"Bleeding wound" bleeds once again

Russian troops launched a massive attack on Takhar Province killing and wounding more than 300 people. A large number of houses were destroyed and tens of harvest were set on fire by ground and air attacks launched on 15 and 16 of July. More than 6,000 people of Chah Aab and Khwaja Ghar, two districts close to border, were forced to leave their houses and seek refuge in safer areas of the province.

This attack was apparently launched after Tajik insurgents killed 20 Russian soldiers along the border with Afghanistan two days before. More than 3,500 Russian soldiers are stationed along the border with Afghanistan.

Moscow accuses Kabul of arming Tajik fighters who are struggling to overthrow the communist regime in Dushanbe. It also claims that the Tajik insurgents are fighting to establish a fundamentalist Islamic government in Tajikistan.

The Islamic State of Afghanistan has rejected the allegation of its involvement in the problems of Tajikistan. It says the events in Tajikistan are internal problems of that republic.

It is worth mentioning that the communists who had the support of Uzbekistan and Russia overthrew the government of Tajikistan last year. The communists unleashed a reign of terror against the supporters of the Islamist and democratic parties. Around 100,000 Tajiks were forced to take refuge in Afghanistan.

The parliament of Russia authorized the Russian government to send more troops to Tajikistan. But some circles in Russia oppose this move and warn that Tajikistan might become second Afghanistan for Moscow.

The Islamic state of Afghanistan has protested to the attack by Russian soldiers on the peaceful Afghan villages along the borders and has expressed worry over the presence of Russian troops along its border with Tajikistan.

The attack on Takhar reminds Afghans of the Soviet invasion of their country. The presence of Russian soldiers along the border with Afghanistan will provoke the Mujahideen who have been fighting against Russians for more than a decade.

The Russian attack on Afghanistan takes place at a time when the country does not have a defense minister and the Prime Minister of the country refused to enter the capital. This is why the reaction to the Russian aggression was not strong enough.

Prime Minister Hikmatyar had said in his policy statement some days before that no external danger was threatening the country!

The government of Afghanistan cannot be blamed for the troubles in Tajikistan. Kabul is facing tremendous domestic problems which will not allow it to think about areas beyond its borders. In view of the current situation in Afghanistan, some Tajik fighters might have received help from some local commanders but the government is not involved in such activities. Arms smugglers recognize no boundaries. If a group of people decide to wage war, they can get weapons from anywhere.

Moscow is trying to show that the situation along the border is very bad to justify presence of its troops in Tajikistan. By declaring war on Islamic fundamentalism, Moscow tries to gain the sympathy of Westerners. A force engaged in war against fundamentalists will not be blamed for human rights abuses and helping an oppressive communist regime thousands of miles away from its borders.

During the ECO Summit, the president of Afghanistan and Tajikistan had agreed to hold talks for solving the border problems. The first round of talks was supposed to be held in Dushanbe.

Turkmanistan has refused to allow Russian military planes to refuel in that republic because Ashkabad does not want to get involved in the conflict.

History is being repeated for the Russians. At one time the communist leaders were sending their sons to defend the hated communist regime in Afghanistan and now Yeltsin, the democratic leader of Russian, sends his troops to keep in place a communist regime in Dushanbe. Yeltsin has gone one step further by bombing the villages of Afghanistan, a neighboring country for Tajikistan, making the "bleeding wound" to bleed again.

Masood supports Hikmatyar conditionally

Commander Masood told AFP he hoped the ceasefire in Kabul would be permanent, and that he was doing his best to achieve this goal. "But the ceasefire does not depend only on us, but also on the other side," he added.

"We did not start any fights in the past and we will not start any in the future," the former defense minister said.

Regarding his long-time rival, Gulbuddin Hikmatyar, now Afghanistan's prime minister, Masood said he was ready to meet with him and had no objections to cooperating with him - on the condition that all provisions of the Jalalabad agreement were fully implemented.

Rival Mujahideen leaders met in the eastern provincial capital of Jalalabad last June where they thrashed out an agreement relating to the ceasefire and approval of Hikmatyar's cabinet. They also agreed to the mutual surrender of all heavy weapons.

Asked whether his faction was prepared to surrender its share of heavy weapons, Masood replied: "One hundred percent."
Government threatens freedom of press

The government of Prime Minister Hikmatyar is trying to impose press restrictions. Journalists writing critical articles are also threatened by members of Hezb Islami.

A few days ago, a man went to the government-owned printing press and wanted to know who printed cartoons of the Prime Minister published in two newspapers. He used filthy language against the workers of the press but left before the security men reached.

It worth mention that the State Printing Press was a major target of Hezb's rocket attacks in the past one year, when most of its machinery and paper stocks were set on fire.

The State Printing Press has been directed not print any paper before getting permission from the Ministry of Information.

Prime Minister Hikmatyar wrote a letter to the Ministry of Information directing it to find and punish the journalist of Bakhtar News Agency who wrote a critical commentary for the TV and radio.

Prime Minister Hikmatyar has also asked the radio and TV not to report firing of rockets into the city. The rockets are fired from west of Kabul where the troops Hezb Islami and Hezb Wahdat are stationed.

He has appointed one of his close aides, Qaribur Rahman Saeed, as a member the commission supervising the work of the Ministry of Information. He also has been appointed as the caretaker Minister of Information.

Saeed is in-famous for his extremist views against other Mujahideen parties and he has been running the Afghan News Agency, the mouthpiece of Hezb from Pakistan. He is trying to bring the Ministry of Information, especially the Bakhtar News Agency, under his control.

Hikmatyar also has been very critical of the foreign journalists working in Afghanistan. Sometime ago Hezb asked foreign journalists working for BBC not to enter into Afghanistan and threatened to try Afghans working for BBC as spies. But Hikmatyar never stopped giving interviews to BBC whenever it suited him.

The direct and indirect steps taken by Hikmatyar to curb the freedom of press must be a source of concern to the intellectual circles in the country. He could make use of the existing press rules to silence the voice of dissent and put an end to criticism of his government.

The Mujahideen government gave freedom to the opposition to express their views. President Rabbani encouraged journalists to be objective in their reporting. He also allowed different parties to print their papers and time was given to different groups to express their view through radio and TV. The only parties denied this privilege were those actively engaged in armed struggle against the government.

The threat against journalists and attempt to stop publishing papers of the parties is a negative development. How can the Prime Minister who is publishing his paper in Pakistan and is broadcasting radio and TV programs from his military base outside Kabul justify imposing restrictions on the publications of other political groups?

Any step to curb the freedom of the press will discredit the government-controlled media. By curbing the freedom of press, the people turn to foreign news agencies to get the truth.

The Mujahideen enjoyed good relationship with the world media during the years of Jihad. The media helped them to get the story of their heroic struggle to the rest of the world putting moral and political pressure on the Soviet aggressors. When they liberated Afghanistan, they gave freedom to the international media to cover the situation in the country. Although the coverage given to the government side was in most cases negative, the government tolerated this and never tried to curb the freedom of journalists.

Maintaining working relations with the international media serves the interest of the country. Our country needs support for its reconstruction and the international media could be used to mobilize world opinion to give support to Afghanistan.

Hikmatyar has been complaining that the state radio and TV are being used by one party. This is not true because all parties are given the chance to air their views. If Hikmatyar abandons his self-imposed exile and assumes his responsibilities in the capital he will get better coverage in the media. If Hikmatyar wants to bring radio and TV out under the control of Hezb, it will be a disaster because the TV and radio will lose the the relative freedom they enjoy and will be turned into a propaganda tool to promote one party and one person.
Poisoning, cholera: Kabul new hazards

People are afraid to eat fruit and vegetables in Kabul. For one month, some people are getting sick after eating fruits and vegetables. Radio and TV warn people of the presence of poisonous fruits and vegetables in the capital.

About two weeks ago, the security forces disclosed that some people who were allegedly involved in poisoning vegetables and fruits have been captured. Most of the captured people are teenagers who admitted to be hired for money to inject poison into fruits and vegetables. So far, more than 20 people such people have been captured.

The Health Minister, however, said that the issue of deliberate food poisoning with doubts. He told foreign reporters that his ministry did not have facilities to identify the types of poison used and has received no reports about the samples he sent to the World Health Organization (WHO) for analysis.

This interview angered the security organizations of the Islamic State which have captured more than 20 of food poisoners. Some of the captured people say that they were hired by followers of Hezb Wahdat to commit the crime. Hezb Wahdat denies its involvement in this crime and accuses the government of the implicating it. Hezb Islami of Hikmatyar alleges that former KHAD people are involved in this crime.

In view of this politically charged atmosphere, the denial of the Minister of Health could be understood. He belongs to Mujaddidi's party which is in alliance with Hezb Islami and Hezb Wahdat. It is believed that the Health Minister's interview is an attempt to cover up the issue for political reasons. In view of such accusations and counter accusations, WHO might find it difficult to announce the result of the test on the samples sent to it.

The cases of food poisoning has decreased recently. This could related to the measures taken by the security people and cooperation by people in identifying and capturing of food poisoners.

Food poisoning has also been reported from the provinces. Cholera has spread in Kabul and some provinces. A source in the Health Ministry said 26 case of cholera have been registered in Kabul and 40 in the northern city of Pul-i-Khumri. WHO and other relief organizations have sent supplies of medicine to prevent the spread of this deadly disease.

Experts say that lack of clean water in Kabul is the cause of this disease. Most parts of Kabul lack clean drinking water. The supply system of drinking water was damaged during the successive rocket attacks on Kabul. The people drink water from shallow wells which are not healthy.

Due to shortages of fuel and vehicles, the Kabul municipality cannot remove the garbage from the city. The presence of great amounts of garbage in the streets, during the hot season, is a health hazard to the people.

AFP reported that cholera cases have been registered in Tajikistan too.

Nasruddin's Fables

Description of the goods

Nasruddin lost a beautiful and costly turban. "Are you not despondent, Nasruddin?" someone asked him.

"No, I am confident. You see, I have offered a reward of half a silver piece."

"But the finder will surely never part with the turban, worth of hundred times as much, for such a reward."

"I have already thought of that. I have announced that it was a dirty old turban, quite different from the real one."

Which is my half?

Nasruddin and a friend were thirsty, and stopped at a café for a drink. They decided to share a glass of milk.

"You drink your half first," said the friend, "because I have some sugar here just enough for one. I shall add this to my share of the milk and drink it."

"Add it now," said Nasruddin, "and I will drink only my half."

"Certainly not. There is only enough sugar to sweeten half of a glass of milk."

Nasruddin went to the owner of the café, and came back with a large packet of salt.

"Good news, friend," he said, "I am drinking first, as agreed and I want my milk with salt."

Narraed Abdullah: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "Abusing a Muslim is Fusuq (evil doing) and killing him is Kufr (disbelief)."
Hikmatyar's policy statement

Prime Minister Hikmatyar announced his government's policy through radio and TV. In his statement, he touched on major issues facing the country and presented his solutions. We discuss here some controversial parts of his statement:

Hikmatyar said he had stated in the past that he would not take part in an unelected government but due to insistence of "others" he was forced to do so. He did not elaborate who insisted that he should assume the post of the Prime Minister. The leaders of other parties, as far as we know, would have been happier if Hikmatyar had not assumed this post and had introduced another man from his party for the job. If "others" were his handpicked party members the situation is clear. The irony is that for this unelected post, Hikmatyar launched several attacks on Kabul killing and wounding thousands of people and destroying major part of the city. He could have accepted this unelected post offered to him by the Peshawar accords.

He said despite sacrifice given by the people during 14 years of Jihad, an Islamic government has not been formed in the country yet. He argued that an Islamic government is established in a county when the Islamic Laws are implemented.

This is an interesting point which needs some discussion. Hikmatyar labeled the government formed by the Mujahideen one year ago un-Islamic and waged a total war against it under the name of Jihad. The cabinet of Hikmatyar is not much different from the cabinet of the previous government. The only difference is the introduction of two ministers from his party and he himself as the Prime Minister. The Hezb paper, radio and TV have begun to call the government Islamic and Hikmatyar is being labeled as 'the Prime Minister of the Islamic government of Afghanistan'.

If a group indulges in armed struggle against the government of Hikmatyar which is neither elected nor Islamic yet (as he himself describes it) what will be his reaction? He will call such a group 'un-Islamic' and their war 'struggle for power'. Hikmatyar might say he is determined to introduce an Islamic system in the country and he needs time to do that. This argument was also valid in case of the previous government which Hikmatyar revoluted against. If he had not waged war against it, by now, it would have had major achievements in the introduction of the Islamic system of government in the country. Replacement of the Peshawar agreement with the Islamabad and Jalalabad agreements does not change the nature of a government.

Hikmatyar claimed that he was in favor of peaceful transfer of power from Najib to the Mujahideen but the communist elements imposed a war on him.

It is true that Hikmatyar and other Mujahideen leaders had agreed on formation of a neutral government under the auspices of the UN. They even had approved the name of 15 neutral people who were supposed to form the government. But this was not transfer of power to the Mujahideen but to a group of people mutually accepted by the Mujahideen and Communist regime of Najibullah. But the military developments inside the country paved the way for the fall of the communist regime. Mujahideen under the command of Ahmad Shah Masood reached the gates of Kabul after capturing Salang, Charikar and Bagram. Masood asked the Mujahideen leaders in Peshawar to form a government so that power could be transferred from the communists to the Mujahideen.

Hikmatyar moved to Afghanistan leaving behind his representative in Peshawar to take part in the talks. The leaders agreed on a formula for transfer of power and the post of the Prime Minister of the transitional government was given to Hikmatyar's party. Hikmatyar rejected this formula and began to launch attacks on Kabul. Masood tried to convince Hikmatyar that a military option was not wise but he insisted on his victorious entry into Kabul. This insistence led to a devastating war that continued for one year. Hikmatyar's claim that war was imposed on him is not true. He chose this path by rejecting the Peshawar accords.

He has said his main task is to implement the Jalalabad accords. One of the main items of the Jalalabad agreements is formation of the Council of Commanders (CC) that elects the defense and interior ministers. The task should have been completed by July 19. Hikmatyar is not interested in convening the CC. Informed sources say that Mujaddidi, Hikmatyar and Mazari have agreed not to cooperate in convening the CC. They think that the current situation suits them. With Masood being away from the defense ministry, Hikmatyar hopes to be able to bring the interior ministry under his full control.

Failure to convene CC will cast doubt on the intention of Hikmatyar towards peace and could lead to resumption of armed conflict. Failure to convene the CC frustrates hopes of holding general elections in the country.

About the armed forces of the country, Hikmatyar argued that since no external threat was facing Afghanistan the armed forces should have a small army. A few days after his speech, Russians launched a massive attack on the border of Takhar Province killing and wounding at least 400 and forcing 6000 people to leave their homes. This took place at a time when the country had no defense minister.

Hikmatyar supported the collection of heavy weapons but opposed collection of light weapons. The presence of light weapons in the hands of people was needed for protection of their life and property, he said. We know that the presence of light weapons in the hand of ordinary people has caused a lot of problems. Hikmatyar might have tried to make some tribal people happy but will not find many people who would support his idea.

Hikmatyar promised to reduce the size of the government organization and employ those losing their jobs in productions firms. This is a beautiful statement but in reality a government needs years to reactivate the existing factories in the country.

Prime Minister Hikmatyar said nothing about the hardship the people of the capital suffered due to the war he launched against Kabul. He should have apologized to ordinary Afghans who had lost their sons, fathers, brothers, mothers, daughters, sisters and mothers in a war which had no motive other than grabbing power and putting Hikmatyar in an "unelected post". 
Letter to the Editor

Dear editor,

I was wondering if you have heard of the Internet Computer Network? It links many computers around the United States and in other countries as well. Using that network people can send each other electronic mail, and can read messages that have been posted on, electronic "bulletin boards". There is one such bulletin board devoted to Afghan affairs. I assume that it is read mostly by Afghan students who are using computers at American universities. Occasionally someone will post a news story about Afghanistan.

If you think it is a good idea, I would be happy to type in an AFGHANews article from time to time. Please let me know if you would like that and what statement (if any) you would like me include about AFGHANews.

Best wishes
Timur
Northampton, MA - U.S.A.

Dear editor,

Thank you for sending AFGHANews. This paper contributed a great deal in describing the situation during the years of Jihad. I hope the Mujahidin parties work together to help the poor people of Afghanistan.

Jamaluddin Shah
Peshwar - Pakistan

Dear editor,

I have come to Peshwar from Ethiopia. I had plans to go to Kabul but after taking the advice from both Afghan and expatriate friends, who told me that the road between Jalalabad and Kabul was not safe, especially for a "Farangi" travelling alone and since I had promised Hanneke (my wife) whom I left in Addis Ababa with the children not to take any risk, I decided not to travel to Kabul. Of course, I realize that a feather in Afghanistan still has the tendency to become a big hen on its way to Peshwar but nevertheless I had to be careful.

Anyway, I have been talking about the situation in Afghanistan with all my old friends, and a few new ones, and the general mood seems to be frustration over the developments. The euphoria from last April/May has changed into disappointment and most people see only a very bleak future with continued fighting and deterioration of law and order in the rural areas.

For my own part, I have been taking in a lot and will need some time to digest it although my immediate reaction also is one of frustration. In that context it would certainly have been good to meet you to hear your views. I'll write you a longer letter once I am back in Addis Ababa. If you have the time please write.

For the future, I have not given up my plans to come back and work for Afghanistan. However, it is above all a question of finding a job and there seems to be some possibilities. My contract in Ethiopia runs to April 94 and after that I'll make a serious try. It is difficult to live in one country and to have your heart in another.

It is also frustrating not being able to do more than to wish you and your "watandars" the best of luck in what you are trying to achieve. My thoughts and my heart are with you and, Insh Allah, next time there will be no problems whatsoever to visit yu where ever you are.

May God be with you and all your friends.
Anders Fange
Peshwar - Pakistan.

Dear editor,

Probably the AFGHANews you had been sending me were all held up somewhere, perhaps in Pakistan. Now suddenly about ten days back all of them reached me together. The same might have happened to the mail I have been sending you.

Your writings in AFGHANews have helped me to understand the ongoing tragedy of Afghanistan and have confirmed my misgivings about the role of Hikmatyar.

I especially enjoyed the book review of The Bear Trap. Very well written. (Remember I teach English to Americans). We will publish excerpts of your review in New Trend.

May Allah keep you safe.
Kaukab Siddique
Maryland - U.S.A.

UN convoys transporting urgently needed relief supplies reached Kabul for the first time since the end of April, the United Nations announced in Islamabad.

During the first half of June two convoys of 27 trucks carried 373 tonnes of wheat and wheat flour, 10 tonnes of medical supplies and 20,000 liters of fuel for UN programs to aid displaced persons in Kabul, the announcement said.

The Government of Japan has decided to provide $11.42 million worth of food assistance for Afghan refugees through World Food Program (WFP). An agreement to this effect was signed on June 7 in Rome between the Governments of Japan and WFP.

Two men have been recently executed in Maidanah, capital of Wardak Province, after being convicted of murdering a commander of Hezb Islami.

They were killed by firing squad. Maidanah is controlled by a coalition of Hezb Islami of Hikmatyar and Hezb Wahda.

Gada Mohammad Khalid has been appointed the commander of the National Guard.

Gada, 50, joined Ahmad Shah Massood in Panjshir in 1979 and has served as the commander of different units of Shora-I-Nizar. He took part in almost all the major operations against the Soviet troops and played an active role in defense of Kabul since the fall of the communist regime.

The anti-narcotic office of the Herat province has succeeded in capturing 956 kilograms of opium, 117 kilograms of heroin and 395 kilograms hashish since the beginning of the current Afghan year (March 21).

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has opened a hospital for the victims of the landmines in Herat. The hospital will make artificial limbs for the victims of the minesfields. Imaal Khan, the governor of Herat, thanked the ICRC for its humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan.
A visit to former USSR

Mohammad Es'hāq

I led a delegation to Moscow to sign an air transport agreement with the Russian Federation. The members of the delegation were the chairman of the law and International agreements department of the Ministry of Aviation, the Deputy chairman of Ariana Afghan Airlines and a representative from the Foreign Ministry, and the office of the President.

We left Kabul on May 8 by a regular flight of Ariana. This was my first trip to a country which I had struggled against for more than a decade. I had no experience in dealing with Russians, except my participation in two round of inconclusive peace talks in Taif, Saudi Arabia, and in Islamabad.

When we landed at Moscow airport, we were led to a crowded VIP lounge where we had to wait for visa formalities. The top of all tables in the lounge were full of empty bottles and glasses. To put our soft drinks on the table we had to clean the tables. A waiter came and took away a few but left the remaining. I got the impression that the people working in state-owned firms were not interested in their jobs. Twenty days of stay in Moscow and Central Asian Republics confirmed my first impression.

Ariana had reserved rooms in the Russia Hotel not far from Red Square. In the lobby of the hotel, I read in Moscow News that on May first, demonstrators had clashed with police and tens of people were wounded in the clash. We were told by Ariana people not to go out the next day because of possible demonstrations on the occasion of the anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany.

Being worried about the situation in Kabul, I tried to listen to BBC. The news said tens of rockets were fired into the city. When we left Kabul, the electricity was cut and firing of rockets had just started.

In the morning, we went to the restaurant of the hotel to eat our breakfast. There was no tea and no milk for coffee. There was no knife to cut the hard bread. The lady in charge of the restaurant was very rude and abstained from answering our questions. Food was expensive. One meal cost 10 dollars.

Ignoring the advice of the Ariana men, we tried to visit the city. To prevent demonstrations, Red Square was full of riot soldiers. We bought tickets and became part of a tourist group to visit those parts of the Kremlin open for public.

In the evening, I was shocked by sound of explosions. I thought, it was incoming rockets, fired by Hezb or Wahdat, but looking out of the window I realized that I was in Moscow and the sound belonged to fireworks that marked the Russian's victory over the Germans.

What struck me most in Moscow were the small shops all along the streets. These shops sold everything from hairpin to socks, Coca Cola and blue jeans. The small shops of Moscow reminded me of the small wooden shops built along the streets of Kabul. In Moscow the shops are made in good shapes and are placed by the permission of the authorities, while in Kabul the shanty shops are made in different shapes and sizes and people have put them up without the permission of the authorities.

The 10th of May was a public holiday in Moscow. A journalist friend invited me for lunch in an Italian restaurant where you have to pay in dollars. Before going to lunch, I was taken to a park where the statues of some of the communist leaders were dumped. After the fall of the communists, the angry people pulled down the statues of the communist leaders and some of them were in this isolated park.

In the evening, I found time to read some issues of Daily Shahadat, the official organ of Hezb Islami of Hikmatyar. As usual the most important article in the paper was the speech of Hikmatyar delivered in Sorobi some days before. Hikmatyar had talked in length about the ethnic factors in the current struggle for power. He accused Jamiat of exploiting ethnic issues. He argued that this theory that Pushhtuns were ruling Afghanistan was incorrect. He said Tajiks dominate in the economic and cultural fields. He described Pushhtuns as an extremely poor section of the Afghan society and claimed that the royal family were not Pushhtuns. He concluded his speech by condemning discriminations based on ethnic and linguistic factors.

Our meeting with the officials of the aviation authority of the Russian Federation took place on May 11. The Russian delegation was composed of the deputy chairman of the department of civil aviation and two others. One of them was introduced to us as an expert but a member of our delegation said he served as the driver of the Soviet airline in Kabul during the Russian occupation of Afghanistan. In dealing with the Russians, he said, it was difficult to know who was the most important man in a Russian delegation - sometime an interpreter is more powerful than the head of a delegation.

The head of the Russian delegation welcomed us to Moscow and asked us about the purpose of our visit.

He was told that the Afghan delegation had come to sign the air transport agreement initiated in 1990. The Russian side had sent a letter through their embassy in Kabul in 1991 asking for some amendments in the text of the agreement and had invited the Afghan delegation for talks in Moscow.

The head of the Russian delegation said he was not aware of any agreement. Our delegation confronted him with the text of the agreement initiated by both sides and the letter of the their embassy. Moreover the Afghan delegation had asked for visas and the purpose of the visit had been conveyed to the Russian side through diplomatic channels.

After seeing the documents, Russians said due to changes in their country they were not able to find the files. They asked us to give them a copy of the agreement so they could study it. They also said they needed the permission of their national assembly to sign the agreement. Disappointed and bemused by the behavior of the Russian side, we decided to approach the foreign Ministry of Russia through our embassy to describe the problem so that they might persuade their aviation authorities to sign the agreement.

The foreign ministry agreed to meet us on May 15. After welcoming the Afghan delegation, the head of the Russian delegation raised the following three points:

- Russia wanted peace in Afghanistan
- Their prisoners of war should be released
- Afghans should stop interference in Tajikistan

They were told by our delegation that the Islamic State of Afghanistan was not interfering in the internal affairs of Tajikistan. The situation in that country is bad because of the extremist policies of the former communists who enjoy the support of Moscow.

About the Soviet prisoners, they were told that the government of Afghanistan considers it an humanitarian issue and has released some of them.
and is ready to cooperate in setting free the remainder. They were told that the Russian government also should fulfil its responsibilities. Russia condemned the 1979 invasion of Afghanistan and had promised to take part in its reconstruction, but did nothing to clear mines and rebuild the economy of the country. They were reminded Russians had not forgiven the Germans for the invasion of their country which took place almost half a century ago, so how could they expect Afghans to forget their invasion that took place only a few years ago!

About signing the air agreement, they argued that due to changes in Russia the authorities in the aviation department could not find the files but promised to talk to the aviation authorities to sign the document during our stay. We did not hear from them during the ten days of our stay in Moscow. The behavior of the Russian officials was surprising for me but other members of our delegation who had been dealing with them in the past told me such things were normal.

Hakimov was among the delegation of the Russian Foreign Ministry whom I had met in Taif and in Islamabad. He had participated in the talks between the Mujahideen and Soviet union as an interpreter. Hakimov wanted to meet with me in private. The meeting took place in the house of the Afghan ambassador. This meeting did not add to my knowledge except the news that Russia was working through the UN to form a body with the participation of Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the USA to discuss the Afghan issue and coordinate their efforts in solving Afghan problems.

-Two journalist friends from a Western country invited me to their house outside Moscow. I accepted the invitation and moved from the hotel to their dacha among the woods. Their dacha was part of a group of dachas in which the writers of the communist regime lived. Now, the owners of the dachas rented them.

In conversation with a group of Russian journalists I found there was a village close to the writers' village where the spies of the Soviet Union had their dachas. Journalists were eager to write a story about the Spy village.

During my stay in Moscow, I visited the war museum. The guide was boasting about the achievement of the Red Army in their great patriotic war against the Germans. She did not have much to say about the gallery of the Afghan war, the smallest gallery in the museum.

Ten days of stay in Moscow taught me a great deal about the life of Russians but language barrier was a problem. I was forced to use a translator and the officials of Ariana were kind to help me and my colleagues in every possible way.

Tashkent
Our delegation reached Tashkent by an Uzbekistan Airways flight. Afghan diplomats in Tashkent and officials of Ariana greeted us at the airport. We were lodged in a state guesthouse. Introductory meeting with the authorities of the aviation department of Uzbekistan began the same day. The next day, formal talks on the agreement began. At the end of the third day, the agreement was initiated by the heads of the delegations of both sides.

We asked our hosts to arrange a short trip to the historic cities of Samarkand and Bukhara. We flew to Samarkand where we were greeted by the officials of Intourist. With the help of a guide we visited the important historic sights in the city. The monuments told the story of a glorious Muslim civilization. Renovation work on most of the monuments was under way. We also visited a modern cemetery in Samarkand to compare the present with the past. The new graves were built in Russian style. It reminded me of the Tapa Maranjan cemetery in Kabul where the so-called martyrs of the communist revolution are buried.

We went to the mosque of the city to offer Friday prayers. The mosque was overflowing with worshipers, both men and women. A lot of young people attended the prayers. The Imam gave a sermon in Uzbek language. It is worth mentioning that the old mosques of the city are not opened yet for the public to offer their prayers. They are used as museums to attract tourists.

Samarkand had the appearance of a central Asian city. Its people are more friendly than the people of Tashkent. A considerable number of people spoke Persian.

After a night's stay in Samarkand, we started our journey to Bukhara by road. The four-hour drive was very useful in seeing the life of people outside the cities. A lot of work has been done in the irrigation field. Hundreds of women were seen working on the collective farms. In a distance of 400 kilometers in an area inhabited by Muslims, we did not see a single mosque. The communists had demolished all the mosques outside the cities. They left some mosques in the cities to deceive the outside world that religion was free.

We were greeted by the officers of Intourist in Bukhara. After lunch, we taken out to see the historic monuments of the city. We were impressed by the historic sights of the city and the kind behavior of its people. A considerable number of people in Bukhara spoke Persian. The memory of the visit to these cities will last for a long time to come. We flew to Tashkent to start our journey to Turkmenistan the next day.

Ashkhabad
We flew from Tashkent to Ashkhabad and stopped on the way in Charjo and Mary. Mary (Marv) is a city close the border with Afghanistan. The city is irrigated by Murghab River, coming from Afghanistan, and Qarqorom Canal which brings water from the Amu Darya. In Mary airport we saw a large number of jet fighters and military helicopters. This base was used to bomb the northwestern parts of Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation of our country.

In Ashkhabad airport, we were greeted by an officer from the civil aviation department of Turkmenistan. We spent the night in a relatively dirty hotel close to the airport and moved to better hotel the next day.

Discussion on the draft of an air transport agreement began the second day of our arrival. They proposed a text and we proposed our text. Our text was simpler and more comprehensive and was accepted by the other side as a working-paper. After clarification of some points and discussion over the routes that the airlines of the two countries were supposed to fly, the agreement became ready for signature. The agreement was initiated by the head of Afghan delegation and the Minister of Civil Aviation of Turkmenistan.

Our Turkmen hosts took us to different parts of their capital city. The city lacks skyscrapers. We were taken to a park where the statue of Lenin is still on display but they do not turn on its lights at nights. There were some huge government shops which had little to sell. Some private shops had also been opened in the city which sold foreign goods. I saw a big Iranian shop selling clothes and a shop belonging to a man from Herat. I was surprised to see that a hairpin sold for 100 rubles while a steel pitchfork weighing one kilogram sold for 40 rubles. Since Ashkhabad is situated close to the border with Iran, many Iranians visit the city.

We returned to Tashkent to take our flight to Kabul. Since Eid was coming we bought sweets and nuts from Tashkent. We reached Kabul on the first day of Eid. We missed Eid prayers but shared the happiness of Eid with our family and friends.
General Dostum arrives in Kabul

General Dostum reached Kabul on July 2, for the first time since the fall of the communist regime, on board a jet fighter, for talks with the government and leaders of the political parties.

Immediately after his arrival, he held talks with President Rabbani. He told reporters he had come to Kabul to show that there was only one united Afghanistan. He offered his services in bringing understanding among different parties in the country for the sake of achieving peace.

He met twice with Ahmad Shah Massoud and discussed with him the issues facing the country. After meeting with Dostum, Massood rejected the rumor that a new military alliance was being formed between them. Massood said they discussed the future of Afghanistan.

Dostum also met with Abdul Ali Mazari the head of radical Wahdat party. Mazari and Dostum have had close relations in the past but some difference has emerged among them recently.

He met with the hard-line Hezb Islami leader Hikmatyar in Beni Hissar, outside Kabul. The meeting lasted for more than two hours, including one hour of private talks. This meeting was preceded by a meeting of Dostum with Hikmatyar’s son-in-law Humayoun Jarar.

There is no information about the content of their talks but the did not reach any agreement. Hikmatyar refused to allow journalists to cover the talks and even turned down a request by Dostum to take a joint photo.

It is worth mentioning that Hikmatyar launched two major attacks on Kabul to eject the ‘miltias’ of Dostum. Thousands of people were killed or wounded and a major part of the city was destroyed as a result of these attacks. But, at the end of last year, Hikmatyar reconciled with Dostum to have his support in the fight against the government. General Dostum, announced that it was neutral.

Hikmatyar planned to draw the feet of Dostum into war against the government.

Although Dostum claimed that his visit to Kabul was aimed at bringing understanding between warring groups, there were other reasons which urged him to visit Kabul.

Encouraged by the Military Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan, Dostum adopted an apparent neutral stand in fighting between the government and Hezb Islami. ISI had promised to help J minibhish have a fair share in the government. A delegation of Junibh was invited to Pakistan to address the problems of Junibh during the J minibhish talks between the government and opposition parties, but, his delegation was not allowed to take part in the talks. Junibh was also ignored in the Jalalabad talks. These developments made Dostum suspicious about the motives of ISI. He sees that the policy of neutrality has resulted in the isolation of Junibhish.

The ability of the government to defend Kabul against the massive attacks by Hezb and Wahdat last Winter and its achievements in Kapisa, Parwan and western provinces encouraged Dostum to enter into dialogue with it.

Junibhish is facing internal problems too. Dostum expanded his military organization to such an extent that he is not able to pay the salaries of his soldiers. Inability to pay his soldiers and officers has forced them to indulge in unlawful ways of getting money. The security situation along the highways in the territory of Junibhish and even in Mazari has deteriorated.

Dostum’s efforts to gain economic self-sufficiency have failed and hopes to get massive economic aid from abroad are frustrated. The support given by some special agencies of interested countries is not sufficient to meet his needs.

Sings of discontent among factions within Junibhish are visible. Sayed Mansoor, the Kayan militia head and spiritual leader of the Ismailis in Afghanistan, is not on good terms with Dostum. Relations between Wahdat and Junibhish are not very friendly. Junibhish has found documents showing that Wahdat leaders were trying to weaken Junibhish with the help of Iran. In the eyes of Iran, Dostum serves the interest of Turkey and America.

It seems that Junibhish has lost interest in taking part in the transitional government of Hikmatyar. An understanding also has been reached over the security arrangements within the city of Kabul; Junibhish forces evacuated some areas in Kabul and were replaced by troops of the Kabul garrison. They also evacuated some parts of the Kabul airport.

Pakistan plunders Nooristan forests

The war in Afghanistan not only had a disastrous effect on its people but proved to be extremely harmful to its ecology.

Border areas in Pakistan province were stripped of its forest by wood traders. Afghanistan once had a wood factory in Jaji and the forest of the area was protected by the security forces.

During the years of Jihad, most of the trees were cut and sold in Pakistan. Not only our national wealth was stolen but great damage was inflicted on the ecology of the area.

After plundering the forest of Pakistan, the timber mafia turned their attention to the forests of Nooristan. A road was built between Chitralt and Kunar. It also connected Kunar to Bajour through Na: a Pass.

This road proved a major route for smuggling timber from Kunar to Pakistan. Afghans being busy with the power struggle in Kabul, local and Pakistani traders found a golden opportunity to plunder our national wealth.

The permission to let Afghan wood be imported to Pakistan was given by the governor of NWFP. In three months of the current year, 13,000 truckloads of wood was taken to Pakistan. It was an immoral decision by the government of Pakistan to allow Afghan wood to be imported in such a massive scale.

Deforestation of Nooristan has worried some Mujahideen leaders. Some years ago, Ghazi Khan, a commander of Jamiat in Nooristan was killed by the timber mafia because he opposed deforestation of his area.

In a previous issue of AFGHANews we asked the government of Afghanistan to ask the Pakistani government to stop import of Afghan wood. Pakistan should stop exploiting the turmoil in Afghanistan.

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