by the Non-Aligned Movement, the Islamic Conference Organisation and the GCC to mediate in the war have come to nothing. The holy men appear to view the continuation of the war with equanimity, Iranian manpower losses notwithstanding, believing that in the end Iraq will succumb. If the Saddam Hussein regime were to collapse and be replaced with one either sympathetic to Iran or susceptible to its pressure, the way would lie open to Kuwait and the other states of the Southern Gulf. Beyond these lie the conservative states of the Middle East heartland, Jordan and Egypt, both ruled by Sunnis, both committed to Iraq and both having strong links with the west. Beyond these lies the state of Israel, to the destruction of which the Ayatollah has personally pledged himself. Only when this pledge is fulfilled will he be likely to rest his case.

12 Throughout the war, Iranian oil sales, unlike those of Iraq, have continued at a high level, so foreign exchange has not been a problem.

The struggle for Afghanistan

ANTHONY HYMAN

The Afghan war has entered a crucial phase this year. Soviet air and ground forces are conducting massive offensives against resistance strongholds in many provinces. The Russians appear to be willing to destroy the country in order to 'save' it for socialism. It is the opinion of some observers of this brutal and tragic war that further resistance to the Soviet war machine is futile: the tiresome Afghans should give up their stubborn insistence on keeping their independence, along with their traditions, and be content to have their country occupied. But the Afghan resistance is by no means finished yet, in spite of its evident problems. The Afghan opposition to the Soviet-imposed government of Babrak Karmal still has some important assets in this struggle, which could in the long term enable it to frustrate the Soviet Union's determination to consolidate its hold on Afghanistan.

On 27 April 1978, a Communist-led military coup in Kabul brought to power a radical new government led by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). Early hopes of building a reformed, new society founded on this small party split rapidly into two rival factions, and the country drifted into civil war. In quick succession, the three chief figures of the PDPA became President, each after the murder of his predecessor—Talai


Mr Hyman is a journalist who has recently visited the region. He is the author of Afghanistan under Soviet Domination, 1954-83 (London: Macmillan, 1984).
replacing Daoud, Amin Taraki and, after the Soviet invasion at the end of 1979, Karmal replacing Amin.

The six years which have passed since the revolution have seen a radical shake-up of Afghan society, which does constitute a revolution—although hardly of a type or pattern attempted under Communist direction from Kabul. After the Soviet invasion, the civil war developed into a nation-wide guerilla resistance, and the spreading devastation led to a mass exodus of refugees. The effects of the war have reached all aspects of Afghan society and economy, shattering traditional patterns and, for better or worse, recasting them permanently. In destroying the old, this war is helping to create a new order—though it is rather disorder and anarchy which are in evidence now. There has been a virtually complete breakdown of the central government’s administration of the provinces, the rural population being mostly independent. Where taxes are paid by farmers, it is often to the various resistance parties, rather than to the Kabul government. The marked decline of schools and medical clinics and of access to improved seeds and fertilisers for farmers is another aspect of the destruction that this war features, which has wiped out decades of progress in development.

The impact of the war on agriculture inside Afghanistan is now becoming better appreciated, after careful studies made in difficult conditions. The sharp decline in crops through disruption caused by military bombardments since 1978 was shown last year by a group of Afghan agronomists and economists originally of Kabul University. In a scholarly report published in London this May, the Afghan Aid Committee warn that there is now a threat of widespread famine in many regions inside Afghanistan, which could lead to the deaths of at least 500,000 people unless they receive immediate food aid from outside. Among the likely consequences of famine, or of serious food shortages, would be the weakening and even the end of guerilla resistance, together with another big increase in numbers of Afghan refugees—which stands at some 3.5 million and is already the biggest single refugee community in the world.

There are also many more internal refugees, displaced persons inside Afghanistan, who have found refuge from the war in the capital, Kabul. The process whereby peasants flee to the capital from the dangerous, ruined countryside has already been seen, dramatically, in Saigon and other cities of Indochina in the 1970s. Kabul’s central location has attracted hundreds of thousands of desperate villagers from Logar, Parwan, Kapisa and other fertile provinces who might otherwise have made longer journeys across the borders to Pakistan or Iran. Kabul’s population is at present at least double the 300,000 of pre-war times, in spite of the large number of established Kabul families who, since 1978, have departed into exile. The effects of this increase

in population include serious strains on the city's already inadequate supplies of water, housing, heating and cooking fuel, and food. Only large-scale imports from the Soviet Union of wheat and other items have eased problems caused by shortages and inflation of prices. Those families who could not afford to find a rented room in Kabul have been forced to pitch tents on or to build shanties on the outskirts of Kabul. Bitterness among internal refugees at lack of government help reportedly led to demonstrations in Kabul last winter.

The effect of these changes has been a steady altering of the political map of Afghanistan. Until recently there had been a clear Pashtun dominance in the country as a whole; this is now being challenged by the refugee exodus, which has affected mainly Pashtun tribes living closer to the Pakistan border. Pashtuns now form a minority of the total population inside the country; and by no means the sole active element in the resistance. As for the swollen capital, Kabul, it is now much more important than it was: it contains a considerable part of the Afghan population and probably 15 per cent of those left in the country.

Kabul is a vital constituency, and the Karmal government is, naturally, concentrating on it. The Afghan capital has long been the centre of the country's modernisation drive, containing many of the schools, colleges, hospitals, businesses and government departments and, inevitably, many of the educated elite, too. Since the war its importance has increased, as more than half the country's schools and hospitals have been damaged or destroyed (according to Kabul government official figures in 1983: 1,814 schools and 31 hospitals, together with 111 basic health centres). The latest available statistics show that the capital has 132 schools functioning, with a total of 135,000 students and 9,254 teachers. The fact that two-thirds of these teachers are female reflects the conscription into the army, or flight into exile, of many male teachers in Afghan towns. Three teacher-training institutions in Kabul have 2,700 students on courses, besides others in the country.

Education in Afghan schools has a high political content. Even in the 10–14 age group, Young Pioneers have been organised on the Soviet model. With a membership claimed to be 40,000 already at the end of 1982, the Pioneers are pointedly described by PDPA activists as 'the school for sound training of children and youth'. It is youth organisation which is treated as a key area, not only in Kabul, but in all the towns where the Karmal government has control. Literacy classes, vocational training and other part-time courses are usually linked to political ideology classes given by PDPA activists. Considerable attention and help has also been given to these areas by foreign specialists and advisers from the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and East Germany. In these circumstances it is all the more surprising that a considerable number of teachers continue to oppose Communist political indoctrination of their students. Organised among female school-teachers, the Revolutionary

---

Women's Society has published many clandestine opposition newsletters (shahnameh), distributed widely by students and teachers who claim to be 'progressive and socially aware women' and at the same time are hostile to the Soviet occupation.

Higher education has suffered quite as much damage as lower since 1978. Kabul University, its Polytechnic and the small Jalalabad University have all declined markedly. Over half the teachers are now living in exile, or have been dismissed or imprisoned, or were killed in prison before 1980. The arrest of some of Kabul University's best-known professors in 1982 further demoralised the academic community, convincing many of the independent-minded that there was no longer any room for them. Commenting at his trial in Kabul last year, Professor Hasan Kabir, head of the history department, said: 'Our arrest created general tension and insecurity in the University, and even professors and teachers who were politically neutral were forced to flee the country...it will take the country decades to replace such losses.'

Hundreds of foreign teachers, almost all of them Soviet citizens, have replaced Afghan teachers at the University and the western teachers (from the United States, West Germany and France) who taught there before 1980. The country's mixed educational system is being reorganised in line with the Soviet model, and the Russian language has rapidly replaced English, French and German as the principal foreign language studied in Afghan schools and colleges. Until 1980, Russian had been restricted to Kabul Polytechnic, where foreign teachers were from the Soviet Union. Because of the disruption of studies in Afghanistan, at least 10,000 Afghans are currently studying or on training courses in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe. An indication of just how seriously higher education has been affected by the war strains comes from the annual enrolments for university: down from almost 15,000 in 1978 to just 4,000 last year. The majority of students are female, and many male students abscond before the end of courses, to avoid conscription. Many students are, however, themselves sympathetic to the ruling party: some male students have already completed military service on its behalf.

Apart from students, the PDPA is also concentrating on other sections of the public considered likely cadre material as members of the party itself, or the National Fatherland Front, a grouping intended to attract 'progressive' (that is, non-Communist) Afghans supporting the government. Special newspapers and magazines are being published for students, the Democratic Youth Organisation, women, industrial workers, farmers and soldiers. A number of these front organisations for the PDPA receive substantial material and organisational help from 'twins' in other friendly Communist countries; thus the Czechoslovak Socialist Union of Youth works closely with the Democratic Youth Organisation. An informal link of growing importance for the PDPA is with Iranian Communist exiles of Iran's banned Tudeh Party. The Tudeh Party is one of Asia's veteran Communist parties, with valuable experience.

in organizing labour unions in Iran's industrial centres. Tudeh Party ideologists are reputed to have a firm grasp of Marxist-Leninist theory and a sophisticated understanding of propaganda techniques in the Persian-language medium—Persian being, along with Pashto, the lingua franca of Afghanistan. By comparison with Tudeh, the PDPA is immature, amateurish and virtually lacking in ideologists. Tudeh Party activists are reportedly trying to mobilise the small industrial proletariat of Afghanistan, concentrated in the capital and in a few pockets in northern Afghanistan. It is the declared aim of the PDPA to recruit people from 'the working class and ranks of toilers' up to more than half its membership; at present these people are still only very thinly represented in the PDPA. Unlike so many Afghans of the educated class in the civil service, with uncertain, often divided, loyalties, Iranian Tudeh members can be relied upon by the ruling party in Kabul, as well as by the Russians.

The Afghan army is a major area of concern to the Karmal government. The task of rebuilding it from a poorly trained, unmotivated army and a deeply-split officer corps into a reliable, motivated and well-trained force is still in progress. Official claims that this programme is already showing signs of success in lowered 'rates of defection' by conscripts and higher morale in army ranks, but these claims are largely discounted for lack of evidence. What evidence there is lies in the opposite direction: the stream of deserters continues, and so does in-fighting between the majority Khalq faction in the officer corps, and officers and political commissars more inclined to the Parcham faction of President Karmal. The fact remains that the bulk of the army is composed of unwilling conscripts, who are keener to desert or defect to the Mujaheddin (the guerrillas of the resistance) than to fight for the regime.

The desperate state of the Afghan army can be pictured from the pressures exerted and the cash inducements offered to those soldiers who are trained to sign on for extra terms of service, and from the activities of press-gangs in areas under government control. Length of service for conscripts has increased progressively up to four years, and this now applies to all males from 19 to 39 years. The continuing drain of weapons and ammunition through Afghan deserters and officers collaborating with the resistance is said to be the main cause of Soviet refusal to supply the most modern equipment to the army, or to replace that destroyed in action. However, there seems little reason to doubt that the strength of the Afghan army is kept up to between 50,000 and 60,000 men, mainly by means of press-gangs. The army had some 80,000 men in 1978. There is a core of officers and NCOs loyal to the regime and able to enforce obedience, and the activity of political commissars in army units is said to have been stepped up in the past year. President Karmal told the army's primary party organisations in November 1983 that the role of the party was being 'consistently increased', urging the need for every man in the army to understand correctly the goals of the revolution.

In spite of its deficiencies, the Afghan army still hangs together, being a major source of support for the government and an important part of the anti-
guerrilla strategy, although it seems very much a junior partner to the Soviet army in joint offensives. More progress has been made with new auxiliary forces, created since 1979 under Soviet direction. These include local militia units, paramilitary police and civil defence groups—all volunteers, with generous pay allowances attracting recruits for the first two forces. An expansion of the police force was designed to bring its strength up to 60,000 in 1983, with weapons and training planned to give the police an important role in the anti-guerrilla war.

It is KHAD, the secret police, which is in charge of counter-intelligence and espionage, working closely with recruits from the border militias. KHAD is credited with considerable successes against resistance forces, and its lavish Soviet funding allows it to maintain an efficient network of some 20,000 paid informers in the provinces, as well as across the border in Pakistan. Officers from the KGB (the Soviet security police) are reportedly placed in many KHAD posts in Kabul, as well as being responsible for training. KHAD’s importance can be gathered from the fact that its director, Dr Mohammed Najibullah, is an intimate friend of Karmal and one of the principal figures in the PDPA Politburo which, together with the Revolutionary Council, is the official centre of authority in Afghanistan.

Assuming that Soviet military, financial and economic support for the Kabul government continues, it is likely to keep indefinitely its somewhat shaky control of the capital, the main towns and the attached rural areas. The actual needs of the restricted administration are supplied largely through deficit financing, recourse to printing large amounts of paper money for the salaries of several hundred thousand people, and considerable Russian loans.

A big factor in paying the war costs is the expanding production of Afghan natural gas—96 per cent of it is for export to the Soviet Union. Priced at what is believed to be half the world market figure, Afghan natural gas production amounted to 2.36 billion cubic metres in 1983, helping to offset the costs of the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, which some observers estimate at a minimum of $1 billion a year. The economic trend is towards integration in the Comecon bloc system, and in particular towards closer integration with the economy of Soviet Central Asia. Comecon’s share of Afghanistan’s trade has increased from 40 per cent in 1978 to over 70 per cent in 1983, though traditional trade with Japan and western European states continues.

The extension to Afghanistan of the Soviet Central Asian system of military infrastructure was marked by the extension of military air bases and the opening in 1982 of the first road and rail bridge across the river Oxus (Amu Darya), and the southward extension of a railway line capable of military as well as trade movement.

It is Soviet airpower which has been used to striking advantage against the lightly armed resistance, with a force of some 400 Mi-24 helicopter gunships proving especially deadly and effective. Air strikes have been the preferred method of engaging the enemy: the majority of some 110,000 Soviet troops are installed as garrisons in towns and air bases, and guarding communications
lines, and they only rarely engage with the Mujaheddin. This strategy has certainly lowered the casualty rate of Soviet troops, which was estimated by the end of 1983 at 15,000, a third of which may have been fatal.

The series of recent Soviet-Afghan offensives since this spring seems to mark a significant change in tactics, aiming to break the stalemate in the five-year-old guerrilla war by dealing body blows to key centres of resistance. Some reports claim that the Panjshir offensive has been a costly failure, with heavy casualties inflicted on Soviet troops. It is probably too early to assess its success, but in resistance circles in Peshawar the shift in Soviet tactics is being taken very seriously indeed. Estimates speak of 10,000 fresh combat troops, many from elite commando units trained for hand-to-hand fighting. By training and often in equipment, Soviet troops taking part in recent offensives are said to be much better suited for the anti-guerrilla war than Soviet reservists who normally guard military bases or do convoy duties. Many resistance commanders anticipate that Soviet commando forces will act in future as a highly mobile strike force, hitting selected targets, often dropped by parachute, and mounting surprise ambushes in the heart of areas the Mujaheddin regard as safe territory.

The resistance is led by a large number of local groups and regional fronts, mostly affiliated to the seven established Afghan parties based in Pakistan's border city of Peshawar. The basic function of the exile parties has been to receive and channel to the internal resistance supplies of weapons, ammunition and cash provided by foreign sympathisers and backers of the resistance. Though captured arms from convoys or Afghan army posts inside Afghanistan provide important supplies, it is the regular flow of external aid which ensures effective resistance, as in other guerrilla movements of modern times. Considerable quantities of small arms are now available to many of the Mujaheddin; they have learned quickly to use these to advantage since 1980, when even automatic weapons were uncommon. The main sources of supply, via Pakistan, are the United States, China, the Gulf states, Iran and probably Britain and West Germany, with a range of infantry weapons distributed through the party system.

As far as organised, systematic guerrilla training is concerned, there is little evidence that more than a small number benefit. Numerous foreign reporters have described the casual manner in which the Mujaheddin fight, and the almost complete lack of appreciation of modern guerrilla tactics. It is after such experiences that jaundiced but seasoned observers of guerrilla warfare have commented that the Afghans live in unreformed guerrilla country which they do not know how to exploit. However, there are a few good centres of guerrilla training inside Afghanistan, notably two camps established in the Panjshir valley for volunteers from many different regions. In Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province, close to the border, some small training camps have been established, with ex-Afghan-army officers teaching recruits weapons skills, and sometimes also guerrilla tactics. There is said to be increasing demand for

training from volunteers, due to their growing realisation that such skills are valuable and not known by everyone who has handled a gun. One problem faced by resistance commanders is the low level of education of most of the Mujaheddin—a problem shared by the regular Afghan army, incidentally. Literacy and numeracy are uncommon attainments, making training in accurate firing of mortars or other complex equipment difficult.

While urging western help for more efficient and more widespread military training, resistance spokesmen are at the same time often bitter about the failure of western states, especially the United States, to supply them with sophisticated ground-to-air missiles such as Sam 7s. Without the ability to challenge Soviet airpower, thereby greatly increasing the cost to the Soviet Union of occupying Afghanistan, few of the commanders imagine it will be possible to break the military stalemate. Bitterness and frustration were expressed in January this year by Commander Massoud in the Panjshir valley: he accused the Americans of exploiting the Afghan war for their own ends, and allowing Afghans to die needlessly because of a failure to deliver anti-aircraft weapons.

There are several explanations for what does look like a cynical western policy. Any obvious American military involvement in delivering sophisticated weapons so close to the Soviet border would probably provoke the Soviet Union to a more aggressive policy in Central America. Pakistan's military government is often reported to have defined strictly the nature of aid which it will permit to be given to the Afghan parties based in Peshawar, and to have ruled out Sam 7s. Certainly, Pakistan would have good reason to fear the consequences that such an escalation of the guerrilla war right on its borders as stepped-up training, together with delivery of Sam 7s to Afghan guerrillas, would produce from the Soviet side.

Apart from sophisticated anti-aircraft weapons, the resistance by and large is much better supplied with infantry weapons, even though effective training is still scarce. In a forceful plea for a change of policy by western states, The Times in a recent editorial urged that it was time to help the Afghans by providing training as well as arms: "This is something which the Russians never have any qualms about providing for those "liberation movements" that they support. It is surely time for those who claim to support the cause of Afghan liberation to take a leaf out of their book." Whether this advice will be heeded remains to be seen.

What is clear, however, is that leaders of the Afghan resistance itself are more aware of its deficiencies than in the past, and they are keen to rectify them. The fighting in many regions of the country reveals the increasing ability at grassroots level of local commanders to cooperate well with guerrilla groups of other parties, and sometimes also to coordinate attacks. The petty rivalries between the parties and leaders based in Peshawar, which have so far prevented

---

8 The Times, 13 March 1984.
a united opposition—or even an umbrella organisation representing the resistance—are now often ignored inside the country by the guerrilla groups who do the fighting. Many of the problems within the resistance arise from the persistent failure of one party, the fundamentalist Muslim Haq-i-Islami, led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, to make a common cause with other elements of the resistance. There have been serious clashes between Mujaheddin groups, especially in the northern provinces, which are variously attributed to this rivalry for influence and to the intrigues of agents of KHAD. Secret police agents undoubtedly do exploit the long-standing tribal and ethnic differences which divide Pushtuns tribes and clans, and complicate relations between Pushtuns and the other ethnic minorities—Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, Turkmen, Baluch and Nurisanzis.

But the Afghan opposition has important assets which are highly relevant to its long-term aim of frustrating the Soviet occupation. The Mujaheddin appear to be able to retain the support as well as the respect of the great majority of the Afghan people, in villages, towns and refugee camps in Pakistan and Iran. Their morale and self-confidence impress all observers, while better leadership and heavy weapons have improved guerrilla effectiveness in recent years. Not only in ambushes and attacks on isolated military posts, but by raids into all the cities and by urban guerrilla strikes, the Mujaheddin have proved their ability to extend the war, and take it even into the heart of enemy territory. Even in the big towns, resistance pressures have been strong. Herat and Kandahar—the two biggest Afghan cities after Kabul—have been bombed from the air repeatedly since 1980 in attempts to regain control for government forces and also to intimidate the local people from collaborating with guerrillas. Large areas of the cities remain in the control of the Mujaheddin despite the presence there of large Soviet and Afghan military forces. This summer, intense fighting has been reported between guerrillas and troops from Herat in the west, Mazar-i-Sharif in the north and Ghazni in the south.

It is noteworthy that six years after the revolution, a curfew is still imposed in the capital and other cities from 10 pm to 4 am, when government control is challenged by the opposition. The continuing defection of senior civil servants, diplomats, doctors, engineers and officers as well as humble army conscripts must also encourage the resistance, suggesting that the regime it is fighting is nowhere near the success it claims against the ‘counter-revolution’. As long as the resistance can preserve popular support inside Afghanistan, and continue developing its military effectiveness, it will remain a piece in the Afghan puzzle which cannot be ignored—let alone dismissed as a mere ‘counter-revolution’—whether in wartime or whenever negotiations towards a peace settlement once again get under way.
Comparative Strategy
AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
RICHARD B. FOSTER
Editor-in-Chief
Comparative Strategy addresses itself to America's primary problem of formulating a comprehensive strategy that molds political, economic, and military factors into one integrated structure—a "grand strategy" for the conduct of its international affairs. The journal offers articles of high quality and great timeliness from outstanding authorities in their respective fields.

Some articles from Volume 3:
Are They Interested in Stability? The Soviet View of Intervention
Keith Payne
Australia, the Pacific, and the United States in the 1980's
Harry G. Gerber
Japanese Views on Defense Burden-Sharing
William M. Carpenter and Stephen P. Ginter
Education and Human Resources in Soviet Development Strategy
Francis W. Rusling and Catherine P. Altes
Soviet Strategic Style
Rebecca Y. Stowe
The Chinese Cultural Style of Warfare
Edward S. Brinsen

Issued quarterly: Volume 4 $49.00

Published for—
The Strategic Studies Center,
SRI International

Crane, Russak & Company
3 East 44th Street, New York, N.Y. 10017
(212) 867-1490