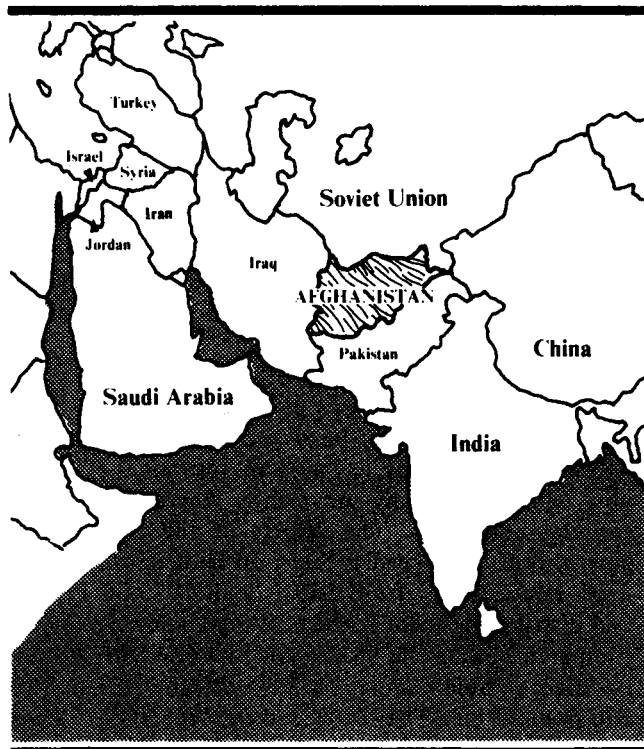


Afghanistan: in search of an Ayatollah

This week, in a hall somewhere in Bavaria in southern Germany, a meeting has been taking place. The room is full of Afghans, exiles from their country who are plotting the overthrow of the present government of President Hafizollah Amin. For more than a year, since the April 1978 revolution which overthrew the family that had ruled this Central Asian nation for more than a century, an armed resistance has been mounted to the new government. Based largely out of Pakistan, the rebels are divided among many groups, many tribes, and many leaders—they have no ayatollah for what they describe as their Islamic “jihad” (holy war) against a “godless Communist” regime in Kabul.

The search for an ayatollah, someone to unify the often warring and squabbling groups, has been demanded by the backers of the anti-Afghan movement residing in London, Washington, Teheran, Pakistan



and the Middle East. In the words of one former senior American State Department official, still intimately involved with Afghanistan: “They need a person to rally the tribes. It would take a rallying family or a person who has not emerged as yet.”

One of the men mentioned by the American official as a prime candidate for the position was the center of the Bavarian meeting—General Abdul Wali. A former Afghan army general, Abdul Wali’s main qualification is that he is the son-in-law of the former king of Afghanistan, Zahir Shah. The ex-king now sits complacently in his Rome apartment—“He is a nice guy,” said the senior official, “but a do-nothing.” Abdul Wali on the other hand is ready to seek the throne according to our Washington source. “He is a real leader, and has tribal backing,” but he later added, “he is not very popular.”

The meeting in Germany, however, solved nothing—a new organization was created, the “Islamic Council for the Liberation of Afghanistan,” but the participants could not agree on who should be “the leader.” Instead, a collective leadership was established with the proviso that anyone who might want to be a leader must: believe in Islam, have an “irreproachable personality” and have “fought in the field.” There was no indication as to who meets these “qualifications” to be the new Ayatollah.

So go the problems of what the British call the “Great Game”—their historic intervention to control Afghanistan, the buffer state between “Russian” Asia and “British” India.

Anti-Khomeini government

The fate of the Islamic rebellion in Afghanistan is of great interest to those who are behind the recent events in Iran, in Pakistan, and throughout the region. The Amin government is the most stridently anti-Khomeini government in the world, and the Afghan government press minces no words in day after day describing the Iranian regime as “fanatics, oppressors, and tyrants.” The highest circles of the government, starting with President Amin who succeeded former President Taraki

two months ago, have identified their enemy as "made-in-London Muslims." They are referring to the Ikhwan Mussalman, the same conspiratorial Muslim Brotherhood organization which stands behind Khomeini, which organized the assault on the U.S. embassy in Pakistan, and which is spreading chaos throughout the region from Bangladesh to Turkey.

Afghanistan also represents something else. It is a Soviet-backed government—a counterdeployment to the London-sponsored "Islamic revolution," which was a revolution aimed in part at Soviet Central Asia and

its large Muslim population. Since Amin's accession to the presidency, the Afghan government has toughened its stance against the Brotherhood rebels, sending its army into the heavily rebel-infested provinces which border the rebel sanctuaries in Pakistan. It has simultaneously reached out to draw legitimate Muslim religious leaders into the base of the government. If Amin's approach succeeds, the Islamic "wave" will be broken in Afghanistan and the control of the Brotherhood strongholds in Iran and Pakistan will be threatened.

Islamic Council vows jihad

The following is an edited version of the final communiqué issued by a group of Afghan exiles who met in West Germany this past Nov. 17 to 22. The meeting brought together a variety of exile leaders including General Abdul Wali and S. Mojadedi. This is an unofficial translation from the original Persian and Arabic.

A number of political, military and business leaders, living in the Middle East, Western Europe and the United States, representing the movements of the people of Afghanistan, have met Sept. 16, 1979, in a West German town, and have decided to establish the Islamic Council for the Liberation of Afghanistan. Its aims were the following:

- 1) Full cooperation with the Jihad/Resistance Movement. . .
- 2) To mobilize all necessary kinds of support for the struggle of the people of Afghanistan.
- 3) The establishment of a system of foundations and committees to propagandize the fight.
- 4) The creation of committees aimed at giving the Afghan people democratic institutions.

In a second session, from Nov. 17 to 22, in a West German city, it was decided that full coordination and cooperation between the leaders of the Council and the Mujahideen be established. The Islamic Council denounces the deeds of violence against the Afghan Peoples Committee by the regime in power in Kabul. The Council stresses that it sees no difference between Amin and Taraki, and considers Amin as criminal as Taraki. . .

The Council does not think that the Jihad is merely a national issue. . . It is an Islamic issue and the Council feels sorry for those Islamic forces which have refrained from supporting our Jihad.

The council considers that it is in the interests of all peace-loving nations in the western world and in the developing sector in particular to stop the aggression of the Soviet social-imperialism.

Based in Pakistan

The base of the Brotherhood's operations against Afghanistan in the Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan, the home of the fabled Pathan tribesmen of the Khyber Pass, which links Pakistan and Afghanistan. The tribesmen are still organized, as they have been for centuries, in feudal clans, and the clans into tribes headed up by a tribal khan or chief. More than half the population of Afghanistan is Pathan, and many of the tribes live in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, passing freely across the border in seasonal migration with their flocks. The Northwest Frontier Province was a part of Afghanistan until the British Indian Empire conquered it in the 19th century. (Afghanistan itself was a virtual British protectorate until 1920.)

It is here, among the tribes and the refugees, that the Brotherhood recruits its "mujahideen" (holy warriors). The main activity of the tribes has not been covered in the numerous reports appearing in the Western press on the "rebellion."

Their main activity is the growing, processing and smuggling of hashish and opium, in a drug "triangle" that recent reports say is rapidly replacing the famous "Golden Triangle" of Southeast Asia in importance. Along with the smuggling of dope is that of guns and precious stones. The poppies which are grown high in the hills of northwestern Pakistan have long been the source of supply for Iran's huge addict population. Until the April revolution they were smuggled through Afghanistan, but now go through the sea and through Baluchistan, the mountainous area which stretches across from Iran to Pakistan and Afghanistan. The difference now is that the Brotherhood's dope is now finding its way into Europe in large amounts.

Some of the tribal khans and their followers have fled with their mulahs, to Pakistan, forming the refugees now camped in army-run camps where they receive training and arms. The efforts of the new Afghan government have been focused on land reform (taking huge estates away from tribal landlords and mullahs and distributing them to the peasants), and on a literacy campaign among the 96 percent illiterate and ignorant populace. These campaigns have driven the landlords and mullahs out. They now lead the "rebellion," which is largely a matter of scattered tribal revolts generated

by lies that the government has burned and destroyed mosques and is trying to kill Muslims. Even an effort by the government to carry out the country's first national census was the subject of a black propaganda rumor campaign in which ignorant tribesmen were told that this was part of the government's plan to eliminate Muslims.

Many Mini-Ayatollahs

The anti-Kabul movement has many aspiring ayatollahs, some of them leaders of organizations not in existence for some time. These also conspired against the pre-1978 Afghan regime of President Mohammed Daud, who had overthrown his brother-in-law, the King, in 1973, with the aid of the forces in the army and outside it, led by the Afghan Peoples Democratic Party which now rules in Afghanistan.

The mini-ayatollahs can be sorted out however, revealing in the process the truth of a charge made by Amin and others that these are "British spies" and "the sons of spies for the English," the historic enemies of the Afghan people. One such "son of a spy" is the leader of the self-styled Afghanistan National Liberation Front, Sigbatullah Mojadedi, also reported to have been a participant in the Bavaria meeting. Mojadedi is a mullah, and the son of a former mullah and minister of the king's government named Sher Agha. Mojadedi's former base of operations was Copenhagen, where he ran an "Islamic Center" known to be a Muslim Brotherhood front and where he established contact with Khomeini when the Ayatollah was camped out in Paris before the downfall of the Shah.

Sher Agha is known to students of Afghan history—of which there are admittedly very few—as the mullah who fled to British India in 1924 out of opposition to

Iran' greatest crisis so far

Following are excerpts from an editorial in the semi-official Kabul Times, Nov. 4, 1979, entitled 'Greatest Crisis Khomeini Faces.'

Khomeini and his clique are critically faced with the greatest crisis they have seen so far... They are currently administering the affairs of the poor people of Iran on the basis of methods which were prevalent in the Middle Ages. This method will draw the people of Iran towards misfortune and misery. This condition will draw Iran once again to the arms of the imperialistic circles.

No doubt this is the intention of the ruling elements of Iran who rule the country with all reactionary ways and means, fanaticism and imperialistic manners.

Ikhwanis against religion's traditions

The following are excerpts from a commentary on Kabul Radio, Oct. 22.

With the victory of the Great Saur Revolution (April Revolution) in Afghanistan, which was realized with the backing of 98 percent of the people of this land, a number of persons had left this country. These persons had been either infidels, Ikhwani Ash-Shayatin [Brotherhood of the Devil—the Muslim Brotherhood] in the guise of religious leaders or the feudal lords. The Ikhwanis in the guise of pirs [religious title] had been directly in the service of the colonialists [the British] and they are now carrying out the cause of the imperialists in Pakistan, Iran and other territories...

'Not a loaf from the British'

Following are excerpts of a speech by President Hafizollah Amin to elders of the Touri, Mangal, and Waziri tribes—Pathan (Pashtoon) tribes which live in the border areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan. The speech is reported in the Oct. 23 issue of the Kabul Times:

Tell your countrymen that their fathers and forefathers were proud and high headed. They were not looking forward to the black hands of the foreigners to throw a loaf of bread in their mouth. They never wanted that Britishers or their agents to give them something. If they walked empty-stomached their pride and their heads were held high. They preferred living on grasses of their country to all luxury and reaction. Thus all of you are the sons of those fathers. Your country will be built. However, you see that some are deceived and have their mouths open for the bread of aliens. They are sitting in the guest house of aliens [referring to the exiles and rebels in Pakistan].

... Our brave laborers, peasants, and workers of our country can never accept this. They say it proudly that their enemies are the sons of the spies of the British. They are the enemies of the country. They are the people whose fathers and forefathers had taken refuge in the lap of the British during the reign of Amanullah Khan. There they were telling lies and shouting nonsense. Today their sons have thrown themselves in the lap of the agents of the British. From there they shout against our country. ...

the then King Amanullah, an enlightened monarch who led his country in a fight for independence from Britain and tried to modernize his backward feudal nation. Sher Agha found employment in the pay of the British Secret Intelligence Service, and led a black propaganda campaign against Amanullah for being "unIslamic" (including his move to have women remove the veil) which led to the British backed overthrow of Amanullah in 1929, with the aid of the same Pathan tribes of the Pakistan (then India) frontier, and the mullahs. Installed to replace Amanullah was King Zahir Shah, father of Zahir Shah. The son, Mojadedi, has dutifully followed in the footsteps of his father.

Mojadedi is a leader of a shaky alliance, the United Islamic Covenant of Afghanistan, which includes another powerful mullah, a former professor of theology at Kabul University, Burhan Rabani. Rabani leads one of the Brotherhood's affiliates, the Jamati Islami of Afghanistan, and has been recently traveling in London and the Persian Gulf in search of funds. Rabani's group is an armed underground organization, founded about 20 years ago which aims, by his own description, in precise following of Khomeini, to create "an Islamic social, political and economic order in Afghanistan." Rabani is backed by the same Jamaati Islami of Pakistan which controls the Zia regime and was responsible for the burning of the American Embassy and the death of two Americans. Rabani's Brotherhood views are uniquely expressed in an interview last July, where he attacked the U.S., charging that "the Americans and the Soviets have a secret compact with regard to the Muslim world. There appears a method in the Americans making way for the march of Communism in Muslim countries."

Can They 'Deliver?'

The rivals of these two Brotherhood mullahs are many. They include the leader of the Hizbi Islami, engineer Gulbuddin, also a militant Islamic who was imprisoned by both the king and Daud for previous subversive efforts. Another "religious" leader Syed Gailani claims to be a descendant of the Prophet Mohammed. The latter is somewhat distinguished for having decided, after launching a holy war against the infidel in Kabul, that he should shape his appeal more "nationalistic."

Gailani also claims to be pro-Western, and according to a recent article in the London Times owns a posh apartment in London where he says things which sound reasonable: "We are opposed to extremism of any kind. We believe in a moderate, modern Afghan state based

on nationalism." Gailani is thus making his appeal for the much competed for "seal of approval" from London and Washington. His problem is whether he can "deliver."

Gailani has received much notice over the months in the Western press, particularly the *New York Times*, due to the efforts of his self-appointed "right hand man," an Afghan living 18 years in the U.S. and a graduate of Harvard Business School and MIT named Zia Nassry. Zia now, tired it seems of being only a right hand, has taken up the task of unifying the great movement, as Chairman of a 30-man Afghanistan Islamic and Nationalistic Revolution Council based, as are all of these groups, in Pakistan. While Rabani charged in the interview that Gailani is an American "infiltrator," Zia seems to fit that role more, traveling frequently between Pakistan and New York and traveling around the U.S. speaking as an Afghan leader.

Nassry does have some credentials—he claims to be from a tribal leader family and has the support of the dope-running Waziri tribe or parts of it. He also is the son of the former head of the Afghan secret police and numbers among his friends Cord Meyer, a former CIA station chief in London, and a group called The American Friends of Afghanistan, which includes two former U.S. Ambassadors to Afghanistan, Theodore Eliot, (now the Dean of the Fletcher School of Diplomacy in Boston) and Ambassador Newman, (now with the Georgetown Center for Strategic and International Studies). The AFA is supposedly engaged in raising money for Afghan refugees in Pakistan and other humanitarian work but is an unconcealed support operation for the Brotherhood's "rebellion."

Financed by dope money, armed by the Chinese (who have a small Maoist group of Afghans as their contribution to the struggle) and with Soviet and Western arms brought from Egypt and contributions by Pakistan and Iran, these holy warriors have aimed to create a new Khomeiniland in Afghanistan. The Amin government is determined to beat back these defenders of that nation's old feudal order and bring about modern development. It may take that if the Brotherhood gains a "leader" who can claim the allegiance of all the little ayatollahs. Such a move would be the pretext, in the context of spreading chaos in the region, for open military backing by Pakistan and the British and American intelligence services for this new "liberation movement."

—Daniel Sneider