

Internal political and security developments

Summary and key dates

Internal security developments (June 1983 to April 1984).

Internal political developments (June 1983 to March 1984).

Border incidents (September 1983 to March 1984).

United Nations Commission on Human Rights resolution concerning Afghanistan (March 15, 1984).

Economic relations with the Soviet Union (January 1984).

The Afghan government of President Babrak Karmal continued during the period from June 1983 to April 1984 to face armed resistance throughout the country from the *mujaheddin* (“holy warrior”) guerrillas, who launched repeated attacks on both the Afghan and the occupying Soviet forces. Neither side appeared by April 1984 to have made significant territorial gains (the *mujaheddin* holding most of the high ground in central and eastern Afghanistan as well as virtually all country districts, while the government forces held the cities and larger towns), but there was evidence in April 1984 of a major renewed Soviet attack on the strategic Panjshir valley to the north of Kabul.

The Soviet forces, which had entered Afghanistan in December 1979 in support of President Karmal [for list of previous reports see 32249A], were believed in early 1984 to be maintaining an unchanged presence of about 105,000 men, whereas the Afghan Army remained at only some 30,000 men, despite repeated recruitment campaigns, largely because of the numbers of soldiers defecting to the, *mujaheddin*.

Since the 1979 Soviet intervention no Western journalists had been allowed into the country, but refugees arriving in India and Pakistan in 1983–84 reported periodic and intensive attacks by the *mujaheddin*, particularly in the cities of Herat, Kandahar and Kabul [for maps see pages 32230 and 30231] as well as in the Shomali valley north of Kabul and at several points near the border with Pakistan. On the other hand, the official Afghan news agency Bakhtar and the government's Kabul radio service generally maintained that the “bandits” (i. e. *mujaheddin*) were rapidly losing control

or were surrendering to the authorities under the terms of an amnesty proclaimed at the end of 1983.

As far as could be ascertained by Western observers, the government's administration continued to be disrupted not only by guerrilla attacks but also by bitter rivalries between the *Khalq* (People) and Parcham (Flag) factions within the ruling People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). Several of the senior personnel changes made during this period were believed to reflect the in-fighting, while there were also repeated accounts of shooting incidents between PDPA members, or between army and police officers in Kabul and in Herat.

The United Nations Commission on Human Rights voted on March 15, 1984, to set up an investigation of alleged human rights abuses in Afghanistan, in view of the increasing reports of torture in the country's prisons. Meanwhile the United Nations continued its efforts through its special envoy, Sr Diego Cordovez, to secure a basis for a negotiated settlement of the issue [see pages 32252-53], but there was no clear evidence by April 1984 of significant progress in this area.

Military campaigns in northern Afghanistan

The Soviet military action in the Panjshir valley, which had been a major area of conflict during 1982 [see page 32249], was halted throughout 1983 as a result of a ceasefire agreement reached with Mr. Ahmad Shah Masood, the leader of the rebel group which still held the valley.

It was reported that the truce had allowed the guerrillas to regroup and to bring in the 1983 harvest, while on the other hand it had freed Soviet forces (hitherto suffering heavy losses in the area) for deployment elsewhere in the country. Rebel attacks continued, however, in Gulbahar, which lay at the mouth of the Panjshir valley and on the main supply route connecting Kabul with the Soviet border in the north. [For details of attacks on Soviet convoys bound for Kabul, see below].

It was widely reported in early 1984 that Mr. Masood had refused a Soviet request to prolong the truce, and as the weather conditions improved in March and April it was reported that Soviet paratroops had entered the area in preparation for a spring offensive, while Sukhoi-25 support planes were moving into the nearby Baghram air base.

Much of the fighting in northern Afghanistan resulted from rebel attacks on the road between Kabul and Mazar-i-Sharif, which served as the main supply route to the capital. It was widely reported in early 1984 that ambushes of convoys were so frequent as to have caused fuel shortages in Kabul, and the guerrillas frequently

attacked power and natural gas lines along the route, resulting in increasingly frequent blackouts in the capital. It was stated at the beginning of June 1983 by Mr. Soltan Ali Keshtmad, the Prime Minister, that the Soviet Union was engaged in laying four new power lines to Afghanistan (serving Kabul, Mazar-i-Sharif, Kundiz and Torghandi respectively-the last-named town lying near the border north of Hevat).

Much of the most bitter fighting in northern Afghanistan took place during this period in the Shomali valley (Parwan province), to the immediate north of Kabul, and refugees arriving in Pakistan reported a series of actions by Soviet and government forces involving large numbers of civilian deaths, apparently in direct retribution for specific incidents such as guerilla ambushes on military convoys. [See also for details of earlier similar operations.]

One such Soviet bombardment was reported to have taken place on June 8, 1983, with the heavy shelling of several villages near Paghman following an ambush the previous day on two lorries carrying Soviet troops. More heavy fighting took place on July 19–20 at Istalef and Qaranbagh, following the shooting down of three Soviet and Afghan helicopters, and by mid-August Western diplomats were describing the bombing of the Shomali region as “routine”. A further major assault on Istalef began on Oct. 12.

Between 50 and 80 *mujaheddin* were reported to have been killed on Nov. 8–9 near Farza (in the Shomali region) during an aerial attack by the Soviet forces, and some 2,500 Soviet troops advanced on Nov. 26 into the zone, where they were reported on Dec. 6 to have lost numbers of tanks and helicopters, with 24 men being taken prisoner by the *mujaheddin*. On Feb. 7, 1984, diplomatic sources in Islamabad (the capital of Pakistan) reported that according to refugees from the area a Soviet reprisal attack on Shomali villages had killed several hundred civilians, and that in late January over 100 Afghan soldiers had been killed by Soviet helicopters which had mistakenly attacked them.

The guerrillas’ “Afghan Islamic Press Agency” (based in Pakistan) claimed on June 5, 1983, that 90 of the 300 Afghan soldiers at a military base in Juma Bazar (near Maimana, in Fariab province) had been killed as 500 rebels had overrun the site.

There were also repeated guerrilla attacks during this period on Mazar-i-Sharif. *Le Monde* reported on June 30, 1983, that the Afghan Army headquarters in the town had been shelled by the *mujaheddin*, resulting in heavy losses to both sides. Some 50 civilians were reported to have been killed on Aug. 13 when a Soviet tank fired on a crowded restaurant, in apparent retaliation for the shooting of a Soviet officer, and large numbers of aircraft, tanks and lorries were destroyed in mid-September during heavy fighting in Mazar-i-Sharif and near the Salang tunnel (a key section of the

supply route to Kabul-see page 32249). Some 18 Soviet soldiers were reported on Jan. 17, 1984, to have been captured in Mazar-i-Sharif, and there were more attacks on the tunnel, and especially on fuel and electricity supplies, on Dec. 21–24, marking the fourth anniversary of the 1979 Soviet intervention; the Soviet Army newspaper *Krasnaya Zvezda* (Red Star) conceded on Jan. 14 in an unusual report that the Salang area was “still subject to guerrilla attacks”.

Campaigns to the south of Kabul

Strong *mujaheddin* resistance was evident from the periodic attacks launched especially in the Logar, Paktia and Ghazni provinces to the south of Kabul, and reprisal bombings and other actions by Soviet and Afghan forces along the road to Kandahar were again a feature of the conflict in this region.

A heavy bombardment of villages in Paktia province, resulting in substantial civilian casualties, followed the killing in late May of some 200 members of the 38th Afghan commando battalion [see page 32250].

A defecting Afghan officer, Brig. Mohammad Rahim, confirmed in Pakistan on Dec. 6, 1983, earlier reports concerning reprisals taken in Ghazni on July 8 when, according to the Western press, between 20 and 30 of the town's elders had been executed in retaliation for the shooting by civilian residents of four Soviet soldiers engaged in looting.

Refugees reported that a major engagement involving severe government losses had occurred on Aug. 11 at Mukur, on the road from Kabul to Ghazni, while on Aug. 28 the rebels claimed to have destroyed tanks, lorries and a MiG-23 fighter on Aug. 14 at Torgan, near Ghazni.

A large-scale tank attack was reported on Aug. 30 in Logar province, following a rebel ambush on a meeting of Afghan elders and Soviet advisers which was seeking a ceasefire for the harvest season. It was reported that the *mujaheddin* had killed all the Afghans present at the meeting and captured all the Soviet citizens.

Further ambushes on Soviet and Afghan convoys were reported in Logar and Paktia provinces in mid-September and in Ghazni in mid-December. Over 100 civilians were believed to have been killed in an aerial bombardment of Ghazni by Soviet forces on Jan. 1–3, 1984.

Campaigns in eastern Afghanistan

It was widely reported in mid-September 1983 that the *mujaheddin* had launched a major offensive against the three towns of Jaji, Urgun and Khost (near the Pakistan border in Paktia and Katawuz-Urgun provinces) in an apparent effort to secure road access to Pakistan (from which country most of their weapons and supplies were thought to originate). Early reports of the fighting differed considerably, but it appeared by late October that the mujaheddin had taken Jaji and had surrounded Khost (where a mutiny had occurred in January-see page 32250) as well as the garrison at Urgun.

The blockade at Urgun was broken, however, in mid-January 1984, when the Afghan Army sent in the first convoy for some seven months. In late December the rebels had briefly taken control of the Urgun airstrip but had been beaten back by heavy shelling. The attack on Khost had failed at this stage, but Jaji was still held by the *mujaheddin*, according to Western diplomatic sources.

Following the fall of Urgun, the Afghan press reported the surrender of large numbers of rebels, and the Soviet media subsequently accused the United States in March 1984 of attempting to set up a "liberated zone" with an autonomous government in the area.

Periodic fighting also occurred at Jalalabad (between Kabul and the Khyber Pass) where the Soviet forces maintained a large presence. They were reported to have bombed local villages for two days in late July 1983, following the sixth attack in six months by the *mujaheddin* on Jalalabad airport, in which damage was done to aircraft. Further heavy fighting was reported in the area in late December.

Campaigns in southern and western Afghanistan

Despite the deployment of a large contingent of Soviet troops in May 1983 at Herat [see [page 32251], rebel activity in the city continued at a high level throughout this period, and Western diplomats reported in late 1983 that the Karmal administration did not exercise full control even in the daylight hours.

It was reported that a major battle had broken out in Herat on Aug. 10 during a house-to-house search for insurgents and that 300 people, including up to 100 Soviet soldiers, had been killed. The following week an outbreak of factional fighting within the PDPA had left another 100 persons dead.

A further Soviet offensive was reported in Herat during mid-October, apparently following an incident in which a helicopter carrying a Soviet general had been shot down. (The Japanese news agency Kyodo subsequently claimed that another

helicopter containing Gen. Abdol Qader, the Minister of National Defence, had been fired on in the same incident.)

Western diplomats in Islamabad substantially confirmed on Dec. 13 the claims made by Iran (on Nov. 29) that up to 30 PDPA officials had been killed during a *mujaheddin* attack on the party headquarters in Herat. On the other hand, the Soviet and Afghan media reported in February 1984 that numbers of “bandits” had been killed by government forces in the area.

Some 140 Soviet and Afghan soldiers were reported in mid-June 1983 to have been killed by insurgents in Kandahar during a visit to the city by President Karmal. A further Soviet offensive was launched in the area in late October, but on Nov. 25 the Chinese news agency Xinhua claimed that rebels had destroyed two MiG fighters, seven tanks and a helicopter during a battle in the area on Nov. 15. Increased *mujaheddin* resistance was reported at this time, culminating on Dec. 22 in a rocket attack on the Kandahar army headquarters in which 31 soldiers died; Soviet aircraft retaliated on Dec. 25 with further aerial bombardment of the city. Sporadic but intense fighting continued throughout January, with up to 100 soldiers reported killed.

Internal security developments in Kabul

Western embassies in Kabul, many of which retained diplomatic representation at reduced level, reported an increase in the level of local rebel activity during this period, although they noted that the city was generally quiet during the fourth anniversary of the Soviet intervention (i. e. on Dec. 25–26, 1983). The rebels generally stepped up their actions against power stations and fuel depots [see also page 32251].

Between 30 and 50 Afghan soldiers were reported to have been killed on May 25, 1983, during an attack on an electricity station in Kabul, and another 60 were killed in late June on the north-eastern outskirts of the city. The *mujaheddin* claimed to have wrecked four aircraft at the Soviet air base in Kabul on July 1, and on July 9 another 18 were reported damaged. A Soviet grain silo was reported to have been holed several times during this period, and there were repeated claims of rocket attacks on the Soviet embassy, which were generally dismissed by Kabul radio.

“Very heavy” Afghan Army casualties were reported by Western sources after an attack on Aug. 13–14 on the Bala Hissar fort in Kabul in which the rebels used rockets and mortars, and it was also claimed that the Kabul radio headquarters as well as the secret police (Khad) headquarters had been damaged simultaneously by rockets.

Seven tanks and two lorries were reported to have been destroyed and seven soldiers killed in Kabul on Aug. 24 during a guerrilla attack, and on Aug. 23 a restaurant allegedly frequented by Khad members was bombed, resulting in 10 deaths. A rebel news agency claimed on Oct. 3 that the head of military intelligence, Col. Khodadad, had been shot dead some days previously. Another six Soviet soldiers were reported to have been captured in the city and a Soviet military attache killed in mid-January 1984 (the latter report originating from Iran).

Border developments

Pakistan protested to the Afghan embassy in Islamabad on Sept. 19, 1983, over an incident on the previous day in which seven Afghan jets had bombed a village in the Kurram valley (90 miles west of Peshawar), killing one person. On Oct. 4 another six Afghan aircraft bombed a civilian area near Wana in Waziristan, killing three persons, while on Jan. 27, 1984, two planes bombed a market at Angur Adda (Waziristan), killing some 40 persons and injuring between 50 and 60.

An Afghan Su-7 fighter landed on Nov. 20, 1983, at Dalbandin in Baluchistan (Pakistan) and the pilot defected to that country, but **another Afghan pilot was killed on March 25, 1984, while attempting a similar landing near Quetta.**

Afghanistan, on the other hand, protested to Pakistan on Dec. 22 over the burning of an Afghan customs post at Torkham on the Paktia-Waziristan border on Dec. 18, maintaining that Pakistan border units had provided cover while Afghan "bandits" conducting the attack had killed some 20 Afghan soldiers. Afghanistan also protested to Iran over incidents on Oct. 9 and Oct. 10 in which it claimed Iranian helicopters had invaded its air space.

There were several reports of unrest involving the almost 3,000,000 Afghan refugees in Pakistan during this period (described by Pakistan at the UN General Assembly on Nov. 20 as representing the highest refugee concentration in the world).

Internal political developments

A cabinet shuffle was announced on Oct. 13, 1983, in which Mr. Mohammad Bashir Baghlani replaced Mr. Wahab Safi as Minister of Justice and Mr. Borhanuddin Ghaisi replaced Mr. Sarwar Mangal as Minister of Higher and Vocational Education. Mr. Mangal was appointed a Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the State Planning Committee in place of Dr. Khalil Ahmad Abawi.

Kabul radio referred on Jan. 25, 1984, to Brig. Nabi A'zeni as the First Deputy Minister of National Defence. The post had been vacant since early 1983, when Maj.-Gen. Khalillullah had been dismissed for physically attacking Gen. Qader, the Minister of National Defence [see page 32251].

It was reported in late January that some 40 senior political and military figures had recently been removed, including Mr. Nur Ahmed Nur, a member of the PDPA politburo and a secretary to the PDPA central committee, who had left with his family for the Soviet Union on Jan. 18.

The changes were also believed to involve Gen. Baba Jan, the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, who was succeeded by Lt.-Gen. Nazar Mohammad. Meanwhile Maj.-Gen. Mohammad Rafi, the former Minister of National Defence [see page 31541; 31787B] and subsequently a Deputy Prime Minister, had returned on Aug. 15 from the Soviet military academy where he had been since early 1982. Mr. Fazal Ahmed had been appointed Governor of Kabul on July 3, 1983, and Mr. Dina Sangin had become PDPA chairman for Kabul province on the same day.

In an effort to boost the strength of the armed forces, the government announced on Jan. 1, 1984, the call-up of all eligible males over 18 years of age. The period of military service for most men was extended on March 8, 1984, from two to three years, with a four-year term for recruits based in construction and maintenance units or in "establishments under central control". University graduates had been allowed a two-year deferment under a ruling introduced in August 1983.

The government's land redistribution programme, which had been substantially watered down in early 1982 [see page 31541], was again amended on Jan. 11, 1984, when it was announced that peasants would be allowed to keep three times as much land as under the previous schedule.

Agreement on United Nations investigation of human-rights Further international developments

The UN Commission on Human Rights voted on March 15, 1984, by 27 votes to eight with eight abstentions, to sponsor a one-year investigation by a person of "recognized international standing" into the state of human rights in Afghanistan. The move was immediately denounced by both Afghanistan and the Soviet Union as interference in the country's affairs. [For February 1983 action by the Commission-see page 32253]

For UN General Assembly Resolution 38/29 on the situation in Afghanistan, adopted on Nov. 23, 1983,

Sr Cordóovez, the UN special envoy for Afghanistan [see pages 31544-45], continued throughout this period his parallel talks with Afghanistan and Pakistan in search of a negotiated solution (Iran being kept informed but remaining unrepresented at its own request). The talks were stalled, however, by the Soviet Union's refusal to specify a timetable for the withdrawal of its troops, and by Afghanistan's insistence on guarantees of the cessation of foreign assistance to guerrilla organizations.

The various guerrilla groups continued meanwhile to reject the principle of a negotiated settlement altogether, but remained divided over several other issues. They differed particularly sharply in their attitudes to the former King Zahir Shah, who had lived in Rome since his overthrow in 1973, and who was increasingly trying to unite their organizations against the Afghan government; however, three of the groups met in Rome in mid-August 1983, when they agreed to form a united front.

Two American diplomats at the US embassy in Kabul, who were named as Mr. Hugh Turner and Mr. Robert Blackburn, were expelled from Afghanistan on Sept. 15, 1983, for alleged espionage. The US State Department dismissed the claims on Sept. 16 as “outrageous and preposterous”.

Economic relations with the Soviet Union

Bakhtar announced on Jan. 15, 1984, that Afghanistan's mutual trade with the Soviet Union in 1982–83 had been worth US \$ 766,100,000, a 287.1 per cent increase over the levels recorded in 1978–79 (i. e. before the Soviet intervention). According to the report the country's exports to the Soviet Union had totalled US \$ 355,200,000, while its imports had been US \$ 411,000,000. Kabul radio had reported on Dec. 29, 1983, that under a recently signed trade protocol for 1984 some US \$ 800,000,000 worth of goods would be exchanged between the two countries.

An Afghan engineer arriving as a refugee in Pakistan claimed on Jan. 11, 1984, that the Soviet Union had located uranium deposits in the Khwajah Rawash mountains to the north-east of Kabul some six weeks previously, and that it had already begun a mining operation on the site and was exporting the mineral back to the Soviet Union.-
(*Times Daily Telegraph Guardian Financial Times New York Times International Herald Tribune Le Monde Neue Zürcher Zeitung BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*) (Prev. rep. 32249A]