

The Afghan revolution of April 78 was a military coup d'etat with urban mass support (amongst the working class, the army and state bureaucracy). Its goals, land reform and modernisation, and its leaders local stalinists. It was however not a Soviet organised putsch. The Soviet Union had hitherto been content with Afghanistan as a neutral buffer state. In return the Soviet Union pumped in large amounts of aid being concerned only that the Afghan regime was 'friendly'. But the effects of Soviet aid (army training, education etc) were to pro-Sovietise the majority of the army officer corps and state bureaucracy. Daoud moved against the PDPA, and a leader of the Parcham faction, Khyber, was assassinated. Faced with annihilation, PDPA cadres in the army moved against the Daoud regime, and launched the coup, without the knowledge or approval of the USSR. The attempts to carry out the land reform, the liberation of women, education, centralisation of the state and economy etc, ran into the reactionary opposition of the tribal leaders who had always barely recognised the central government in Kabul, and whose economic base consisted largely of illegal cross-border trade (smuggling of opium, etc). Moreover the Pushtuns were traditionally the dominant nationality within Afghanistan. They resented bitterly the measures of integration of non-Pushtun peoples (Tadjiks, Baluchis etc), into the state bureaucracy/armed forces.

The resistance to land reform, to the abolition of bride price and other measures liberating women, the unprovoked slaughter of PDPA members engaged in the literacy campaign, all point decisively to the "Islamic Resistance" as a reactionary Vende (i.e. a popular mobilisation for counter-revolutionary ends). Their "national" right to self-determination - whilst a healthy workers state /revolutionary communist party would still assert it strategically - would (should now) be recognised as vitiated by this dominant reactionary character. The tactics that are dictated by this characterisation are:

- 1) the absolute impermissibility of alliances/united fronts with these forces.
- 2) The permissibility of tactical united fronts against black reaction with bourgeois and petit-bourgeois democrats and Stalinists - Afghan or Soviet.

Such fronts are of course tactical, i.e. of limited duration for limited goals, (principally the preservation of the lives and goals of the working class, the intelligentsia etc). Equally important is the defence of these against Stalinist repression. No united front with the Soviet Armed Forces when and if these are under attack. The overall reactionary nature of the anti-Soviet forces does not entirely obliterate the possibility of acts of national oppression occurring against peoples who are not in reactionary opposition to Kabul. There we would support self-defence including armed self-defence, but no alliance with reaction.

The dictatorial regime of Zia ul Haq in Pakistan is being actively militarily supported by the US following the Soviet invasion. Zia in his turn has been giving succour and aid to the rebels for some time. This connection is not simply geographical some 200,000 nomads cross the border from Afghanistan to Pakistan, and back again, each year. Nationalities such as the anti-Karachi Baluchis straddle the border. The development of independent working class activity in Afghanistan would inevitably be connected with insurgency in Pakistan. Similarly, the overthrow of Zia by the Pakistani masses would cause enormous shock-waves in Afghanistan. Were the rebel forces in Afghanistan to triumph in the current civil war, the resultant pro-imperialist state would strengthen Zia's hand in repressing the Pakistani masses, and give further strength to the imperialists' band around the southern borders of the USSR.

The PDPA was/is a Stalinist party which had little or no basis in the peasantry or the tiny working class. Its lack of cadres in the countryside or throughout the nationalities rendered its reforms "from above" extremely limited in their mobilising power. The land reform failed to mobilise the impoverished peasantry whilst galvanising reaction, as did the abolition of the bride price. Crucially missing (necessarily) from the Stalinists' programme were independent democratic organisations (soviets) to mobilise the rural masses. Only these and their arming (i.e. creation of a popular militia) could have launched class struggle in the countryside. Only by putting the land reform before these bodies could the suspicions engendered by the Mullahs and the landowners have been exposed and dispelled. Likewise at a national level the failure to convene a Constituent Assembly, and the PDPA's outright refusal of the right of self-determination for all Afghanistan's peoples, up to and including separation, immeasurably weakened the regime. Revolutionary Marxists would have advocated self determination

within a federation and/or assistance to oppressed minorities in surrounding states (i.e. If the Baluchis wanted to form an independent Baluchistan out of the peoples of Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan they should have been assisted). In these ways maximum progressive forces could have been rallied round the small Afghan working class whose free trade unions and soviets would have provided a conscious mass base and example to the poor peasants.

Instead the PDPA ran into bitter reactionary opposition - resorted to harsh repression in reply, and as their social isolation advanced, fell into internecine conflict and more and more reliance on the Soviet Union. Thus Afghan Stalinism showed itself incapable of leading a revolution. The imminence of collapse and the triumph of a reactionary movement, backed by US imperialism and Pakistani reaction, which might well have placed hostile forces on the border of the USSR and have turned Afghanistan from a friendly (or neutral) state into a new base for spying and military intervention, (a replacement for the Shah's Iran), caused the Soviet bureaucracy to intervene.

We condemn this intervention as reactionary because:

- a) Its formal violation of the PDPA Government and party, and the installation of a Soviet-backed minority faction (potentially at least) split the progressive forces and threw some of them into the arms of reaction. It did amount to a violation of the Afghan peoples right to self-determination (expressed by various means but in the end by who held power - i.e. by civil war). It in fact weakened the indigenous progressive forces socially even if it (temporarily) strengthened the combined fire power against the reactionary rebels.
- b) It threatened any independent organisation/mobilisation of the working class with full scale Stalinist repression. It would for example expose any Afghan Trotskyists to murderous police/military repression as well as making the creation of Soviets or freely elected Trade Union leaderships much more difficult. Faced with this overwhelmingly reactionary invasion, the strategic aim must be for the Afghan masses to drive out the Soviet Armed Forces, as part of a drive to seize state power.

Nevertheless, once the intervention had occurred, revolutionary communists had to adopt tactics related to the existing situation, however undesired or disadvantageous. In conditions of civil war, where the working class and its allies under revolutionary leadership are unable to take independent military action against Afghan reaction, and the soviet-backed Afghan government, we suspend the demand for the withdrawal of Soviet troops.

- i) In the civil war with reaction we are for the defeat of the Afghan counter-revolution. A united front with the PDPA and the Soviet Armed Forces for this purpose and for the defence of the land reform, liberation of women etc, remains necessary. Whilst:
- ii) Defending the working class and democratic forces against the PDPA and Soviet repression, and
- iii) Warning of the politically counter-revolutionary role of these two - the need for Soviets, for a programme of transitional and democratic demands, for committees in the Afghan and Soviet armies, for a proletarian revolution in Afghanistan and a political revolution in the USSR. The workers, not the reactionaries, must settle accounts with Karmal. This must mean the building of a revolutionary communist party in Afghanistan, whose main tasks would be:
 - 1) Kick out the Soviet Armed Forces. 2) Kick out Karmal and seize state power. 3) Defend Afghanistan from imperialist intervention. 4) Spread the revolution to South-West Asia. 5) Defend the property relations established in the USSR in 1917. 6) Fight for and support the struggles of the Russian working class in the political revolution against the Soviet bureaucracy.
- iv) We warn of a Soviet deal with imperialism and Islamic reaction. While we would not oppose a Soviet withdrawal, we would 1) demand arms, munitions and volunteers from the Soviet Armed Forces to help defeat reaction; 2) call for armed resistance to and overthrow of any reactionary coalition put in power by the USSR -USA-Pakistan governments.

- * For an independent workers state based on Soviets in Afghanistan.
- * Down with the reactionary Islamic opposition and its imperialist backers. US, Britain - Hands Off Afghanistan.
- * Down with the cold war hysteria; Defend the USSR.
- * Down with the Afghan and Russian Stalinists - for a political revolution in the USSR.