

world's front pages, the ongoing crisis between Bulgaria and Turkey received no such fanfare. Not until Prime Minister Turgut Özal lambasted the West on June 13 for ignoring that crisis, did the State Department agree to make a formal denunciation of "Bulgaria's ill treatment of its Muslim community." The crisis had started in early May when Sofia sent paramilitary forces, and then the Army to repress Bulgarian Muslims' protests against the Bulgarianization process set into motion in 1985: Muslim- or Turkish-sounding names were changed into Bulgarian Slavic names, speaking Turkish in public has been banned, and the mosques closed down.

When Ankara moved politically and diplomatically to defend the Muslim community, Sofia decided to play the game of open borders, officially meaning Bulgarian Muslims could leave for Turkey. In reality, the Army was deployed to herd thousands of Bulgarian Muslims, either of Turkish ethnic background or Slavs converted to Islam in the Ottoman era, to the borders. Without any belongings but a bag, with no compensation for houses or properties left behind, they are being summarily dropped at the Turkish frontier. Since early May, more than 10,000 have been expelled that way, forcing Ankara to build emergency refugee camps on its borders. Besides the problem of integrating these refugees into Turkish society, the issue of how many intelligence agents the Bulgarian authorities mixed in among the refugees is no less troubling.

But if this crisis has been lingering since 1985, why did Sofia change policy suddenly in May 1989? The level of internal revolt within Bulgaria, even though it grew larger by the year, is no explanation. Many Turks believe the cause lies in Moscow, and especially the way the Soviet Union has been recently protesting Ankara's decision to modernize its forces and major military bases. Hence, the Bulgarian Muslims are paying the price of a direct crisis between the NATO and Warsaw Pact.

It could thus be expected that would Ankara be the recipient of NATO solidarity. Instead, the U.S. Congress cut some \$50 million in aid to Turkey at the end of May. The pretext? Some days earlier a Soviet pilot defected to Turkey with his MiG-29. While rejecting Soviet pressures to extradite him back to Russia, Ankara agreed to return the plane. This was a normal procedure; moreover, the MiG-29 is no longer Russia's most advanced fighter and is known to Western services. Yet, Washington rebuked the Turks for having kept them from inspecting the plane.

The new U.S. Ambassador Morton Abramowitz arrives in mid-June in Ankara, with the mandate to give Turkey the West Germany treatment: neutralization. And the United States is making it clear that if Turgut Özal does not agree with this agenda, it is grooming an alternative—Suleyman Demirel, a former right-wing premier in the 1970s whose leadership pushed Turkey to the brink, until the Army intervened in 1980. Maybe his longstanding Freemasonic connections make him a better known entity in Washington.

A 'new' Afghanistan same old sauce in a

by Ramtanu Maitra and Susan Maitra

Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's recent visit to the United States was the occasion for a media-hype that a new Afghan policy is on the anvil. Both President Bush and Prime Minister Bhutto stated that the United States and Pakistan are "in full agreement" over the new policy. Afghan President Dr. Najibullah—whose removal, along with the return of 3 million refugees to Afghanistan, was otherwise identified as the solution to the Afghan crisis by Miss Bhutto recently—added to the hype: Najibullah praised the Pakistan government for its "change of Afghan policy."

The political-military equations on the ground in Afghanistan, taken together with recent public discussion of strategy by the Mujahideen guerrilla forces, point to the fact that for the next three to four months any "new policy" is not likely to add up to more than a variation on the old one of attempting to deal a convincing military setback to the Kabul government.

It was the failure of the Mujahideen, despite heavy losses, to capture the Afghan cities of Jalalabad and Khost, that gave rise to the speculation that a "new Afghan policy" was at hand. But considering the limited options open now to the Mujahideen, and to Pakistan, efforts will most likely continue to attain even a partial military victory in the battlefield and thus re-establish the Mujahideen's credibility. Until the Afghanistan plains start receiving ground frost in October, the Mujahideen will widen the battlefront and try to capture at least a few provincial capitals from the Kabul regime. The hope is that such a policy will bear fruit and provide the Mujahideen the necessary leverage to discuss a political solution with the Soviet Union—a suggestion which the Pakistani prime minister has made a number of times in the recent period.

Tactical errors

Backing up this "new" policy is the word from Peshawar, Pakistan, that the Mujahideen have come to realize that they had made a tactical mistake by concentrating their firepower only on Jalalabad, following the Soviet troop withdrawal in

policy, or the new bottle?

February, and thus allowing the Kabul regime to throw its entire army and arms into the defense of that city. With such a limited and predictable battleplan, the Mujahideen were sitting ducks for the defending artillery and Afghan Air Force. The "new" Afghan policy seeks to remove that predictability by opening up a number of battlefronts simultaneously, forcing the Kabul regime to distribute its firepower.

The Mujahideen themselves have pointed to the new tack. In a recent interview with *India Today*, a bi-monthly published from New Delhi, Prof. Sibghatullah Mojaddedi, president of the interim Afghan government based in Peshawar, readily admitted that concentrating all the rebel forces in the attack on fortified Jalalabad was a mistake. Professor Mojaddedi said that the original plan had been to attack a number of provincial capitals at once, but that could not be done because "in some places there was heavy snow, in some places there were insufficient supplies, in some there were mistakes."

In order for the Mujahideen to start a dialogue with the Soviet Union, they must establish their military credibility. There is no reason to expect that the Soviet Union, humiliated by the aborted 10-year-long campaign on the Afghan plains which brought only death and misery to the mighty Red Army, will accede to the demands of the Mujahideen in their current rag-tag state.

Moreover, one of Bhutto's demands, borne out of the realities in Afghanistan, is that Najibullah leave the scene. Even if the Kremlin agrees to such a proposal, it is doubtful whether they could make it work. Najibullah's unquestioned success against the Mujahideen has made him stronger within the party than ever before. Besides, everyone knows in Afghanistan that he is not only the secretary-general of the ruling People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), but also the grandson of Jehandad Khan, former chief of the powerful Ahmedzai tribe.

More pie-in-the-sky?

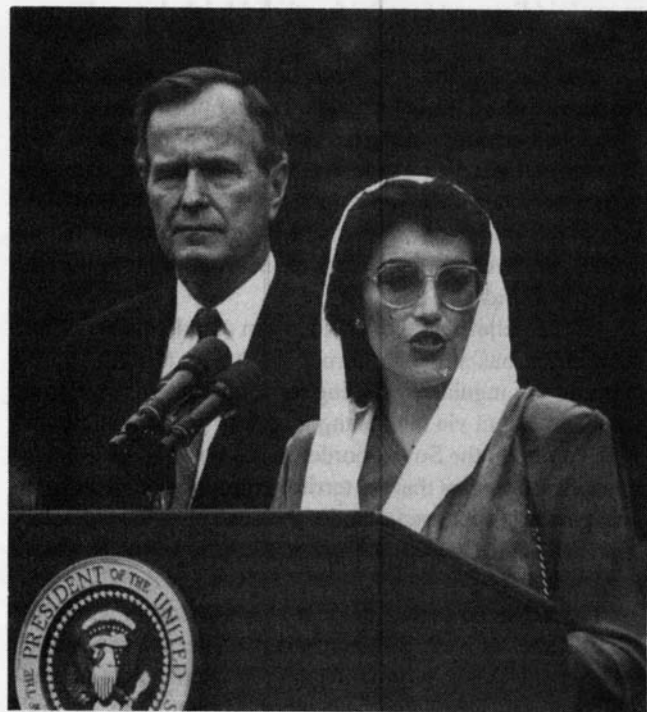
But to expect the Mujahideen to achieve major military

successes in the coming few months just because a better battle tactic is adopted, would be naive. Only the most glib take the Mujahideen's excuses for failure at face value. The three-month-long Jalalabad campaign has brought to light other facts which add up to a very different picture. For instance:

- The Mujahideen are not unified, and act more as tribal units than as factions within a purposeful government. In spite of months of effort and oft-repeated promises, the Teheran Eight (the eight-party alliance of Afghan refugees based in Iran) have remained outside the interim government cabinet (for which they were heartily thanked by Soviet Ambassador to Afghanistan Yuli Vorontsov during his recent visit to Teheran).

It is no secret that the leaders of the Peshawar Seven (the seven-party alliance of Afghan refugees based in Pakistan) feel no hesitation in abusing each other publicly. At least two—Jamiat-i-Islami chief Prof. Burhanuddin Rabbani and National Islamic Front for Afghanistan (NIFA) chief Pir Sayed Ahmed Gilani—have publicly expressed "reservations" about the elections to the Shooraa—the Afghan Consultative Council—to form an interim government.

- There is evidence that the pettiness reflected in the quibbling between the leaders in Peshawar has been carried to the battlefield as well. In Kunar province, which is now fully under the Mujahideen control, the Ahle Hadith under Maulana Jamilur Rehman has set up a parallel government to



Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan at the White House with George Bush on June 6.

that set up by an alliance of the Hezbe Islami and Ittihad-e-Islam, both groups that are members of the Peshawar Seven. Maulana Jamilur of Ahle Hadith does not recognize the interim government set up by the Peshawar Seven.

- NIFA activists have accused the Hezbe Islami of sabotaging the Jalalabad campaign because they did not want Pir Gilani to take credit for conquering the city, according to the April issue of the *Herald*, a monthly magazine from Karachi, Pakistan. That would have exposed the oft-repeated claim of the Hezbe Islami that its leaders Maulvi Yunus Khalis and his deputy are the most powerful leaders in Nangarhar province, say the NIFA men. The accusation is backed up by evidence that the Hezbe Islami did not effectively block the Jalalabad-Kabul highway at a crucial time of the campaign, allowing the Kabul regime to bring in large supplies of arms and food rations from distant Kabul to the beleaguered city.

Myths shattered

- The belief that the Kabul Army and Afghan militias would desert the Kabul regime under the slightest pressure from the Mujahideen commanders, has been proven by eyewitness reporters from Pakistan to be nothing more than a cultivated myth. According to these reporters, the sacrifices made by Afghans supporting the Kabul regime surprised many. Jalalabad's defenders fought valiantly, as did the militias, which consist of villagers armed by the Kabul regime. One eyewitness told of how the women in a village near Samarkhel, a garrison town close to Jalalabad, fought like trained soldiers and kept the frontline Mujahideen soldiers at bay.

In large part, this resistance is due to the Mujahideen's practice of indiscriminately slaughtering prisoners of war—even when factions among their own ranks oppose the killing of unarmed people. There are also reports that the Arab volunteers who have come to fight the *Jihad* (Holy War) against the infidels of Kabul, and who now number more than 1,000, are forcibly marrying women from villages overrun by the Mujahideen.

- The belief that the Kabul regime could be starved into submission has similarly turned out to be a myth. Soviet convoys are regularly bringing large amounts of butter and guns into Kabul via the Salang Highway connecting the Afghan capital to the Soviet border in the north. This is occurring despite the fact that the territory through which the highway passes is supposedly under the control of the legendary Ahmed Shah Massoud, a Tajik and a follower of Professor Rabbani.

The Indian government is regularly sending humanitarian aid to Kabul as well, and according to a recent exposé in a Dubai-based paper, large amounts of Western goods are finding their way into Kabul and other Afghan cities as well. Dubai merchants, in collaboration with traders in Hamburg, West Germany and Antwerp, the Netherlands are reported to

be involved in this goods supply operation through the Soviet Union.

Some military realities

- The hostility between Pakistani frontiersmen and the Afghan refugees—the Mujahideen leaders in particular—is no secret, and this tension has been further exploited by Kabul-sponsored terrorist activities in the North West Frontier Province. It is an important military factor, as the recent failed effort by the Mujahideen to capture the Afghan border town of Khost demonstrated.

Eyewitnesses have reported that 400 Mahsud tribesmen from Pakistan's South Waziristan tribal agency, lured by the offer of cash and kind from the Kabul regime, fought the Mujahideen for the defense of Khost. Another 1,500 Mahsud tribesmen have since arrived in Khost for the same purpose. An authoritative source in Pakistan reports that although Kabul troops are also stationed there in sufficient numbers, the Khost garrison is in fact primarily defended by local militias composed of Zadran Pushtoon tribesmen, along with the Mahsuds.

- During the Jalalabad campaign, it became evident that the columns of Afghan rebels advancing across the flat plains were sitting ducks for the Afghan Air Force. High-altitude bombers were grinding up the Mujahideen from an altitude well above the reach of the defending Stinger missiles. The fact is that the Mujahideen are no longer involved in a guerrilla-style hit-and-run operation, harassing the Red Army's search and destroy missions from the hilltops.

Now the Mujahideen are engaged in conventional warfare against an army which is properly trained and armed by the Soviets to defend the built-up towns. There is no doubt that the Mujahideen will have to match the Kabul regime's artillery—tank for tank, missile for missile, heavy guns with heavy guns—and do even better if they hope to break through the fortified large cities.

- It is doubtful how long the rebel field commanders will remain under the control of the quibbling Peshawar Seven leaders. President Najibullah has reportedly offered a dozen rebel commanders military rank and full autonomy over their respective regions if they stop fighting. Such an offer is tempting; it cannot be bettered by the Mujahideen leaders. How many field commanders have already accepted the offer is moot.

These are some of the realities that need to be taken into consideration. If the purpose of the "new plan" is to strengthen the hands of the Mujahideen so that they can deal with the Soviet Union from a position of strength for a viable political solution, these realities must be addressed. For Pakistan, the failure to do so would make meaningless the 10 years of support given to the Mujahideen against the Soviet troops and the Kabul regime, and render impossible a solution in which the refugees return to their homeland, and an Afghanistan emerges whose government is friendly to Pakistan.