This is a short update of the situation in Afghanistan based on impressions and information gathered during a visit to Peshawar in March 1983. It does not set out to give an exhaustive picture of the war, to which end it is essential to report directly from Afghanistan, but only to supplement the excellent articles of Olivier Roy, Edward Girardet and John Fullerton.

**THE SOVIETS**

The last eight to twelve months have witnessed a change in Soviet military tactics and an increased effort to subvert and infiltrate both the mujahidin ranks, the civilian population, and through Afghan infiltrators, to destabilize Pakistan.

**MILITARY TACTICS AND POLICY**

The Soviets have increased their use of helicopter gunships and reliance on the air force generally. Most commandos and armaments, including tanks, are now airlifted as the risks of hit and run attacks on large convoys are too great.

In trying to destroy the popular support base of the mujahidin the Soviets have increasingly resorted to heavy bombings of villages with simultaneous artillery fire in order to stop the population escaping. Deliberate attempts at wholesale destruction are obvious — sometimes one shot from a village will provoke reprisals. Reports of such raids are particularly numerous from Logar, Kunduz, Wardak, Paktia, Laghman, Kandahar and Baghlan areas, which does not mean that similar tactics are not applied in the Western Herat region or Hazarajat, but refugees from these areas tend to go to Iran. These attacks are followed by a systematic policy of scorched earth and terror: destruction of fields, burning crops, destroying irrigation systems (in Kunduz cotton cannot be cultivated properly anymore because the
means of irrigation have been destroyed), removed means of water so that villages cannot be rebuilt and generalized plunder. Talking to a small group of recently-arrived refugees from Kunduz area, I was told that the following places have now been partly destroyed: Khanabad, Chahar Dara, Borteh, Hazrat-e Sultan, Gurtepa. These people were particularly upset that their wounded, moved away during the attacks, were later bombed by helicopter. Cases of people being burned and buried alive, briefly reported in the British press a few months ago, were confirmed by people claiming to be eye witnesses.

Large movements of troops have taken place recently: 10,000-12,000 Soviet troops have been shifted to Paktia, where only the Kabul Government's army was stationed until now, another 8,000-10,000 Soviet troops have moved to Ningrah and 16,000 to Kandahar — all areas bordering Pakistan. These moves could indicate that the Soviets will try to close the border with Pakistan — a precondition to success in their war in Afghanistan but a Herculean task which is doomed to fail. Remnants of the Afghan army have been withdrawn from all areas to the North of Kabul and replaced by Soviet troops. The Soviets have meanwhile brought long-range missiles and other sophisticated equipment to their bases in Wakhan (overlooking China and the Subcontinent), to Kandahar (overlooking Pakistan) and to Shindand, Herat area (overlooking Iran). Abdul Rahman Pazhwak (formerly Afghan ambassador to the U.N.) says that this type of missile could be of no possible use in fighting the mujahidin. Afghans have no access whatsoever to the Soviet base in Wakhan, not even Karmal. Soviet troops have been withdrawn from the northern border areas of Mazar-e Sharif and the North West. These areas are now bombed by aircraft based inside the Soviet Union. Soviet troops are now operating directly from the Soviet Union using the Sher Khan Bandar bridge and the new highway crossing from Turkmenistan. Thus any estimate of the number of Soviet troops (100,000-130,000) based in Afghanistan has little relevance to the total actually deployed against the resistance. The south and southeastern regions remain covered by air force and troops based in Afghanistan.

Using squadrons based in Afghanistan or the USSR, the Soviets are in a position to attack any area of the country. Although the Soviet ground forces have tried to dig in, they have been unable to do so without leaving their rear exposed. They have been unable, therefore, to follow the strategy used by Frunze during the Basmachi war in the 1920s in Central Asia whereby he conquered, occupied, then politically organized the territory. It is impossible to subjugate a country such as Afghanistan with air power and artillery alone — infantry (which the Soviets dare not utilize) is also essential. When comparing the population of Afghanistan with that of Central Asia during the Basmachi war, one should take into account the remarkable political maturity which the Afghans have gained in the last twenty years. The Afghan anti-communists are well informed, they listen to radio Pakistan and Iran, to the BBC, Voice of America and Deutsche Welle, whereas the anti-Bolshevik Basmachi had practically no notion of the outside world. The same sophistication can be observed in the mujahidin's knowledge of modern weaponry, transmitted in most cases by defectors from the Afghan army. As guerrilla fighters, they are perfectly adapted to the conditions of the century.

SOVIET ARMY DISCIPLINE

The lack of fighting spirit and discipline of the Soviet troops have been reported often enough. Cases of Soviet troops firing indiscriminately on their own convoys after one shot from a mujahid are frequently encountered; plunder and stealing is generalized. Not only troops but also Soviet officers plunder. An Afghan officer reported that he defected, utterly disgusted, when a Russian officer saw a Russian officer plundering a house. When he remonstrated with him for letting the officer corps down, the Russian replied: "but we need these things".

Smoking of hashish is also increasing, thereby making discipline more difficult to enforce. To illustrate this one can mention the following incident: in the football field of the Kabul Military Club children were playing watched over by Soviet soldiers — two soldiers, drunk or drugged, were laughing excitedly when one fired four shots at random killing a boy instantly. The soldiers went on laughing... The Afghan officer reporting this case defected after witnessing the incident. Such incidents blunt any impact that Soviet propaganda may hope to achieve.

ETHNIC COMPOSITION

The few Soviet Central Asian officers in the original invasion force have proved unreliable and been almost entirely removed. The number of Muslim soldiers has also diminished but some remain. Soviet Tajiks are still used as interpreters in Dari-speaking areas of Afghanistan. However, they do not always serve the best interests of the Soviet army according to Afghans who have worked with them as they sometimes add their own advice in mid-sentence when interpreting for their officers, such as "don't believe them — resist!". East German troops were brought in two years ago and Cubans
approximately eight months ago but they do not appear to have had much impact.

CASUALTIES

Soviet casualties are difficult to estimate with figures varying from 15,000 dead and wounded to 25,000 killed. This last figure seems high and more conservative estimates place the dead at 18,000. An Afghan officer from the Ministry of Defence reported last July that the Soviets calculated that Massoud's mujahidin killed nearly 3,000 troops during the Panjshir offensive last spring. Whenever mujahidin have engaged Soviet troops in pitched battles, the latter have suffered greater casualties (Afghan mujahidin are fitter and quicker at taking protective action). Paradoxically, some mujahidin groups would welcome a greater involvement of Soviet infantry as they are confident that they would inflict proportionately greater losses on their enemies. (The Soviets employ Afghan troops as cannon fodder.) One unofficial political group in Peshawar (Afghan Millat) claims that between 300 and 400 armoured vehicles are destroyed every month.4

Defections continue to plague the Afghan army. To avoid forced conscription young people escape to Pakistan, Iran or the freer areas. Defections to the mujahidin from the Soviet army also occur. Few people are prepared to become members of the PDPA (Afghan Communist Party) — there are now no more than 10,000 members of Khalq and Parcham.

SUBVERSION AND INFILTRATION

The most active department of the Kabul administration is the political police KHAD which is run by the KGB. A constant effort is aimed at infiltrating mujahidin groups. In some cases the Soviets and KHAD have managed to plant communists among the mujahidin commanders to provoke animosity and infighting or to arrange spectacular defections to the government. In tribal or mixed ethnic areas the Soviets try to “buy” local chiefs. Following a well used policy during the Basmachi war in the 1920's (when they gained the support of Badra oglu and Karak tribes against the Ihsan Hoja) they generally choose the weaker tribe. Intelligence work is carried out by KHAD whose members, trained exclusively by Soviet KGB instructors, infiltrate the villages. In areas more difficult to infiltrate spying is often carried out by children and elderly women.

In Turkmen and Uzbek areas in the north of Afghanistan, the Soviets have brought over Turkmen and Uzbek families to help promote Central Asia as the land of plenty and riches, a happy state which awaits Afghans after the tentative to accept the Soviet way of life. Soviet Turkmen and Uzbek families used to spread the word are often chosen from among those who have kinsmen or family ties with Uzbek and Turkmen in Afghanistan. (Such ploys are risky and point to Soviet desperation: infiltration can work both ways and there is no doubt that mujahidin propaganda too has proved attractive.)

However, not all echelons of the Soviet military occupation machine have been able to adapt to this kind of psychological action and it seems that the Soviets have been notably unsuccessful at winning the Afghan population over, due to their indiscriminate brutality and self-defeating inflexibility and ignorance of local conditions. The following example serves to illustrate: many clans of the Shinwari tribe of Nangahar Province were loyal to the Taraki government and transferred this allegiance to Babrak Karmal, but in March 1983, during manoeuvres in Nangahar, Soviet soldiers assaulted and killed some of their women and children. A Shinwari delegation subsequently arrived in Peshawar requesting help and weapons as many Shinwaris have now taken arms against the Soviets. Similar cases are reported continuously, in particular from Paktia Province.

Communist infiltration is not limited only to Afghanistan. Efforts have also been directed at Afghan refugee camps within Pakistan and Pakistani sources estimate that one in 100 Afghan refugees are KHAD agents. Some Afghans consider this figure too high but nevertheless admit that it is not too far off the mark. However, new Pakistani legislation requires that each chief of tribe or village must vouch personally for his people before they are issued with I. D. cards which has helped unmask many spies and has gone some way to arrest efforts at infiltration. Afghan communist agents working in Pakistan are thought to be found mainly among rich refugees, most of whom have moved from the camps and bought land in other provinces of Pakistan (further legislation has now been introduced to prevent Afghan refugees from buying land). This situation is seen as a real threat by many Pakistanis, given the strong Soviet lobby which already exists in Pakistan.

The exploitation of Afghan natural resources, such as natural gas, for the benefit of the Soviet Union is beyond the scope of this paper. I would only mention that last year the Soviets bought corn through nomad traders at inflated prices for export to the USSR but these traders were promptly executed by the mujahidin and the trade has now stopped.
THE MUJAHIDIN

I will not attempt to give a description of the Afghan political parties of Peshawar, only to say that the mujahidin commanders on the spot decide everything, including allegiance to the political parties of Peshawar and political alliances inside Afghanistan. The latter do not always follow the pattern of alliances in Peshawar (for instance, the alliance inside Afghanistan of the “fundamentalist” Jamiat-e Islami and the “moderate” Harakat-e Engelab belonging to Islamic Unity of Afghanistan Mujahidin).

Cooperation between resistance groups from different parties is usually close in the case of major attacks (as during the Panjshir offensive in Spring 1982). Communication between the resistance groups is, nevertheless, difficult because of the terrain and lack of modern means of communication.

Tactics are mostly hit and run (at which the mujahidin are past masters) against Soviet convoys and military bases. The mujahidin are constantly on the offensive, winter and summer, and allow the Soviets no respite or a chance to develop their strategy. Logistics are provided by the women who transport and provide food and by the elderly who give refuge to mujahidin units on the move. Most mujahidin groups are now sufficiently well organized (some more than others) to keep fighters and messengers permanently on the alert, and to warn other resistance groups in case of attack. Some resistance groups even have full-time planners — a far cry from the random tactics of the Basmachis rebels in Central Asia.

The latest development in mujahidin tactics is the intensification of urban guerilla warfare which most groups now realize is an essential aspect of the war. Hardly a night passes without attacks on Khalq and Parcham as well as Soviet officials, most of which are launched from villages surrounding Kabul (Paghman, etc.). The Soviets response has been to empty these villages and expel the population (600 families from Deh Sabz village near Kabul have now arrived in Peshawar). Anti-Soviet left-wing groups such as SAMA and the former Shole-ye Javid (Marxist–Maoist) are said to be still efficient in urban guerilla warfare, although they have no influence whatever in the countryside where no brand of Marxism (even anti-Soviet) is tolerated.

Mujahidin intelligence is very effective — some groups claim it is their main weapon. Resistance fighters are usually warned three days in advance of any Soviet attack, usually through Afghan army informants. The Soviets are becoming increasingly suspicious of their Afghan comrades and try not to inform them of their movements. The mujahidin also get help and information directly from Soviet troops, mainly Soviet Muslims but also from other nationalities.

Many sources confirm that mujahidin groups cross the border into Soviet Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. On 7 December 1982, the Commander of the KGB Border Military Units of the Central Asian Military District, Major-General Zgerskii, called for an enhanced vigilance among borderguard units to stop the spread of terrorist and subversive material inside USSR (Turkmenskaiia Iskra, 7, 12, 1982). For example: in 1982, mujahidin from Darwaz, on the banks of the Amu Darya, planted mines on a Soviet motorway after swimming across the river. On another occasion they shelled, from across the river, a Soviet militia warehouse. All villages of the Darwaz valley were bombed in retaliation by M.24 helicopters. Eighty percent of the weapons used by the mujahidin are captured from the Soviet and Afghan armies. Faced with an immensely powerful Soviet army and air force the mujahidin’s equipment is pathetically inadequate. What little help they get from abroad cannot possibly be considered sufficient to protect them from the full blast of Soviet attacks. Their need for sophisticated equipment (especially ground-to-air missiles) is desperate, particularly now that the Soviets are increasing their raids from the USSR itself. The resistance has no proper wireless equipment, few remote control devices and many have never laid eyes on a time bomb. Generally they lack the basic equipment that any self-respecting terrorist group would have in the West. Ingenuity, which the Afghans do not lack, is not enough. For instance some groups have learned to reduce the chances of their mines being detected by wrapping them in plastic and, when mining a road, the guerrillas forewarn Afghan bus drivers of their position thus leaving the Russian APCs following the buses to detonate the charges.

There is a large untapped capacity for fighting within the country. With adequate supplies of the right equipment most groups could raise their effectiveness several times over. Commander Qara (the “Black”, along with Ahmad Shah Massoud one of the finest commanders) in the Maimana region could raise 25,000 men if he had sufficient arms — at present he has only approximately 3,000 regular troops.

Within the next year the mujahidin will need more help with supplies of arms, food and international political recognition. Since 1982 there has been a shift of people into Kabul with the result that the situation in the city is said to be critical — if there is starvation it will be there. The majority of those displaced are from the country areas and are now not only less able to aid the mujahidin but, more seriously, cannot provide properly for themselves. Help should go.
to the country areas — the two political alliances in Peshawar can easily distribute assistance inside Afghanistan.

CONCLUSION

Before the invasion, according to Afghan intellectuals, the Soviets thought that they held three trump cards: the army, the communist parties and agrarian reform, all of which were to prove illusory; because of the numerous mutinies, the hope of turning the Afghan military into the Cubans of the East must have already faded during Taraki-Amin rule. Although at the time of the invasion Khaqan and Parcham had completely lost control of the provinces, the Soviets thought that with a little help they would be able to administer the country. In spite of their continuing efforts, they have been unable to regain control. As for the agrarian reform, the population rejected it, realizing that it would mean starvation.

The Soviet Union is now fighting a nation, not a handful of rebels as it would have us believe. The wholesale destruction of the civilian population — the very support base of the mujahidin — could, if unchecked, lead to genocide. Out of a population of 15 millions, 2 millions have been killed according to French volunteer doctors and over 3 millions are now in exile. The Soviets are experienced “nation killers” (cf. Robert Conquest); first the Kazakhs, when, during the forced sedentarization programme of the late 1920’s, they killed the nomads’ livestock and over one million Kazakhs starved to death; later, in 1944, they were more successful — the Crimean Tatars, for so long a brilliant example of Muslim civilization, no longer exist as a nation; but the North Caucasian nations, the Chechen, Ingush, Karachai and Balkars, have defeated the attempt at genocide through sheer determination and refusal to die out during their years of deportation.

A political “solution” along the lines of that adopted by Frunze and the Turk Komissiia in Central Asia in the 1920’s (when after two years of brutal rule by the Tashkent Soviet, Moscow managed to partly coopt the local population through an estate policy of reforms and liberalization) is now surely impossible. During the Basmachi war, most of the Muslim liberal intelligentsia was fighting with the Bolsheviks, or remained neutral, and nearly a third of Frunze’s armies were composed of Muslims. After five years of fighting Communism things have gone too far in Afghanistan — the Afghans are likely to reject any course of action sponsored by the Soviet Union and probably will go on resisting whatever happens. For this reason the current Geneva talks, which do not include representatives of the mujahidin, are an exercise in futility. Even if Pakistan and the USSR and, maybe, Iran and the West come to an agreement over Afghanistan, what possible change could these talks bring if the Afghans are determined to fight against the Soviet occupation and the Kabul regime?

The argument that the mujahidin cannot be given any political or military help so long as their parties are not united is disingenuous. By creating two alliances they have already gone a long way towards unity; second, all parties’ aims are the same: to get the country rid of the Soviets and their system and to restore Afghanistan to the status of a free, independent, non-aligned country.

As far as Pakistan is concerned, its survival as an independent non-aligned Islamic country will ultimately be determined to a large degree by events in Afghanistan. The economic problems caused by the influx of refugees as well as the danger of communist and Soviet infiltration cannot be solved independently without taking Afghanistan into account. Whether it is confident of Western support or not, Pakistan is in a position to direct more help inside Afghanistan. It could also do a lot in promoting unity among the political parties of Peshawar. Pakistani press media could also help by not harping on the “Pashtunistan” issue — greater threats now loom over Pakistan — and by focusing attention away from the problems of the Middle East and Israel and concentrating more on Afghanistan and Soviet Central Asia. Publicizing the Soviet threat and that country’s treatment of its own “forgotten” Muslims would undoubtedly serve to remind Pakistanis of the real danger that threatens them.

Whether or not the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan to protect its southern borders from Muslim fundamentalist contamination, it is now in a more dangerous position than before December 1979. Not only has the threat of fundamentalism not receded but the situation has become aggravated by the very real possibility of a spill-over from events in Afghanistan. The struggle of the mujahidin could easily awake memories of similar heroic struggles — Shamal and Uzun Haji in the Caucasus, the Basmachis in Central Asia — and administer the proof that the Russian “elder brother” is not invincible. Every day that goes by without demonstrable Soviet success increases this danger.
NOTES

1. Until seven months after the invasion, airlifted weapons even included anti-aircraft guns — a sure sign of the thoroughness of Soviet bureaucracy.

2. In the last three years the Soviets have been nicknamed kir-e qotbi (polar bear) — a symbol of dullness and inhumanity.

3. Since this article was written, the author has spoken to representatives of Hezb-e Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar who mentioned that according to a report stolen in Kabul in Summer 1982 from a Soviet offices named Tsvetkov (who was consequently promptly dispatched back to USSR) the Soviets estimated their losses at the time at between 32,000 and 42,000. The mujahidin do not bother to release these figures because they have too often been accused of boasting and know that they will not be believed by Western media. The same source reports that Soviet casualties have been less important in Winter 1982–1983.

4. Afghan Millat, a leftist party of nationalist trend, founded at the same time as Khalq and Parcham. It has now split into two groups: Afghan Millat and Milat, which is the more revolutionary.

5. Hezb-e-Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar keeps tight control on the activity of its mujahidin groups and directs their every military move from Peshawar.

6. Usually Georgians, Armenians, but also sometimes Russians. However, it is possible that our Afghan reporters may not be able to distinguish a Russian from a Latvian or Estonian, for instance.

7. Many Afghan political figures who contributed to the development of Afghan-Soviet friendship between 1955 and 1978 are now dead or in exile. Three former prime ministers of King Zaher have been killed: Maiwandali, secretly executed in his prison cell on the morning of 20th October 1973 by, presumably, Samad Azhar — a Parchami police officer (Maiwandali was said to have committed suicide); Masum Shafiq, executed in May 1978 by the Afghan army, Commandant Khalaf, and Nur-Ahmad Etemadi, executed in September 1979 (this may have been the last common secret decision of Taraki and Amin). All those who have survived have escaped from Afghanistan and oppose the Soviet occupation of their country. Among them the leader of a government in exile (who would be acceptable to all parties) could be found, if only for a transition period.

Non-Russian Education in Daghestan:
A Bibliographical Note

SIMON CRISP

The following brief survey is intended as a supplement to Isabelle Kriendler's bibliography of Tsarist non-Russian education in Central Asia, published in Volume 1, Number 1 of this journal (July 1982). It presupposes the first section of that bibliography (entries 1–36), and attempts to cover the most important sources dealing with the education of the indigenous peoples of Daghestan. A few more specialised works concerning the Avars, the largest of these peoples, are also included.

The geographical coverage of this article is limited (one relatively small and little-known region), but sources dealing with both the Tsarist and the Soviet periods are listed in separate sections, prefaced by a list of general works on Daghestan which contain significant material on education.

The abbreviations used are the same as in Kriendler's bibliography: in addition, SSKG stands for Sbornik Sveddenii o Kazakhskikh Gortsakh (10 volumes; Tiflis, 1868–1881), and IIIaL stands for Institut Istorii, Iazyka i Literatury.

I. General Sources

