Khan with his son, Mohammad Ya'qub Khan, in 1879 (p.35); when the British invited Sardar Abd al-Rahman Khan he was in Khanabad in Afghani-

stan, not in Samarqand(p 35); Amir 'Abd al-Rahman Khan did not himself write his propaganda pamphlets (p.38); it was the assassination of Abharuddin Bawhis, not of Tahir Badakhshi, that led to the assassination of U.S. Ambassador Adolph Dubs in February 1979 (p.87); Babrak Karmal was neither a leader nor a member of the Kabul University Student Union in 1950; he was also not imprisoned in 1956 (p.102); by 1973 the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) was not a partner in government (p.105); Ghulam Dastagir Panjšeri was neither a brother nor a nephew of Dr. Abd al Rahman Mahmudi (p.109); Premier Mohammad Daud had not imprisoned Babrak Karmal (p.109); Nur Mohammad Taraki was not an employee of the U.S. Information Service as a translator (p.110); colonels and generals in the army were not all Pashtuns in origin (p.112); Premier Nur Ahmad Etemadi had not attempted to organize "a government" party (p.114); the Taliban occupied Herat in 1995, not 1996 (p.153); Mulla Mohammad 'Omar is a Hotak Ghilzay Pashtun, not either a Popalzay or Noorzay Durrant Pashtun (p.181); the Taliban occupied Ghazni in 1995, not 1994 (p.182); Mas'ud and Abd al-Rashid Dostum made an alliance in Khjinjan, not Khaletin (p.187); Dr. Mohammad Yusuf was not a Tajik (p.202); Premier Musa Shafiq ruled from 1972 to 1973, not 1972-1983 (p.203); Hafizullah Amin was not a founding member of the PDPA (p.203); Babrak Karmal was not a Pashtun (p.203); Najibullah (Najib Allah) was not Mohammad Najibullah (p.203); Burhanuddin Rabbani sat in Kabul from 1992 to 1996, not to 1995 (p.204); and Tahir Badakhshi was not Dr. Badakhshi (p.125).

The Tatars of Crimea. Return to the Homeland, Edward Allworth ed.

Review by Brian Glyn Williams


Ten years ago, Edward Allworth released his _Tatars of the Crimea_ which was, at the time, the most complete and up to date collection of es-
says dealing with the Crimean Tatar national movement. This early volume quickly became an invaluable resource for those focusing on such issues as the Crimean Tatars' unprecedented struggle for homeland and their efforts to sustain