

Afghan partition: Moscow-Teheran axis aims to undermine Turkey

by Konstantin George

An April 5 wire by the French news agency Agence France Presse cited Afghan exiles in Paris denouncing Washington and Moscow for having agreed to a partition of Afghanistan in the wake of a Soviet troop "withdrawal." The Afghan exiles reported the existence of a "live plan" to partition the country into a northern part, governed by Moscow and its Afghan puppet, Najibullah. The dividing line would be the Hindu Kush mountain range. South of that, the bulk of Afghanistan, the part that has been totally ravaged and heavily depopulated during eight-plus years of Russian occupation, would be turned over to the seven or more rival parties that comprise the Afghan resistance.

The exiles charged that the current plan reflects Soviet policy intentions all along. It is being carried out in full collusion with the Reagan administration. In this context, the exiles linked the near-simultaneous arrivals of Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze in Kabul (April 3) and U.S. Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci in Delhi (April 4).

On all counts the exiles are correct. Dramatic and fast-moving developments in this direction are under way. Shevardnadze spent over three days in Kabul, April 3-6, working out the details with the Kabul regime of what will be called a withdrawal, but will in fact be a carefully staged regroupment of Soviet and Afghan forces into the north.

Then, on April 6, with no prior announcement or hint, the Soviet news agency TASS announced that General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachov had arrived in Tashkent, the capital of Soviet Uzbekistan, a republic bordering on Afghanistan. The first TASS statement gave no reason for the sudden, surprise visit, but the reason was obvious. A press conference was suddenly called April 6 at the Soviet Foreign Ministry. The speaker, Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Petrovsky, addressed the troop withdrawal question, and announced that the Afghan government "has agreed to such an arrangement," and Moscow and Kabul "are in full accord."

On April 7, Gorbachov himself announced that an agreement had been reached.

These developments climax the first phase of Moscow's new policy of by-passing the Afghanistan-Pakistan Geneva talks. The policy was first announced by the Soviet Foreign Ministry March 17, while Gorbachov was out of the country, on a five-day visit to Yugoslavia. That a superpower deal was coming was clear in March, when Washington and Moscow quietly began their own Afghanistan talks in Geneva,

between Robert Peck from the State Department and Kozyrev from the Foreign Ministry. The most explicit Soviet statement that a deal on Afghanistan will be concluded by the superpowers, and not via the Afghanistan-Pakistan Geneva talks, was contained in an April 5 Radio Moscow question-and-answer commentary on Shevardnadze's visit to Kabul.

Q: Is the Soviet Union counting on the complete failure of the Afghanistan-Pakistan talks?

A: That's precisely the essence of the Shevardnadze visit. The withdrawal of Soviet troops is a foregone conclusion. It will happen with or without U.S. guarantees.

The U.S. sellout

The last quote from Radio Moscow is simply extending a courtesy to the Reagan administration. Enough "guarantees" have already been delivered.

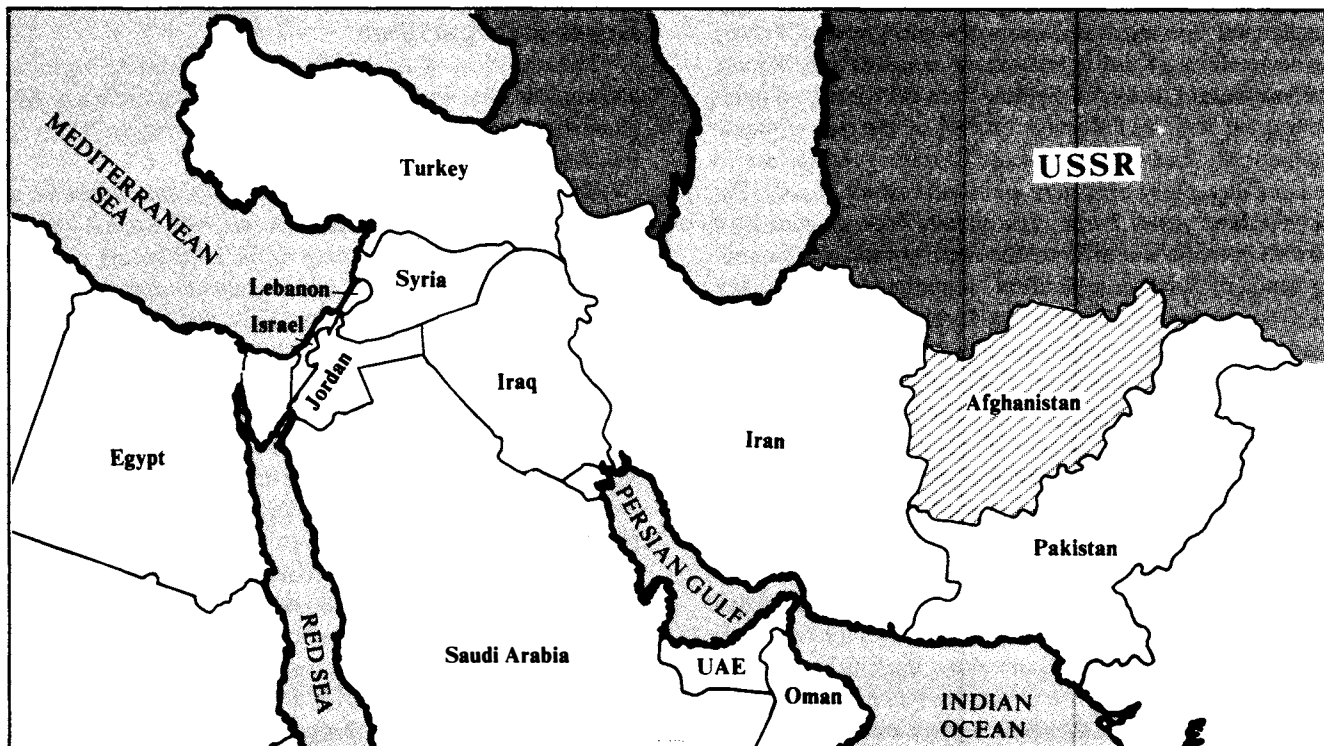
To start with, Moscow's ability to successfully partition Afghanistan has been guaranteed by the Reagan administration's halt of deliveries of effective military supplies to the Afghan resistance. The "deal" to this effect was worked out no later than November 1987, on the eve of the Reagan-Gorbachov December summit in Washington, the "Munich II" INF treaty sellout of Europe.

A press conference held April 4 in Peshawar, Pakistan, by the leader of one of the seven Afghan resistance parties, Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi, confirmed this. He disclosed that the resistance has received no American Stinger SAMs for "four or five months," i.e., since mid- to late-November 1987. Afghan resistance inquiries to the U.S. government as to why, were simply left unanswered. Finally, "three months ago," i.e., early January, the Pakistani government told the resistance that Washington had decided to stop supplying Stingers.

This means that the full strength of Soviet aircraft and helicopters can operate in the geographically compact north, where the Soviet regime will be established, with total security against any guerrilla resistance. In short, the establishment of a Soviet puppet regime between the Hindu Kush and the Soviet-Afghan border will be militarily tenable.

The Gulf, the Indian Ocean, and Turkey

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"REGIONAL MATTERS" IN WEST ASIA. *The Soviet objective in the Arab Near East, Persia, and the Indian Subcontinent, has been and remains domination, and the attainment of Moscow's long-desired goal of warm water ports on the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf. Moscow will use its axis partner, Iran, as a battering ram against the Arab countries and to destabilize NATO-member Turkey. The Afghan resistance groups will be manipulated into fighting each other and Pakistan.*

long-desired goal of "warm water ports" on the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf. That was the essential geopolitical reason for the 1979 invasion and occupation of Afghanistan in the first place. Afghanistan was envisaged as a springboard for a further drive southward to the Indian Ocean.

The new policy of regrouping and partition, couched under the banner of "withdrawal," changes only the means by which this underlying policy will be executed in the coming months. To be precise, the old policy will be continued, employing a new axis of advance. Furthermore, the new policy will be much more efficient for the Soviets. Through the use of proxies in the interim, the entire region proximate to the southern Soviet Union, from Turkey to Pakistan, will be destabilized, through two simultaneous operations.

1) Moscow will use its axis partner, Iran, to pave the way for a Russian conquest of the region. The Iranian armies will serve not only as a battering ram against the Arab world, but set in motion a destabilization of Turkey.

2) The Afghan resistance organizations, based in the mostly Pathan "south" of to-be-divided Afghanistan, will be manipulated into focusing their energies on fighting each other and Pakistan.

The Moscow-Teheran axis

In the autumn of 1987, Iran changed its strategy in the war against Iraq. Previously, the brunt of Iran's repeated

offensives in the war had occurred along the southern front in the Basra region. Then, in November 1987, a series of major offensives commenced, lasting to the present, in the Kurdish-inhabited region of northern Iraq. In addition to the heavy front-line fighting, with huge Iranian territorial gains in Iraq, an Iranian-sponsored Kurdish insurrection has seized large pieces of territory in mountainous northern Iraq, behind Iraqi lines. The series of offensives has produced a crisis in Iraq, whose hold on "Kurdistan" in the north is very shaky; the specter of Iraqi loss of the region is real.

The new war strategy might as well have been scripted in Moscow, whether it was or not. Teheran is playing Moscow's game, and a fair portion of its leadership, consciously so. Russia is now reaping the full benefits of over four decades of carefully built networks of agents, agents of influence, and assets inside Iran. The operation was begun during the Second World War, when Iran was partitioned between Russia and Britain, with Russia occupying the north, including Teheran. More assets were implanted during the 1945-46 tenure of the Soviet puppet regime in Iranian Azerbaijan, in four decades of channeling Tudeh (Iranian Communist Party) cadre into positions of power and influence, including a fair number of "made in Tashkent" red mullahs, especially after the overthrow of the Shah in 1978.

The Iranian and Kurdish irregulars' successes in northern Iraq have set off alarms in NATO-member Turkey. On two,

equally vital "life and death" national security counts, Turkey can never allow a Kurdish takeover of northern Iraq. Turkey receives most of its oil via pipeline from the Kirkuk oil fields in northern Iraq, and Kurdish control of the region would automatically lead to a large-scale Kurdish guerrilla war in the Kurdish regions of eastern and southeastern Turkey. For the past three years, Turkey has already been plagued by a Kurdish guerrilla war in its southeastern provinces. Marauding bands of Kurdish separatists, supported by Soviet ally Syria, have repeatedly crossed into Turkey via Syria and Iraq, massacring villagers and ambushing military patrols. Well over 1,000 persons have been killed to date.

Turkey is now caught in a bind. The Özal government in Ankara would like, if at all possible, to avoid having to send the Turkish Army into Iraqi Kurdistan; yet it knows that if the situation goes out of control, it must intervene militarily.

The critical status of the Gulf War caused Prime Minister Özal to undertake a mission to Baghdad at the beginning of April. On April 3, on his return to Ankara, Özal declared that Turkey had "no intention" of sending troops into northern Iraq, and that Turkey would not allow itself to be dragged into the Gulf War. These were accurate statements of intent, if one adds the qualifier, as long as Turkey absolutely doesn't have to.

Events may dictate another course, and Turkey is preparing itself for that contingency. On March 31, as Özal was preparing to depart for Baghdad, his government imposed a state-of-alert in the Kurdish provinces of eastern Turkey, and sent elite army units to provinces bordering on Iran, Iraq, and the Soviet Union. The alert was sparked by a renewal of Kurdish guerrilla war inside Turkey, which saw some of the bloodiest fighting since the Soviet-Syrian-sponsored insurrection began in 1985.

Ankara is well aware that suppressing the Kurdish threat to Turkey in northern Iraq will be no simple "surgical" action. To effectively destroy an estimated 50,000 armed Kurdish irregulars, who can depend on the sanctuary of Iranian territory, would require between 100,000 and 200,000 Turkish troops, with no guarantee of success. That could only be ensured by also moving against Iran. That would give Moscow a pretext to move into Iran and "protect" Iranian Azerbaijan, the Teheran region, and the Turkmen region of north-eastern Iran.

Whatever Turkey does militarily, Russia would vehemently protest the "NATO military intervention," etc., but behind the shrill "protests" would be a gleeful Kremlin, happy over Turkey's predicament. The Soviets would use Turkey's weakened military situation and the "imperialist intervention" charge as the pretext to relaunch a direct expansionist campaign against Turkey, a campaign dormant since 1947, when Russia demanded the secession of the Turkish provinces of Kars and Ardahan, bordering on Soviet Georgia and Armenia. The move against Turkey would occur in the context of not only the Near East destabilization, but also the post-INF weakening of Western defenses in general.

Korea-style partition

The partition of Afghanistan would likewise begin to accomplish what eight years of Soviet troop presence in Afghanistan have not, the destabilization and fragmentation of Pakistan.

The outlines of a partition of Afghanistan would be a Soviet regime installed in the Turkmen, Uzbek, and Tadjik north, ethnically corresponding to the neighboring populations in Soviet Central Asia, and located between the Soviet border and the Hindu Kush Mountains, and an Afghan "Lebanon" in the south. The ethnically defined partition has a built-in "fall back" benefit for the Russians. Should, for any reason, the northern Afghanistan Soviet regime fall apart, the Russians can simply orchestrate a sudden chorus from "duly constituted bodies" of the "Turkmen, Uzbek, and Tadjik peoples," "asking" to be "united with their brother-peoples in the Soviet Union." In short, annexation.

The south, like Lebanon, would be characterized by rival guerrilla and tribal militias slaughtering each other.

The fratricidal warfare would not be confined to southern and eastern Afghanistan. The south consists of Pathan and Baluchi tribes, and borders on the Pathan-inhabited Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan and Pakistani Baluchistan. Both regions have already been plagued by Soviet-sponsored separatist insurrections. These will get worse in the months ahead.

By partitioning Afghanistan, by making the non-Pathan north "off limits" to the Pathan majority of Afghanistan, it will be child's play for Russia to guide the redirection of Afghan nationalist energies into a Pathan-centered "Greater Afghanistan" project, aimed east and south—at Pakistan. This is no scenario. It is a live dynamic, unfolding at present.

Timed with Shevardnadze's stay in Kabul, the Soviet government cynically declared its support for Afghan territorial claims against Pakistan. On April 5, Soviet 1st Deputy Foreign Minister Yuli Vorontsov called in the Pakistani ambassador to Moscow, and announced that "one of the issues" that the Kabul government "wishes to settle" in Geneva is the "so-called Durand Line."

The Durand Line is the Afghan-Pakistan border drawn by Britain in 1883, and as Soviet profilers are fully aware, a line never recognized by any Afghan government, including the present Russian puppet-regime and, for that matter, all the parties in the Afghan resistance.

In fact, Moscow's declaration on the Durand Line was preceded by an even stronger statement issued by the Afghan resistance. At a March 29 press conference in Peshawar, Pakistan, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, President of the Resistance's seven-party alliance, announced that a future resistance government in Afghanistan would demand a "merger of Afghanistan and Pakistan," and barring that, a "confederation."

The plan was first signalled by Soviet Politburo "king-maker" Yegor Ligachov, in a mid-December speech announcing a new policy whereby individual Soviet republics

and regions were assuming partnership-protector relations with individual provinces of Afghanistan, with the north of Afghanistan to receive the lion's share of increased assistance under this new program. Then, timed with the March 21-23 Shultz-Shevardnadze meeting in Washington, the puppet regime in Kabul announced the creation of a new cabinet post, "Minister for the Northern Provinces." On March 28, giving no reason, the Soviet news agency TASS announced a re-drawing of provincial boundaries in northern Afghanistan. The southern portion of two northern provinces, Balkh and Yavzyan, which run south from the Afghan-Soviet border, have been detached to form a new province called Sari Pul. Balkh province contains the town of Mazar-e-Sharif, which observers note is slated to become an Afghan "Pyongyang," i.e., the capital of a Soviet northern Afghanistan as Moscow pulls its forces out of the south.

Already, both Soviet and Afghan forces are being regrouped more and more into the north of the country. The Afghan resistance has reported that, beginning March 20, a squadron each of Soviet MiG-23 fighters and SU-17 fighter

bombers were flown in, while in the following days, hundreds of truckloads of Soviet military supplies began arriving in the north.

Keeping the north is essential for Moscow to capitalize on another part of Washington's "New Yalta" generosity. Moscow, geopolitically speaking, can afford the phony part-withdrawal from Afghanistan, because it has been agreed to in return for a free hand regarding Iran. The move out of Afghanistan is producing a military regroupment of another kind, aimed at having forces in place for future military opportunities directed at Iran and/or Turkey. The forces being "withdrawn" from Afghanistan will beef up Soviet invasion capabilities in the Turkestan Military District, opposite Iran, east of the Caspian Sea.

The unrest in the Soviet Transcaucasus, instigated by the KGB, has provided the pretext for a massive inflow of military forces into Armenia and Azerbaijan, both bordering on Iran, west of the Caspian Sea. When the Iranian card has been played for all it's worth, Russia will be in position to move in directly.

Top Soviet expert sees partition of Afghanistan

The top Soviet expert on Afghanistan has declared that the country may be partitioned, once Soviet troops are withdrawn. Yuri Ganokovsky, who has worked for 35 years at the Oriental Institute of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, made this remarkable statement to a seminar at Johns Hopkins University in Washington, D.C. April 6.

Ganokovsky ascribed the movement for partition to tribal groups interested in abolishing existing borders with Pakistan. "Semi-independent regional regimes" may surface, said Ganokovsky; he argued there could be no single Islamic republic of Afghanistan, since it is a tribally-divided country. He talked of regional republics of Nouristan, Hazarachia or Pushtoon.

But the People's Democratic Party of Najibullah will remain in power in the remainder of the country, Ganokovsky insisted, for the following reasons:

- 1) There are now 180,000 members of the party, along with another 90,000 members of its youth group and 20,000 members of its women's group. Many of these have received training in the East bloc.

- 2) The new Afghani army has 160,000 soldiers and another 100,000 police; 75% of the officers of both are members of the PDP.

- 3) Twenty percent of the economically active population of Afghanistan now is employed by the state direct-

ly—over 400,000 people.

- 4) More and more guerrilla groups are approaching the Kabul government to sign non-aggression pacts.

- 5) The internal rivalries between the over 60 guerrilla groups have not abated.

- 6) Guerrilla action against the Kabul government has forced all the moderates out of the government, and handed it over to hard-line leftists.

- 7) A growing number of small businessmen are supporting the government because they are being allowed to visit the Soviet Union and sign trade agreements there.

Asked by *EIR*'s Nick Benton to comment on Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze's speech of March 31 about the issue of the "artificial" border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and whether the Soviets would encourage tribal invasions into Pakistan of groups that would eventually provide the Soviets with warm-water ports on the Indian Ocean, Ganokovsky detailed the history of the British-drawn border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, which, he pointed out, has "created many divided peoples." He added, "The Soviet Union has no wish to discuss the frontier between Afghanistan and Pakistan," thereby implying the Soviets will leave it up to the tribes to take care of that "problem" themselves.

Ganokovsky did not deny that the Soviets have a \$1,000 bounty for every Western journalist captured dead or alive in Afghanistan or near its border in Pakistan. When challenged by an anti-Soviet Afghani in the audience, Ganokovsky reminded him of the "benevolence" of the 100,000 Soviet troops there. "We live now in the end of the 20th century, where if it wanted to, a modern army could eliminate all life from the landscape of your country."