

Afghan deal is destabilizing the entire subcontinent

by Linda de Hoyos

Under the headline of "Peace Breaks Out," the liberal press in the United States has been heralding the "New Yalta" regional deals now in the process of negotiation among Washington, Moscow, and in part, Beijing. The first such regional settlement was Afghanistan. But far from bringing peace, the Afghanistan deal reached with the Geneva accords of April 14, by which the Soviet Union agreed to withdraw its troops in return for a full halt of aid to the Afghan mujahideen, has proven to be a failure on all counts in regards to Afghanistan. Furthermore, the escalating instability centering around Afghanistan has placed new pressures on adjacent nations, primarily Pakistan and India.

The pact has not brought peace to Afghanistan. Instead, Afghanistan faces a likely protracted period of civil war, as all factions scramble, politically and militarily, to fill the apparent vacuum left by Moscow's withdrawal.

Even the Soviets are divided among themselves on how to approach Afghanistan. In an interview with the weekly *Ogonyok*, Soviet Maj. Gen. Kim Tsagolov, who is an associate of Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, demanded that Kabul's policy be focused on coalition talks with "the leaders of the armed resistance in various regions" of Afghanistan, and a policy of playing upon the differences between the seven resistance parties based in Pakistan, and "the field commanders" of the resistance "inside Afghanistan." Tsagolov, now head of the Marxism-Leninism Department of Faculty at the Frunze Military Academy, predicted prolonged internecine warfare among various opposition groups in Afghanistan, whether or not the Kabul regime survives a Soviet pullout.

Tsagolov proposes that in the medium term, the Soviet Union be prepared to play the "Islamic card" in Afghanistan, as he writes that he expects the Soviet withdrawal "for a certain time" will result in the "activation of the Islamic factor . . . not only in Afghanistan . . . but in all of Islam." The problem with Soviet policy in Afghanistan, he said, is that the Afghan party "never managed to make Islam its ally. . . . We can expect a hardening of Islamic determination in connection with the notion of Islamic revolution."

However, Tsagolov has been publicly countered by Vadim Perfilyev, deputy head of the Foreign Ministry Information Directorate, who replied to the Soviet news agency TASS Aug. 2 to questions on Tsagolov's perspective with an arch-defense of the Kabul puppet-government: "As for the

opinion of the Soviet side, it differs from Tsagolov's standpoint. We hold that the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan has good positions in its country, steers the right course that meets the interests of the people, and has every chance to continue working confidently toward attaining peace and national reconciliation of the Afghans. We are convinced that this line will triumph in Afghanistan."

The following day, *Krasnaya Zvezda* carried an interview with Col. Gen. V.A. Vostrov, who did a long tour in Afghanistan as chief military adviser. Asked to give his opinion of Tsagolov's interview, Vostrov retorted, "I cannot share the assessment made of it in the aforesaid interview. I think that Maj. Gen. K. Tsagolov formed this view back in 1981-84, when he was adviser at an Afghan military college. Nor were his views changed by his stay in Afghanistan in 1987, a stay that was short. Yet, enormous changes have taken place there. I also believe that the depth of K. Tsagolov's perception of everything happening in the country was affected by the relatively limited framework of his service in Afghanistan."

For the moment, it would appear that the latter line has prevailed, as Japan's Kyodo news agency and other press sources report that the Soviets are preparing a counteroffensive against mujahideen positions close to Kabul, which has been steadily pounded by rebel rocket attacks. Realizing the Afghan army alone cannot dislodge the mujahideen, the Soviets are stepping in with a sweep out of Kabul to the Qarghah Lake area. *Krasnaya Zvezda* also reports that the Soviets have formed "Red Guards" to defend Kabul. Intelligence sources report that although the Soviets are withdrawing their troops, they are leaving behind a major contingent of special forces.

Mujahideen rivalries

The disarray in the Soviet camp is more than matched by factional strife within the mujahideen themselves. On Aug. 8, a group of resistance commanders, including the famous Ahmat Shah Massoud, declared that only mujahideen unity can defeat Moscow. Territory can only be captured, their statement read, "if all groups are collected into an army so as to facilitate logistics, planning, and expansion." The group, organized into the Supervisory Council of the North, under the leadership of Massoud, charged that the fundamentalist party Hezb-i-Islami, headed by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, is

blocking their arms supply.

The two groups are also split over whether to attack withdrawing Soviet troops. From Pakistan, Burhanuddin Rabbani, head of the Jamati-i-Islami, who is allied with Massoud, called upon guerrillas to show restraint toward the Soviets to avert any delay in the Soviet withdrawal. On this issue, Rabbani is allied with both Massoud and two other Pakistani-based resistance leaders, Younis Khaled and Abdul Rasul Sayyaf. Hekmatyar, however, is demanding that the mujahideen take advantage of the withdrawal to press forward militarily.

Massoud might claim to have authority to shape the political and military policy of a mujahideen force. He claims to control 10 out of 31 Afghan provinces, and his moral authority is enhanced by the fact that he has fought within Afghanistan, rather than basing his efforts from Pakistan. However, no mujahideen forces have been able to seize any provincial cities, even as the Soviet troops withdraw. Reports emerged Aug. 12 that the mujahideen had taken back the provincial capital of Kunduz province, but the official Baktar Afghan news agency said that the Afghan army forces had taken back the city after infiltration by rebels. The mujahideen may also be closing in on the southern city of Kandahar. Press reports say the Afghan army controls only the innermost of the four security belts around the city. Most residents of the city have fled the fighting; 85% of the city's homes have been destroyed or badly damaged.

In summary: The withdrawal of Soviet troops—50,000 supposedly by Aug. 15—has not abated the level of violence within Afghanistan itself at all. The fighting in the country prohibits the projected next step in the agreement—the return of 3 million Afghan refugees to their homeland.

Pressure on Pakistan

However, while the April 14 accords have not decreased the civil war levels in Afghanistan, they have acted to virtually hand the Soviet Union a *carte blanche* to increase pressure on Pakistan. By signing the Geneva accords, Pakistan is forbidden to continue militarily supplying the mujahideen, as it has done since 1979. Official arming of the rebels is, however, not necessary, since Peshawar, provincial capital of the Northwest Frontier Province along the Afghan border, is a virtual arms bazaar. Anything and everything is available; all that's needed is cash.

On Aug. 1, Pakistani Foreign Minister Yaqub Khan went to Moscow to reassure Soviet leaders and mend fences. The visit does not seem to have had lasting effect. Four days later, Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze, who had charged Pakistan with aiding "international terrorism," paid a surprise visit to Kabul, where he threatened that Pakistan will bear responsibility for continued arming of the mujahideen. The Soviets, he said, will "find means" to counter Pakistan's material support for the rebels.

On Aug. 6, Pakistan's Khan dismissed the Soviet claims

as "baseless," explaining that although Pakistan was not arming the mujahideen, it had never ceased its "sympathies" with the rebel.

His response was in turn answered by an Aug. 8 dual statement from Kabul and Moscow issued at the end of Shevardnadze's visit. Charging Pakistan with "crude violations" of the Geneva accord, the statement said that Kabul and Moscow had to "draw appropriate conclusions" and would be forced to "define their actions in case the interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan is not ceased." The statement demanded that the United States act to enforce the Geneva accords and rein in Pakistan.

Behind the words is an escalation of attacks on Pakistani territory. On Aug. 1, there were 27 people killed and 25 injured when Afghan jets bombed the Pakistani border town of Baghar. This is the worst attack on Pakistani border areas since the Geneva accord was signed, but it is not an isolated incident. On Aug. 6, a Soviet bomber was shot down over Pakistani airspace, according to BBC. In the last two months, the Pakistan government charges, Soviet or Afghan forces have violated Pakistani airspace 120 times.

Pakistani sovereignty is also under attack. One design for the Soviet withdrawal is the division of Afghanistan into at least two sections. The north would be annexed directly by the U.S.S.R. The southern half would fall into the hands of Islamic fundamentalist mujahideen (which could be played as Tsagolov sees it), or be divided along ethnic lines. This design immediately impinges upon Pakistan. The Baluchs and the Pushtoons, for example, are two tribes which straddle the Afghan-Pakistan border. The party of Abdul Wali Khan in the Northwest Frontier Province has known loyalties to the Kabul government. Representatives of this party claim that the Durand Line, devised by the British to divide Afghanistan from India, should include the entirety of the Northwest Frontier Province and part of Baluchistan.

Pakistan is seeking partners for its defense. In Washington, Pakistan is asking for an immediate upgrade of U.S. military equipment, particularly to counter Soviet and Afghan air incursions. On Aug. 6, Foreign Minister Yaqub Khan met with his Iranian counterpart, Ali Akbar Velayati, at the United Nations in New York. Aside from possibly carrying messages to Velayati from Secretary of State George Shultz, Khan discussed the Afghan war with Velayati. Reports are accumulating that, with U.S. and British backing, Pakistan will seek to create an alliance that includes Iran and China. Since the accords, Sino-Pakistani relations have tightened, especially in the military sphere. Pakistan is currently negotiating the purchase of submarines from China, and China sent an unspecified number of F-7P planes to Pakistan on July 26.

Such deals have been uneasily noted in New Delhi. For sure, the increasing militarization of the region does not bode well for the future of peace—despite the platitudes of Moscow and Washington.