CHAPTER IV

SOVIET UNION AND APRIL REVOLUTION, 1978

On the eve of the 'April Revolution', the Daoud regime was in mounting tension due to the opposition from many circles including Communists and royalists. Such a situation was obviously because of his independent policies on the one hand and the prevailing economic underdevelopment of the country on the other. Moreover, his policy of neutrality, disregard of Soviet instructions and his revengeful policies towards the pro-Soviet PDPA and arrest of its leaders, compelled the Soviet Union to work for a pro-Soviet regime to take over in Afghanistan. This was the background of April developments in 1978.

The Soviet dislike of Daoud's move for making good relations with United States and its allies, under his neutrality policy shows that the immediate objective of the then Soviet policy was to stop Daoud's move to weaken the Afghan-Soviet relations. Moreover, Daoud was too independent to be tolerated by the Soviet Union. The developments towards the 'April Revolution' and the resultant conflict

1. 'April Revolution' is called 'Saur revolution' because it took place in the month of Saur, the Afghan name of the month of April.
between native socio-political power and a foreign power are explained in this chapter. A conflict between an advanced political system and a backward social system also comes under discussion in this chapter. The above mentioned factors are analysed on the assumption that the Soviet policy at that time was to penetrate politically through economic and military aids and thereby expand Soviet base to Third World. This policy seems to be true in the case of Afghanistan also.

In Afghanistan, the Soviets were interested only to form a pro-Soviet national government and consolidate it for Soviet advantages. When the Soviet Union understood that Daoud was going out of the purview of their control and the PDPA, mainly its Khalq faction, started preparations for a coup to oust Daoud, the Soviet Union followed a policy favourable for a beneficial Soviet-Afghan relations by supporting and encouraging the PDPA. It was in the army cadres that the Khalqis started their operations. About the preparations of their coup (revolution) Antony Arnold reports: "The armed forces' leading cadres were trained under comrade Amin on making preparations for the 'revolution' in such a manner that they themselves did not feel that the
time for action was fast approaching."² It is reported that the date of the coup was pre-determined that it would have taken place in the Afghan month of Azad (August). But the events that took place in April pre-dated the pre-planned coup. Developments had overtaken the plan.

Daoud's end has begun with a series of political assassinations that plagued Kabul since August 1977. When Mir Akbar Khyber, a PDPA ideologue was assassinated on 17 April 1978, it agonized and antagonized the PDPA leaders. They staged a protest demonstration. Almost fifteen thousand people participated in the funeral procession of Khyber³ on 19 April 1978. The demonstrators accused mainly the USA,

³. Ibid., p.58. The assailant of Khyber was not found soon after the murder. But it is reported that Amin himself might have planned the murder; though the CIA was accused of being involved in the murder. According to one source, Daoud regime identified one of the brothers among Muhammad Siddiq Alemyar and Muhammad Alem Alemyar, as the killer, but mistakenly called him a "Muslim Brotherhood fanatic". Again on the occasion of PDPA's 15th anniversary Dr. Anahita Ratebzad alleged Amin for Khyuber's murder. She said, "...there are evidences that Mir Akbar Khyber... had also been martyred by his (Amin's) savage band of murderers and terrorists." But the identify of his assailants and the reason behind his murder remains still as a mystery. There are many Afghans who doubts KGB involvement in this case.
CIA and SAVAK, the Iranian secret police\(^4\) of assassinating Khyber and alleged that, in all these, Daoud had agents. This made Daoud to view the developments in Afghanistan with increasing alarm and danger. Therefore, in the next week, he ordered his security police to make a midnight raid and catch and PDPA Central Committee members. The security police caught seven top PDPA Central Committee members: Taraki, Babrak, Amin, Dr. Akbar Shah Wali, Dastagir Panjsheri, Abdul Hakim Sharayee, Jauzjani and Dr. Zamir Safi. All these people except Amin were jailed on 29 April. Amin was kept under house arrest for eleven hours before he was jailed.\(^5\) This went fatal to Daoud and altered the history of Afghanistan. And Daoud's men could not arrest the supporters of the PDPA in the armed forces.

Amin had many supporters in the military. Before he was jailed, he could inform all his supporters mainly the

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4. PDPA demonstration was an anti-imperialist and anti-US one because they suspect that CIA had a hand in the assassination of Khyber. That time, Daoud was very much friendly with us and its allies and received help from them. And he tried to avoid Soviets gradually. This might have prompted the PDPA to think of CIA involvement in favour of Daoud.

5. While all other leaders of the PDPA were arrested and jailed, punishing Amin with house arrest only, makes a ground to believe that those who came to arrest him might be Amin's own men. Otherwise, why should they give exemption to Amin, while all others are jailed at the night itself. And no police prevented Abdur Rahman (Amin's son) whom Amin sent to airforce officer Gulabzoi with instructions of operation.
key Khalqi officers in the armed forces including Syed Gulabzoi, Muhammad Aslam Watanjar, Abdul Qadir, etc. Hence, the situation was such that they were just waiting to get an order of action from the leadership. On 27 April 1978, an order for a military coup was issued to the PDPA accomplices in the armed forces.

As decided within a short span of time, the coup started at 9 a.m. on 27 April 1978, under the leadership of Watanjar and Gulabzoi. The PDPA revolutionaries arrived at the presidential palace and called upon the occupants to surrender. Then, a severe fight took place between the PDPA men and Daoud's men. In the fighting, Daoud and his family members were eliminated and PDPA seized power. Thus the coup led to the communist rule in Afghanistan. Colonel Abdul Qadir announced over Kabul radio, on 27 April 1978, the death of Daoud and declared, "all powers of the state are in the hands of the people of Afghanistan. The power of

6. Henry Bradsher cites Amin as having said that thirty-four "party-Comrades" and sixty-seven "anti-revolutionaries" were killed in the coup. A resistance leader, Prof. Sibghattullah Mojadeddi claimed that more than 10,000 soldiers, police, republican guards and civilians died within the first thirty-six hours and twenty-nine members of the Daoud family were executed. Henry S. Bradsher, Afghanistan and the Soviet Union (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 1983), p.271. Also see Louis Dupree, "Red Flag Over Hindu Kush, Part 2: The Accidental Coup, or Taraki in Blunderland", American Universities Field Staff Reports, Asia 23, 1980, p.13.
the state fully rests with the Revolutionary Council of the armed forces." 7 The 'revolutionaries' announced through Kabul radio: "For the first time in the history of Afghanistan the last remnants of the imperialist tyranny and despotism have been ended." 8 The broadcast said: "The Revolutionary Military Council is founded on the potential strength of the noble people of Afghanistan; it will make genuine endeavours for the freedom of the people, protection of the home land and safeguarding the tenets of the sacred religion of Islam." 9

For the presidentship of the country, there was a struggle for succession between Taraki and Karmal. In this Taraki won because, as reported, he got the favour and backing from Brezhnev, though Karmal was backed by other leaders especially those in the KGB. Moreover, Amin who took the initiative to set in the military events was a Khalqi and the military leaders who took the lead in the Saur overthrow were also Khalqi recruits. This probably worked in favour of Taraki. Thus Taraki became the first

communist presidents of Afghanistan. Taraki as a President of DRA tried to justify the circumstances that led to Saur Revolution:

Daoud deceitfully and with Machiavellian approaches concentrated state power in his person and at the beginning in a bid to deceive and beguile the public declared a relatively progressive program which was supported by the progressive forces. But in five years, practically no change took place in the direction of social and economic progress of the country. Remnants of decayed monarchy and corrupt bureaucracy and the torture machine of the monarchical order and the ruling despotic and exploiting strata lived and endured in the country.  

After the takeover, the Afghan Communist Party leaders mentioned that "the Afghan revolution was a continuation of the path of Great October Revolution". But the developments that led to October Revolution are different from those of the Afghan revolution. Though the developments from 26 April to 30 April are termed as the 'Great Saur Revolution', it is not a revolution per se. It was a palace coup to topple the ruling government, hated by the Communists.

The Afghan event is explained as a coup, because a small group of military officers without any popular mandate

took over power. It is only a successful attempt of the armed forces to topple the prevailing government. During the Afghan revolution, no mass uprising broke out. Except the Kabul city where the palace is situated, there was no fighting or revolt or any other trouble. Actually, the rest of the country was calm and peaceful. In short, the Afghan revolution was a Kabul event, led by the Soviet trained military units. Therefore, an external involvement is very much likely, and moreover, there was a great Soviet ideological commitment towards PDPA since its formation.

In the case of the October Revolution, a series of popular peasant revolts throughout Russia preceded the revolution. The October Revolution has a long history also. It had more popular support and also a strong and committed leader, Lenin who could even influence less ideologically inspired persons. There was no involvement of foreign powers in the Great October Revolution.\footnote{Political analysts like Henry S. Bradsher argues that there was foreign involvement even in the October Revolution also. He says, "Just as 1917 German decision to inject Lenin into the tumultuous Russian situation, by returning him from Swiss exile in the famous "sealed train" was an important foreign factor in the downfall of the troubled post-monarchial Kerensky government to a handful of Bolsheviks." See Henry Bradsher, n.6, p.81.}
Though, initially the Afghan leaders were reluctant to give a Marxist rhetoric to the Afghan revolution, they have mentioned later that their revolution was similar to the October revolution. In an address to the nation, Amin compares the circumstances toward October and Saur revolutions.

He says: "The October revolution triumphed on the basis of experiences accumulated by the Russian Communist party, under the leadership of Great Lenin from the Bourgeois Democratic Revolution of 1905. The Bolsheviks, with the careful and scientific assessment of the experiences of the apparently unsuccessful revolution of the people of Russia, ...in the light of Marxist and Leninism Theory, could better provide the possibilities for the victory of October Revolution."^{12}

According to Amin, the Great Saur Revolution is the result of scientific assessment by PDPA under the leadership of its General Secretary of its experiences from the coup of Sardar Daoud and his five year old government, in the light of concepts of Great October Revolution and epoch making theory of working class. PDPA could carefully plan the way of wresting the political power.^{13}

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13. Ibid.
Again, Amin said: "...it ought to be noted that the working class revolutionary ideology is the torch of our revolution and its leadership, that is, the Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan. It is on this basis that the same dictatorship of the proletariat has been established in this country and is in the service of the peasants."¹⁴

The very comparison, by Amin, of Daoud's coup and rule with 1905 revolution of Russia shows that there was tendency of imitating Soviet Union for everything and of even analysing Afghan experience in tune with the Soviet experience. This way they have established that their revolution was a continuation of the path of Soviet revolution.

**Soviet Role in the April Developments**

Significantly, there is lack of reliable evidences confirming Soviet role in the Afghan coup against Daoud. One of the main reasons for the lack of evidence to find the extent of Soviet influence is the secrecy of both the Afghan and Soviet sources.

After the 'revolution', the Soviets as well as Afghan's propagated that it was a local phenomenon which overthrew a

dictator without any foreign assistance. But the later developments after this so-called revolution and increased Soviet presence in Afghanistan show that their propaganda was not fully correct.

About the revolution, Taraki said later in November 1978: "This has been organized on the basis of profound studies and specialised advices. During the first days of the revolution some persons who had specialisation in the Party Organization came to Kabul at the invitation of the secretariat of the party and studied for three months party affairs here and consequently they gave specialized advice to the party and it was on the basis of these advices that the party is always organized." From this it can be assumed that the 'advisers' referred here might have come from the Soviet Union to help PDPA.

Prof. Micheal Voslensky of Lumumba University, Moscow, agreed that it was wrong to say that the Soviet Union did not know anything about the 'Saur revolution'. He says: "Without Soviet approval the communists would have immediately called the coup d'état against Daoud a 'fascist putsch' of 'CIA agents'. Then some Afghan committee would

have been formed which would have had to invite the Soviets. The plotters against Daoud had no chance to attain their aim without Moscow. The nomination of Taraki by the people who were actually not on this side was the price they were ready to pay. The Soviets from their side agreed to the putsch. They were to get a Communist regime in Afghanistan which would obviously not have come to power without the intervention of Moscow. It was to have been one of those authentic Socialist revolutions which the Soviets need so greatly. What would have remained to be done was the liquidation of the conspirators, and the communist autocracy in Afghanistan would have been perfect. 16

From prof. Voslensky's words it is understood that there was some covert influence of Soviet Union in the 'April revolution'. Definitely it may not be wrong to assume that the KGB officials present in Afghanistan might have been aware of the coup plans. But they might have received a wait and see policy for a more apt occasion to begin and when the Communists started operation, the Soviet advisers posted in Afghanistan might have aced in favour of PDPA men.

Some facts like the precision of airbombing of Daoud's palace (where around 2000 guards were present) which cast the balance in favour of coup makers couldn't make one believe that the operators were Afghans. It is reported that the Soviet pilots were flying the planes.\textsuperscript{17}

After the revolution a KGB defector reported that "Not only did he (Daoud) arrest the leaders of the Afghan Communist Party, but planned to execute them. The Afghan communists were in a desperate position. They consulted the Soviet embassy in Kabul. Moscow quickly confirmed that we would support their proposed coup against Daoud. Just before it was too late, the communist leaders ordered the coup - in fact, from their prison cells. The coup succeeded and Afghanistan went communist."\textsuperscript{18} An Afghan journalist said that "anyone who believes that Soviets were not involved in the 1978 coup, was either uninformed about the role of Soviets in the Afghan military or was confirming Lenin's assessment that there will always be useful idiots who would inadvertently support the communist cause."\textsuperscript{19}

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\hspace*{1cm} 19. Ibid.
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While all these statements are evidences for an active Soviet involvement in the Afghan affairs and the April coup, there are equal premises to believe that Soviets were not involved in the coup. Even renowned people have maintained that the Soviet Union did not have any hand in the so-called Saur revolution. For example, Merwin G. Weinbaum says that "Soviet Union does not appear to have orchestrated or taken part in the Communist led coup."  

Weinbaum argues:

Typically in its policies in the Third World, Moscow does not order local communists to initiate coups. Soviet leaders are likely to be far more critical in the advices and promises they give once friendly forces come to power. Very likely, the Soviets were kept informed of plans to get rid of Daoud and, plainly, they did nothing to save him. The view Moscow's role was secondary is strengthened by the fact that Hafizullah Amin, a Khalq leader, and not Parcham head Babrak Karmal, set the coup in motion.  

Amin's role, his participation in the coup with the ambitious and futuristic plan of slowly capturing the reins of political power, seems to be the primary and immediate factor behind the coup in April. This is the only conscious element left for assessment in a situation where events


21. Ibid.

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overtook the proposed PDPA plan of coup in August 1978. This is besides the extraneous pressure factors from Daoud's side like possibility of elimination before resorting to action. In a situation of act or get eliminated, what is important is opportune plan and immediate action. A Soviet involvement in such a fast move is very unlikely. Ratification and further co-operation are possible from the side of Soviet Union. And this happened too.

Another premise which shows the non-participation of the Soviets is because of the fact that the Soviet leaders and advisers at that time were not likely to take Afghanistan as mature for revolution. Their policy towards Afghanistan was in accordance with a plan, developed by CPSU's Central Committee Secretary Ponomorov. The plan was to win over certain Third World States on the side of the Soviet Union. According to this plan, in the majority of states of Asia, Africa and Latin America in which, no revolution was to be expected for the time being, nor could one be instigated. The Soviets could instead pursue their aim of seizing power by the indirect route of establishing a "Front of National Unity". The leading role in this national front was to be played by the indigenous bourgeoisie, traders, intellectu-
als, students and all other "progressive" forces.\textsuperscript{22} The Communists in these countries (if they already existed in an organized form) were only to play a small part of this united front. Such a national front would then take power in a legal manner, preferably through elections. And then communists would take up key positions within the new government, such as the ministries of defence, home affairs and education.\textsuperscript{23} From there the communists would prepare the final and complete take over of power, after an appropriate period of time and successful infiltration and indoctrination. This was evidently also the course the Kremlin wanted to follow in Afghanistan, to achieve its goals slowly but surely. This strategy was incidentally put forward by Karmal before the coup repeatedly, surprisingly and openly and it can also be read in a series of articles in the Parcham Newspaper as early as 1969.\textsuperscript{24}

If these facts of Soviet strategy and the presentations of this by Soviet keymen like Karmal are true, and as these are undeniably true, the coup of April was in fact a surprise for the Soviet side in all probability.

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\item Ibid.
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Fred Halliday finds that the causes of April events were, predominantly internal, and that the most outside influence was a rightist one, from Iran. In his opinion, the internal factors were the main determinants of April coup. He says: "So far as there was outside power it came from Iran and although the Soviet Union benefitted from these events this is not the same thing as saying that it organized them." 26

Though the arguments discussed above confirm that Soviet Union does not have a significant role in Afghan coup, a keen observation of the Soviet policy towards Afghanistan and its communist party shows that Soviet Union was very much worried about Daoud's friendship with US and its allies. Brezhnev even warned him against his friendship with imperialist powers. Therefore, naturally, they may desire the coming of a friendly force in power in Afghanistan, because Soviet Union had always taken keen interest to keep Afghanistan into its own sphere of influence. When the communists or, to be precise, a faction of


26. Ibid.
them made suitable grounds for taking over power, it was likely that they were led to involve in the events, at least on behalf of ideological commitments.

Another problem is that the operations of KGB is very much secretive. Therefore, even if they have participated, it is very difficult to corroborate evidence for it. As they were very much present in Afghanistan in large numbers, their involvement was a possibility.

Weinbaum's view that Amin's initiative instead of Karmal's whom the Soviets liked most might have made the Soviet role secondary can be questioned on the ground that Soviet Union was helping both PDPA factions simultaneously, though Karmal's faction got Moscow's preference for certain reasons. The Soviets were interested in getting a pro-Soviet national government in Afghanistan. For this, it is reported that they had reconciled the two factions of the party (PDPA) together. Thus the party was a re-unified PDPA at that time disregarding the differences of opinion. Even then, the actual coup given as a surprise by Amin (not the leader of Khalq) and the long term Soviet involvement are two different schemes despite their interlinkage within the overall pro-Soviet perspective. The unexpected catalyst in the game plan was Amin.
Now, the question is about communist party's coming to power, not of any personality's takeover. Again Amin was not the leader of Khalq, it was Taraki. Therefore, Amin's presidency was less likely. Apart from this, Brezhnev personally liked the Khalq leader Taraki and the possibility of offer of help to Khalq was very much there, especially when Parcham's membership did not increase as the Soviets expected. The later developments after the coup are suggestive of the Soviet involvement in the coup. Therefore, after going through these two sets of arguments, one can say that the truth exists in both the arguments in favour of the long term Soviet involvement and of the surprise coup set in motion by an individual of a faction of PDPA which caught the Soviet Union unawares and was made to follow suit. It is better that the Soviet involvement is to be read in this comprehensive manner.

Immediately after the revolution the Soviet Union recognized the Taraki government and congratulated Taraki. With the 'April revolution' Afghanistan became a Soviet Satellite. In all respects - ideologically, militarily, economically - it became a dependent state on Soviet Union. In May 1978 alone, Afghanistan signed almost twenty agreements with Moscow. The number of Soviet advisers to Afghan-
istan had increased many fold. There were visits and talks of Soviet ministers and other high ranking officials in Afghanistan to help and finance the planning, education and other programmes. For example, Strovski, a high ranking official of the state planning committee, reached Kabul on 13 June to co-operate with the Afghan planning ministry in framing a five year economic and social development plan for Afghanistan. A Soviet delegation headed by Nikolai N. Sofinsky arrived in Afghanistan to discuss on higher education in June 1978. An agreement for import of Soviet books into Afghanistan was signed on 29 November 1978. These kinds of exchange of visits, signing of agreements and discussions became frequent. And this hurry of Soviet Union to make the backward Afghan social system parallel to the advanced Soviet political system confirms its continuous and consistent involvement in the domestic affairs of Afghanistan.

Significance of 'April Revolution'

The significance of 'April revolution' lies in the fact that the social structure in Afghanistan was such that the

28. Ibid.
emergence of a Marxist-Leninist regime, without any help from the neighbouring Soviet Union, was inconceivable. The social structure of Afghanistan was a deeply conservative one. Afghan society had strong and fundamental attachments to Islam. The base of the society was mainly tribal, and Muslim tribesmen were reluctant to accept any form of central government.

Given this social context it can be said that 'April revolution' was a great success towards an advanced progressive system. But, when the Soviet Union took the vanguard role of revolution, the developments in Afghanistan became a conflict between the native socio-political power and a foreign power, the Soviet Union. In this conflict there was the Soviet puppet government of PDPA, which was transforming the Afghan society on Soviet lines on the one side, and on the other, socially, the feudal, tribal and Islamic forces and politically, the groups which opposed the Soviet Union and its puppet PDPA government, including Socialist oriented political groups as well as Islamic fundamentalist resistance groups. This divide became more concrete when the communists started their reform package on Soviet model.

in his early days, Taraki was trying to conceal the Marxist ideology or communist character of his government.
He was facing a great ideological dilemma while introducing his reforms. He had to explain the reforms into Islamic terms. He understood that there would be a clash between Marxist government and Islamic traditions. Therefore, in the initial years of his rule, Taraki deliberately denied that his government was either communist or marxist. He said that his government was a "democratic government, devoted to the interests of the oppressed classes of the people of Afghanistan, i.e., the working class, the peasants and the middle class bourgeoisie." From this statement the communist colour of his government is very much clear because usually the words like "oppressed classes", "working class", "bourgeoisie", etc. are words of communist vocabulary.

Taraki again said, "The principles of Islam require that reforms be implemented in the interests of the people and land reforms are not contrary to the principles of Islam." With these kinds of explanations to his policies and reforms, Taraki tried to get support from all sections of the people. Colonel Abdul Qader stated that "while the

31. Ibid.
revolution was marxist in a sense, there was no communist party as such in Afghanistan and that new leaders were all good Muslims."\(^32\) Thus important PDPA leaders tried to pacify the Muslims.

Taraki told a West German journalist: "We want to clear Islam in Afghanistan of the ballast and dirt of bad traditions, superstitions and erroneous belief. Therefore, we will have progressive, modern, pure Islam."\(^33\) While all these statements are intended to hide marxism or to make a party line on Islam, his other statements justify the revolution. Taraki wrote: "If the Great Afghan Revolution, which triumphed with the inspiration of Great October Revolution, also jolted all the toiling people of the world and drew their best wishes. It was particularly an example for the developing countries to liberate their own toilers from the oppression of exploiters and to wrap up vestiges of imperialism and reaction."\(^34\) This made it clear that Afghan government was a communist one.


\(^33\) Mark Urban, n.8, p.18.

Taraki's effort to hide marxism behind Islam itself shows the significance of Islam in Afghan society. In such a situation, leading a progressive government consolidation of revolution in Afghanistan is very much significant.

With the formation of Revolutionary Council after the coup, the communist rule started with regulations, decrees and reforms. When Taraki brought important economic, social and political reforms in the society through a series of Decrees, the conflict between Islam and Communism were getting established in a more organized form and strength.

Nur Muhammad Taraki (April 1978-September 1979) and the Consolidation of Soviet Power

Decree No.1 issued on 30 April 1978 proclaimed Taraki the President and Prime Minister of Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. Decree No.2 proclaimed Babrak Karmal as Vice President and named other members of the cabinet. Decree No.3 provided for the abolition of the previous constitution, promotion of bureaucrats and other positions so as to work out the government's reforms with its own trustful people.35

Decree No.4 under which it was suggested to establish a new emblem and Soviet style flag for Afghanistan, was one of the most provocative among the reforms. This led to widespread popular unrest, especially from the clergy. The introduction of policies for the abolition of dowry (bride price), forced marriages, etc. under Decree No.7 issued on 17 October 1978 also caused serious opposition from the society.

Decree No.6 and 8 were for agrarian reforms. Decree No.6 abolished mortgage system (gir aw) and usury (Sud). Decree No.8 was for the redistribution of land. These measures adversely affected the interests of the rich people like tribal chieftains, mullahs, etc. The redistribution of land was opposed by saying that it was against 'Shariat' laws. It is reported that even the poor landless people who got land as a result of redistribution of land refused to take land as their own because of their belief that taking the land of some other's ownership is equivalent to steal it. Thus strong faith in customs and Islamic laws, made the people think and act against the government.

36. Ibid.
37. Ibid., p.75.
On the contrary, Afghan leaders were trying to theorise and find greater people's support in favour of revolution. Few days after the conclusion of 1978 Treaty, Taraki claimed that since "April Revolution which transferred political power from the exploiters to the working class, great revolutionary changes have taken place. The people's support for the revolution is gaining strength with every passing day."³⁹

Though the programmes brought by the government seems to be better and beneficial to the people, when these reforms were implemented, the government failed to do it tactically. Therefore, people started agitating against the government. As a result the communists turned to coercion and repressive policies⁴⁰ to crush the opposition.

When the Taraki government started formulating methods to control the resistance, the resistance groups also started strengthening their operations with or without foreign support.⁴¹ They were operating as fragmented groups. They

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³⁹. Pravda, 4 December 1978.
⁴¹. The resistance groups were getting economic and military support from Pakistan, US, Iran, China etc.
followed guerrilla warfare to capture cities and towns from government control. As David Chaffetz found: "The rebel bands are isolated by their mountains, like the Hazaras; by linguistic and cultural identity, like Nuristanis; or by bitter memories of political rivalries, like the Pathan Khans of Pakistan North West Frontier Province."42

Some of the important groups coming up to fight against the government were Nezbi-i-Islami (Islamic Party) headed by Hekmatyar, the Etthadi-Inqelabi-Islam-Wa-Milli-Afghanistan (Islamic Revolutionary Party of Afghanistan) led by Syed Ahmed Gilani, Hazarat Sebgatullah Mojadidi's Jabalai-Nejat-i-Milli (National Liberation Front), Prof. Rabbani's Jamiat Islami (Islamic Society), Harkat Inquilab Islam of Afghanistan (Islamic Revolutionary Movement of Afghanistan) etc.43

Along with the reforms the Taraki government was taking punitive actions against members of the past cabinet and citizenship was withdrawn from the surviving royal family


members. These kinds of activities led these people to flee as refugees to other neighbouring countries like Pakistan, Iran, India, etc. The denial of human rights and arrests without sufficient reasons were followed. Amnesty International's report issued on 9 September 1979, finds that "severe beatings, whipping, pulling out of prisoner's nails, burning the hair and sleep deprivations" were common practice in Afghan jails.\(^{44}\) It also reports that "(it) is government policy to imprison any individual or member of a group whom the government considers to be in actual or political opposition to its policies."\(^ {45}\) This shows that Taraki's police state was pursuing a reign of terror.

The United PDPA was shortlived. The power struggle between Taraki and Karmal was very much obvious in the Revolutionary Council. To consolidate his position as President of Afghanistan Taraki conducted Stalin style purges and appointed mostly Khalqí men in important positions. Important Parcham leaders were either assigned as ambassadors to different countries or arrested and kept in jail. Babrak Karmal's appointment as ambassador to Czechoslovakia and Abdul Qader's arrest are examples of punitive


\(^{45}\) Ibid.
action taken by Taraki. Therefore, the Parchamis were waiting for suitable time to topple Taraki and conspiracies were hatched in this regard. Because of the negative impact of Taraki's government, the Soviet Union was also worried about the worsening situation in Afghanistan. Even they thought of removing Taraki. Therefore, they had covertly even supported the Parchami attempt of a coup in August. But it was not a success.

Taraki feared that plots against him will be possible from his opponents and therefore, he disposed many leaders who helped him to obtain power. AGSA, Taraki's secret police, had done many arrests and punishments. This secret security force was assisted by Russians and East Germans. AGSA, the agency for the preservation of the interests of Afghanistan, under the prime ministership of Amin was in charge of crushing the insurgency. The government formulated a three-pronged strategy for this: 1) Unrestrained use of air power against rebel forces and villages, 2) the destruction of crops in rural areas with the anticipation of either starving the rebels out or forcing them to flee into Pakistan, 3) a political understanding with the Pakistani opposition that the Kabul regime expected to come to power
in the elections promised by President Zia-ul-Haq.\textsuperscript{46} The situation in Afghanistan was getting from bad to worse and therefore Taraki turned to Soviet Union for help to control the internal situation.

Taraki visited Moscow in December 1978 and signed a twenty year Treaty of Friendship, Neighbourliness and Cooperation with the USSR on 5 December 1978. The treaty provided that the signatories "shall consult with each other and take by agreement appropriate measures to ensure the security, independence and territorial integrity of the two countries."\textsuperscript{47} With this treaty Afghanistan started obtaining more Soviet arms and advisers to keep the country from a takeover by insurgents. During this period it seems that the Soviet policy was of monopolising the Soviet power over the Taraki government. An incident confirming this Soviet desire took place in February 1979.

On 14 February, 1979 US ambassador Adolph Dubs was kidnapped by a few terrorists and the Afghan government


\textsuperscript{47.} \textit{Kabul Times}, 9 December, 1978.
responded indifferently to US appeals for his rescue. 48 It is reported that the terrorists kidnapped him on demand of releasing some political prisoners. But experts say that no such demand was made of American government. In this incident also the Afghan government acted on the advice of Soviet officials. It is clear that due to the direction of Soviet officials, the Afghan police fired and stormed the hotel, where Dubs was kept, disregarding the American protest. 49 The Soviet government stated that "Soviet representatives had arrived at the place of the incident with the aim of protecting the life of Soviet citizens, whom the terrorists were also threatening." 50 After this incident the US reduced its aid programmes to Afghanistan. Thus Afghanistan became almost fully under Soviet control.

In 1978, the Soviet policy was, on the one hand, to preserve the hypocrisy of non-involvement in Afghan affairs and on the other, gain more control by assuring more guarantees. The offer of more help after the signing of the December Treaty was an example of this policy.


50. Alvin Z. Rubinstein, n.47, p.163.
On 5 March 1979 rebellion broke out in Herat. In the fight between insurgents and the government about forty Soviet advisers were killed. After this Taraki gave prime ministership to Amin, in March. Giving more power to Amin was disliked by Moscow though they have not shown any clear signal in this regard. Amin's policies also were to strengthen the more friendly relations with Moscow. Therefore, the Soviets have not seen any problem with his getting more power. They saw Amin as "a hardline communist... even more servile to the Soviet Union than Taraki." And they have increased arms aid to Afghanistan.

After the Herat uprising General Aleksey Alekseyevich Yepishev invited Afghanistan for fact-finding of the developments in Afghanistan. With his visit all important decisions were made by Soviet advisers. After his visit a deliberate massacre of the entire male population of the village of Kerala, Northeast of Kabul, was done under the direct command of Soviet advisers accusing that the village was suspected by having supported the insurgents.

52. General Yepishev was the key person who played an important role in the 1968 Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
this the attack on government by insurgents and retaliatory action by government against insurgents has caused great Soviet worry.

By February 1979 the rift between Amin and Taraki became very clear. By July Amin was in a position to take over all the powers and Taraki became just a nominal head. Amin had his supporters in the military and the police. He followed repressive policies to suppress insurgency. Amin used AGSA and Sarandory, the secret police to arrest people merely because they came from a particular area where fighting had occurred. Apart from this Amin started taking punitive actions against his own party men who were reluctant to support him. The Soviets were not satisfied with Amin's repressive policies. Popular uprising were gaining strength and DRA was unable to suppress them. In the military units also there were disturbances and possibility of mutiny. In this situation General Ivan G. Pavlovsky, visited Kabul, assisted by sixty-three officers and stayed for two months in Afghanistan to observe and study the developments. This shows that they had interfered in serious and complex matters.

54. Fred Halliday, n.45, p.493.
55. Alam Payind, n.17, p.120.
On 1 September 1979 Taraki went to Havana to attend the Non-Aligned Summit. On his return journey, Taraki met Brezhnev in Moscow. It is reported that in this meeting Brezhnev discussed and pressured Taraki for the reconciliation of his differences with Babrak for unity of Khalq-Parcham factions. And it is also reported that in Moscow Taraki met Karmal and settled their differences and they agreed that Amin should have been removed from power. The Soviet leaders also advised Taraki to remove Amin. According to their advice, when he return from Havana, Taraki asked Amin to take ambassadorship till the situation improve. But Amin refused and showing all his anger he said to Taraki: "You are the one who should quit, because of drink and old age you have taken leave of your senses." When Amin understood that Taraki decided to remove him, he went against Taraki and decided to take over power by eliminating Taraki. When Taraki returned Kabul from Havana (on 11 September) Amin arrested him. Thus before Taraki could do anything Amin acted cleverly. On 16 September

issue of Kabul Times Amin announced Taraki's resignation and the assumption of power by him. On 10 October, Kabul Times brought the news of Taraki's demise on the final page only in two sentences. It reads:

"TARAKI DIES OF ILLNESS

Kabul Oct. 10 (Bakhtiar) - Noor Mohammad Taraki, former President of the Revolutionary Council, died yesterday morning of serious illness, which he had been suffering for some time.

The body of the deceased was buried in his family graveyard yesterday."

The Novosty Press Agency, Moscow documented Taraki's murder in the following: "The assassination of Noor Muhammad Taraki was Amin's foulest crime. Taraki disappeared under rather strange circumstances in mid September 1979. It was officially announced that he was gravely ill and therefore had to relinquish all his posts. At his very first press conference after seizing power, Hafizullah Amin made it quite clear to foreign journalists, without any beating

60. Kabul Times, 10 October 1979.
61. Anthony Arnold, n.48, p.84.
about the bush, that Taraki's days were numbered, adding
 cynically that as he was not a doctor he would not say when
 Taraki would actually die. No one in Afghanistan or any-
 where else in the world believed in subsequent announcement
 of Taraki's sudden death from a grave illness."62

Raja Anwar wrote that he was told by Mir Wais that Amin
 sent a message to Brezhnev by saying "Taraki is still
 around. What should I do with him? If you like I can send
 him to Moscow."63 Brezhnev answered, "There is no need to
 send Taraki to Moscow. This is your problem. You solve it
 in the manner you consider best."64

This shows that it cannot be ruled out that Soviet
 Union was interested in eliminating Taraki also. Therefore,
 it cannot be ruled out that it was the Soviet Union who
 created Taraki-Amin rift for the advantage of their favou-
 rite leader Babrak Karmal. Soviet Union did not want to
 save Taraki. They kept a very cool attitude towards
 Taraki's death.

62. Truth About Afghanistan: Documents, Facts, Eyewitness


64. Ibid.
Hafizullah Amin (September 1979-December 1979)

After Amin's take over as president of DRA, the Soviet leaders congratulated him as the Head of the State. Though they congratulated him, Amin was aware that Taraki's murder and his attitude towards Babrak may not be liked by the Soviets. Therefore, he started broadening his base even by including non-communists in his government.

After coming to power, he left his hold over Pushtoonistan issue and tried to have better relations with other nations. His efforts to make better relations with Pakistan, Iran, US, etc. invited the anger of Soviet Union and he was branded as a CIA agent and became a target in the Soviet hit list.

By the end of November 1979 Amin was facing a very critical political situation. Because of his repressive polices he had to face anti-regime elements within and outside the communist party. In addition to this the country's economic situation was also worsening severely and the resistance to the government was gaining strength. In short, the PDPA government was in the danger of an imminent collapse at that time.
When it was reported in the Soviet Union that there was a bitter opposition to Amin's government from Islamic leaders, a threat of mutiny from the army and an imminent collapse of the economy, the removal of Amin was discussed and agreed in the politburo. Lt. General Talebov was selected by KGB as Amin's assassin. Talebov arrived in Kabul equipped with the poison given by KGB to murder Amin. Pretending as an Afghan citizen, he managed to get a job in the kitchen at Presidential Palace. But as mentioned by Vladimir Kuzichkin, who defected from KGB, "Amin was as careful as any of the Borgias. He kept switching his food and drink as if he expected to be poisoned." 

While Talebov's mission was failing, the situation in Afghanistan was also deteriorating. The situation developed to the extent that unless Amin was removed, the communist regime would be replaced by an anti-Soviet Islamic republic. The Soviet option to prevent the possibility of triumph of

65. Talebov was an Azerbaijani, who spent several years in Kabul. He was able to pass as an Afghan citizen. See Cristopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievsky, *KGB: The Inside Story of its Foreign Operations: From Lenin to Gorbachev* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1990), p.480.

Islamic fundamentalism over socialism in Afghanistan was nothing but a military intervention by them.

To make a favourable situation for intervention General Paputin was sent to Kabul. He was assigned with a mission of making Amin either step down in favour of Karmal or invite Soviet Union to intervene militarily in Afghanistan. But Paputin could not fulfill his mission. Before fulfilling his mission he died. The death of Paputin was reported on 28 December 1979.67

Paputin's failure in his mission and his encounter with Hafizullah Amin are likely to be the immediate cause of the plan for an intervention. Moreover, Soviet Union feared another danger of Afghanistan going into the hands of imperialist powers. Therefore, to protect its political and economic investments in Afghanistan, the Soviet Union started preparations for a massive military intervention.

67. Some scholars argues that Paputin might have committed suicide due to the failure of his mission. But, the circumstances under which he died remain unclear. Report on Afghanistan, n.43, p.22.