SEMINAR ON "PEACE INITIATIVES IN AFGHANISTAN"
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CAN WE PREVENT DISINTEGRATION OF OUR DREAMLAND?
AFGHANISTAN

BY

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Shouting hysterical slogans for the Mujahideen victory, a huge convoy of assorted vehicles carrying hirsute, unkempt guerillas, was cheered by residents of Kabul who turned out like locusts to greet them. The Mujahideen Council President, Prof. Sibghatullah Mujadidi, leading the convoy, mounted a major assault of joy congratulating the Mujahideen and people of Kabul for the triumph of Jehad in a voice choked with emotion.

The turnout was by all standards unprecedented. In a spectacular display of support, the Afghan crowds roared Allah-O-Akbar (God is Great), clapped and danced to the kalashnikovs' bursts, momentarily forgetting their toil, tears and blood. There was a music-like atmosphere in the air and the rhythm of tapping in their feet.

Unfortunately, hardly had the colorful trails of tracers fired in jubilation of the Mujahideen's success petered out, than shots rang out again and foreign players began to take stock of their takings. As blasts filled the horizon of Kabul, a pall of dust and gun-powder smoke blurred out the skies and Migs zoomed overhead with deadly purpose.

The collapse of the Najib regime, a legacy of the former Soviet "Evil Empire" had precipitated a chain of reactions which moved faster than either the botched-peace process initiated by the incompetent UN body, or the plan prepared by the Mujahideen Islamic Council itself under pressure of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Pitched battles engulfed the whole city of Kabul for the control of important Govt buildings and strategic positions, and the hapless Kabul residents became the victims of a fratricidal war and got the first taste of deadly combat in what should have been a moment of rejoicing, a time to cherish and an occasion of which to be proud.

After the Mujahideen took power on April 28 in Kabul, the subsequent events have been described by one of the best commanders of our freedom struggle, Commander Abdul Haq, Khaled group, whose heroism, political sagacity, war-front achievements and impartial judgments are admitted even by his rivals and western countries. The recorded cassette of his latest interview with Voice of America (VOA) in the first week of June 1992 has been preserved, so we may not be accused of committing falsehoods or omitting facts. Commander Haq's revelations are explosive and expose the nasty side of events engineered by foreign hands. We reproduce the entire interview before commenting on the role of
foreign players in the Afghan war theater:

The Text of the Interview with VOA:

Last week in an interview with Voice of America (VOA), Commander Abdul Haq, who has been appointed Chief of Police and Gendarmerie by the Jehad Council revealed that in the fighting between Iran-backed Wahdat party and pro-Saudi Itihadi Islami party, foreign hands were involved. He maintains that unless foreign interferences were stopped and basic problems solved these clashes would not end but would emerge in one form or in another.

Commander Abdul Haq of Khaled group says there are absolutely no reasons whatsoever for these factional clashes which are against the aims of the Jehad and the wishes of the Afghan people. He is of the opinion that the excuse for these clashes springs from personal ambition for power and has nothing to do with ethnic or tribal or religious factors.

He complains that the Mujahideen did not accept the UN peace plan, or any other plan advanced by America, Pakistan and others, on the grounds that they wanted Mujahideen Govt undiluted and would not give any share even to Kabul residents. Mujahideen have now set up a regime in which 60 to 70% share has been given to communists and still worse, the elements that established Mujahideen Govt have started fighting among themselves, created chaos in Kabul and resorted to looting and plundering. Then they indulged in clashes in the name of Tajiks, Uzbeks and Pashtoons and stoked the fire of Shia and Sunni animosities.

In desperation Commander Abdul Haq said, "I don't know what they want from this country. People have the right to know who did the treachery, who are responsible and who are these elements." Commander Abdul Haq adds that groups which penetrated into Kabul have taken control of Govt buildings and institutions for strengthening their political positions. Shameful enough, they indulged in looting and plundering and factional fighting. Commander Haq maintains that even leaders of some Govt organs have a share in the looting and plundering in Kabul city and have received their portion of booty.

Another potent factor contributing to unrest in Kabul, according to Commander Abdul Haq, is the attempt, open and deliberate, made by Govt organs to discredit Mujahideen Govt and show that it is incompetent. These Govt organs for their own political gains want to weaken Mujahideen regime so as to show to the people that the Mujahideen regime is incompetent and must be changed, further elaborated Commander Abdul Haq.

Commander Haq proposes that all Mujahideen forces should pull out of Kabul, tanks and APCs be placed around the outside parameters of the
city. The security forces should be given the opportunity to keep law and order and disputes must be solved through talks. He revealed that for reasons already explained, he has not yet assumed responsibility as the Chief of Police and Gendarmerie apportioned to him by the Jehad Council. It seems relevant that we reproduce the statements of the Afghan Former Monarch, Mohammad Zahir Shah and that of Mujahideen Foreign Ministry.

The Afghan former Monarch, Mohammad Zahir Shah, who lives as an exile in Rome since 1973 demanded a stop to foreign interferences in Afghanistan.

The ex-Monarch, Mohammad Zahir Shah, said that the Afghan nation was grateful for all the assistance received from Islamic and neighbouring countries during the last 13 years of Jehad struggle but would not tolerate being pushed around and would not allow anybody to interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan.

A spokesman of the Foreign Ministry in an official statement in Kabul condemned foreign interferences in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. The statement did not name any country but the interferences were loud and clear. The Mujahideen Foreign Ministry is in the hands of Moderate Groups which have been highly critical of Saudi Arabia, other Arab countries as well as Iran in backing hardline fundamentalist Mujahideen factions in Afghanistan.

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The Role of Foreign Powers:

1. The Former Soviet Union

The invasion of Afghanistan was not an aberration of Russian policy. It was a logical extension of historical Czarist Russian moves and Soviet expansionist drives towards the Indian Ocean and the oil riches of the Arab countries in the Middle East. They felt confident of a quick military victory and the seating of an obedient, effective regime in Kabul that could cope with native resistance on its own.

On the contrary, Afghanistan became — to quote Gorbachev — a "bleeding wound". On the international scene, Afghanistan fatally tarnished the self-created image of Russia as a defender of the poor nations against the rich. The image of the Red Army as invincible was destroyed and Afghanistan contributed towards the collapse of the former Soviet "Evil Empire".
After disintegration of the former Soviet Union, CIS has very little leverage to influence event in the present Afghan turmoil.

2. China

Chinese role in the Afghan Jihad struggle was effective and after withdrawal of Russian troops they have adopted on the whole pragmatic policies towards developments in Afghanistan.

3. The UN

If the UN finds itself in an unenviable situation, it has largely itself to blame. The UN peace proposals changed umpteen times by Mr. Benon Sevan, UN Sec-Gen special envoy to Afghanistan -- had the hallmark of a typically UN-botted operation. Instead of relying on majority conception, a democratically accepted principle, he veered towards consensus which is a communist strategy used during elections, voting in parliaments or on other occasions to suit authoritarian systems. Naturally the UN peace process was overtaken by events, throwing Afghanistan in the vortex of chaos.

4. India

The flawed Indian assumption that a communist regime in Afghanistan was preferable to other forms of Govt. for India's interests has now proved to be a mistake. In the 1990s the necessary amendments have to be made in India's foreign policy towards Afghanistan with imagination in order to restore the traditional friendship between the peoples of Afghanistan and India. India must work out a common approach with Pakistan to prevent disintegration of Afghanistan which would certainly lead to disintegration of Pakistan. This trend will affect events in India with adverse consequence for the country. Therefore, Indians must not be complacent and should study the collapse of Yugoslavia and now the process of disintegration of Czechoslovakia. If the Indian Govt can genuinely put across these ideas, if should be able to gradually overcome the strong reservation that the average Afghan feels towards India, thus creating a better climate for this country in Afghanistan.

5. The United States of America:

The US often-repeated policy towards Afghanistan is to support self-determination for the Afghan people as outlined in the UN General Assembly resolutions passed by overwhelming majorities each year. But in practice, America adopted a flawed policy of achieving consensus in Afghanistan and imposed this con-
ception on UN with consequences evident to all.

We are sure Americans are best experts in post-mortem analysis, but extremely poor in reaping results from their sacrifices and investments.

The excellent expose of Leon E. Poulada in connection with American failure to halt Russian penetration deserves special mention. We quote Prof. Poulada's piercing insights to make our point:

"The basic failure of American diplomacy in those crucial years was a direct result of the inadequacies of its Foreign Service, which lacked the expertise to understand and analyze correctly Afghan motivations and cultural values. It also lacked the prestige and influence needed to persuade America's political leaders of the strategic importance of Afghanistan and the grave consequences of its falling under complete Soviet domination. America's policy makers of that period were enthralled by the illusion that Turkey, Iran and Pakistan were and would continue always to be bastions against communist expansion. This, in their view, made Afghanistan a negligible factor in the security of the region. In the 90's they have suddenly discovered their error -- too late."

After the verdict of Prof. Poulada, I hope I will not be misunderstood by Americans. We Afghans are grateful to their generous assistance without which we could not have shaken off our chains of slavery nor could have the Americans overcome their arch-enemy without Afghan bravery and sacrifice. There are thousands of Afghans who would shed their blood to repay American assistance. Let us not make a mistake about that.

Now my critical remarks in this context can be well taken. In fact, the results achieved from prosecution of adopted policies have in most cases defeated the very purposes of policies as the following historic events demonstrate:

a) America entered the war against the Nazis and won the main war but signed agreements in Potsdam and Yalta to ensure the slavery of East European countries for half a century.

b) America ended the Vietnam War after signing an agreement in Paris. The ink had not yet dried when South Vietnam was overrun and the best Vietnamese friends of America spent decades in prison and only last month the last friend found his freedom.

c) America goaded persistently Shah of Iran for violations of
human rights to an extent that he was overthrown. The monstrosity of human rights violations in Iran by the Khomeini regime are one-chilling.

d) The Desert Storm Operation was a stunning success of American War Technology executed with unbelievable precision, but the Monster they left untouched is still tormenting the people of Iraq.

We do not want America to do the same thing to the brave Afghan nation. How can the Americans justify their policy of fuelling the deadly fighting during 13 years in which more than one and half million Afghans lost their lives, not to mention other devastating costs, and then abandon us to a cruel fate. As long as the Soviets were rivals on the scene, the Americans were ready to fight to the last Afghan. Once the purpose of defeating the Soviets at the cost of Afghan lives was attained, the Cold War warriors returned to the safety and comfort of Washington's "isolationism". It would not be amiss to remind our American benefactors to adhere to their solemn pledge in regard to giving a reasonable chance to the Afghan people to determine their destiny without interferences and through fair and just elections. The blood of 1½ million Afghans demands this justice, and it is in the spirit of Democracy, and a pre-requisite for international order.

6. Saudi Arabia

Soviet atrocities did not succeed in making people change their faith. History is replete with glaring examples. We wonder who advised the Saudis that Afghans can be converted into Wahabis through monetary enticements. The Afghans are filled with love and respect for Saudi Arabia and this will be converted into hate and hostility if the present flawed policy is not changed. We hope that Govt of Saudi Arabia will study more carefully the formulation of its policy towards Afghanistan through a Saudi think-tank team in consultation with some unbiased Afghan social and political experts. It should not be beyond the competence of Saudi Arabian diplomacy to craft a policy which will enhance the Saudi vote in bringing peace & prosperity to Afghanistan which would bring endoavouring gains on the real investment they have made in Afghan goodwill.

7. Pakistan

The most vulnerable country facing danger now is Pakistan. The tripartite front composed of CIA/Zia-Ul-Haq/ISI ran the
show under direct command of Zia-Ul-Haq, the then president of Pakistan and the civilian branch of Pakistan Govt. had nothing at all to do with the Afghan policy. The Americans closed their eyes and flouted their own laws in regard to the drug menace from certain groups so as to nurture, train, arm and equip them to combat Soviet designs.

For Pakistan, the Afghan misadventure has proved to be an unmitigated potent danger. It demonstrates an almost perfect example of how perfidy does not pay in the end. The culture of Kalashnikovs has spread like wild fire, drug trade has flourished and law and order has deteriorated fast. So long as the Cold War continued, the Americans pumped sophisticated weapons and dollars into the region and Pakistan ISI dreamed of a military solution and the installation of their puppet regime in Kabul.

With the disappearance of the Red danger, the Americans changed colours. Then came the epoch-making collapse of the Soviet empire, spilling political equations in the entire world. The real danger is now the Islamic wave of fundamentalism within reach of an irresponsible Iranian Govt. The Americans are itching for re-entry into Afghanistan, this time with the help and involvement of Saudi Arabia. The advice to Pakistan is probably filtering through Riyadh.

Confronted with the possibility of disintegration of Afghanistan, Pakistanis under pressure of friends and events turned to history and soon found out that it had never paid any conquerors from Alexander the Great to the Russian Czar, from Imperial Britain (as Benazir Bhutto had pointed out while she was Prime Minister of Pakistan) to Brezhnev to play war or domination games with Afghans because no foreigner has ever won a war in Afghanistan. Much wiser with the rediscovered historical facts, Pakistan changed direction and sided with UN to seek political settlement in Afghanistan. Changes were made in ISI structure and personnel and Pakistan Foreign Ministry took charge of Afghan policy. But Pakistan, America and Saudi Arabia now risk being threatened by a Frankenstein of their own creation.

A suggested policy would be to persuade America, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to work in unison with India in helping the return of the Afghan former King, Mohammad Zahir Shah, now living in Rome, to restore calm, prevent disintegration of the country and deal firmly with Iranian blatant interferences in
8. Iran

Many countries have stuck their fingers into the Afghan pie during the last 13 years of Jihad struggle, but none has emerged as triumphant as Iran.

Iran bunched together eight vociferous Shiite splintered groups into a solid bloc under one leadership called Wahdat party to vie with Sunni Saudi Arabia and Pakistan for carving a secure place for itself in Afghanistan.

Iran enticed Afghans and hosted one and a half million Shias nurtured their leaders, trained their cadres before arming them and indoctrinated the rank and file of refugees. It was because of these factors Iran did not allow UN to look after Afghan refugees in Iran.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Iranian appetite sharpened and its primary target changed. Instead of plotting a Shia revolution in Afghanistan, Iran started fostering Persian culture. As Afghanistan splintered along ethnic lines, Iran applied its diplomacy to winning Persian speaking Tajiks and Uzbeks who now control Kabul. In shameless policy statements smacking of direct interference in our internal affairs, Iran supported Ahmad Shah Masoud, thinking he would support Iranian interests because he speaks Persian. General Dilawar, a Tajik, has been appointed Chief of General Staff and General Mohammad Nabi Azimi who is also a Tajik is Commander/General of Kabul garrison.

Taking these factors into consideration, Iran hosted a meeting early this year with Tajik Afghan President-designate, Prof. Burhanuddin Rabbani and representatives from Tajikistan to promote ostensibly Persian-based cultural links between Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan. To bolster a Persian-influenced Govt. in Kabul, Iranians have sent fuel and food to central and western Afghanistan sometimes without permission of either the Najib Govt. or the Mujahideen.

On the other hand, Iran is entangled in tough competition with Pakistan and Turkey over construction of overland trade routes with landlocked Central Asian Muslim republics of former Soviet Union. Afghanistan has common borders with Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkomanistan and trade prospects depends upon stability in Kabul.
In April this year Iran made known its intention to start a new railway line from Turkomanistan to Iran's southern coast. Iran also announced its agreement to provide oil pipeline from Tajikistan and Turkomanistan through Turkey to the West. With these grandiose ambitions Iran appears to have lost a balanced approach. It is bent on disintegrating Afghanistan so as to export Islamic revolution and thus form a powerful fundamentalist Islamic bloc to take revenge on America after acquiring nuclear technology from the former Soviet Muslim republics.

We do not think Iran has a chance to realise this dream but her capacity for mischief making must not be overlooked. However, there is reliable evidence that the Iranian government is gravitating towards new thinking in its foreign policy. The time may therefore be ripe for change in Teheran's attitude to develop a constructive stance for strengthening the economic-political fabric of the Afghan and Central Asian system, and to eschew the short-sighted policy of exacerbating ethnic and nationalist tensions.

Prospects for Solution

In real terms the prospects are dim. However, there are some positive factors which if employed correctly, can prevent the disintegration of Afghanistan.

The best solution would be if all the Afghan Jehad parties including their leaders could form a united front and set up a Govt. of national unity. To speak the truth, this is nothing but wishful thinking. A more realistic approach is that America, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and India revive the initial UN peace proposals so as to convene a representative gathering of Afghans in order to agree upon a transition period as well as a transition mechanism, leading to the establishment of a broad-based Govt. through fair and free elections. We appeal to all countries that matter and to the leaders of America, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and India to use their political weight so as to create the opportunities and prepare the ground for self-determination of the Afghan people. Let them not discover their error when it will be too late. The blood of one and a half million Afghans would have been shed in vain.

The Secretary-General Mr. Boutros Boutros Ghali, is aware that there is a growing disenchantment with the present phase of the UN peace process. What is needed is a new context for discussion
and negotiation among Afghans and a full implementation of the principle of democratisation. Harmonisation of the actions of different Afghan groups is the imperative need of the situation which is developing in Kabul and in the rest of Afghanistan. We must ask the Secretary-General to develop a broader conception of the negotiating process and at no stage should the democratic principle be sacrificed. It should be made clear that no one inside or outside Afghanistan will be allowed to impose its own approach to the detriment of the democratisation process.

Although the Soviet-American antagonisms have ceased to affect tensions and conflicts in Afghanistan after the end of the Cold War, the political, strategic, and economic interests of the regional powers are increasingly exerting a malign effect on the local contradictions in Afghanistan. But the time has come to look at fundamentals of the Afghanistan situation much in the same way in which all the nations gathered at the Earth Summit in Rio are looking at the steps necessary to safeguard the ecology of our planet. What should be done to safeguard a real transition towards stable peace in Afghanistan? The present scenario of competitive interference in Afghanistan has to be changed dramatically. Afghanistan must not be regarded as a pawn in a new power struggle, otherwise very soon we will witness a devastating confrontation which will engulf many other countries in South West Asia, Central Asia and South Asia. The West Asian peace process will also be adversely affected if Afghanistan's sky remains covered with clouds of internecine warfare and destruction. To redress the situation and steer clear of the encircling crisis, the United Nations and the major and regional powers must join forces to work for the reconstruction of the Afghan economy shattered by war and conflict.