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Afghanistan

“We are fighting a dual war”

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Shoaib Bhatti, editor of Weekly Mazdoor Jeddojuhd (Workers Struggle) interviewed Adil, central leader of the Afghan Revolutionary Labour Organization on 11th November in Lahore, before the fall of Kabul.

WHY were Osama and the Taliban held responsible immediately after the September 11th terrorist attacks?

Osama bin Laden was wanted by America for his involvement in the Tanzanian killings [the bombing of the US embassy - ed]. While he was already considered responsible for terrorist attacks in America. Under the same allegations America and the UN had imposed economic sanctions to pressurize the Taliban to arrest Osama. And to put pressure on Pakistan's government economic aid was linked with the arrest of Osama and creation of a broad based government in Afghanistan. Because of this economic sanction and with the efforts of the Pakistani government there were three distinct groups among the Taliban. But due to the superiority in numbers of armed men belonging to Al-Qaida and AQ economic support for the Taliban, they were reluctant to kick Osama out of Afghanistan. The killing of Ahmad Shah Masood on September 9th by two Arab militants was also linked to AQ. Ahmad Shah Masood was the only war lord who could have helped the Americans very effectively in their attack on the Taliban after the September 11th attacks.

Is it possible to arrest Osama and the main leaders of the Taliban?

Look, it is not difficult to arrest a man like Osama who weighs only 55 kilograms. It's also not difficult to capture Kabul and Mazar Sharif. America has a long planning in the area. America also wants to teach a lesson to the Northern Alliance that without American support the NA can neither conquer Afghanistan nor maintain it. America also wants a strong base in Afghanistan to keep a check on China and Russia. The differences can also be seen among the Taliban. A moderate group under the leadership of Foreign Minister Wakeel Ahmad Mutwaki also exists. He was not seen publicly for some time. Because of bombing and the fear of killing the people are asking AQ to leave the area or migrating themselves. It shows the reservation among the masses and there are differences among the Taliban. Because of losing mass support the retreat of the Taliban is a real possibility.

Would the new set up after the Taliban defeat be a strong one?

Even if the Taliban are not fully defeated, a faction of them under foreign pressure can join the new set up. While another faction with the support of AQ can join the guerrilla war. In future, a broad base government comprising moderate Taliban and Pashtoons is quite possible. In the next few days the meeting is going to be held in Turkey to settle the features and representations of the next government. A large number of tribal elders are participating in this meeting. Ex governor Jalal Abad is also participating in this meeting. However there is no question of stable and long lasting government. The enforced set up with or without Zahir Shah will look after the interests of America not the interests of Afghan people. This proposed set up is also not acceptable to the countries of the area.

Pakistan has its own interests and wants to defend them. However we are of the view that Pakistan's rulers and Intelligence agencies will not be able to provide the same monetary or military aid for Taliban guerrilla war as provided in the past. However Pakistan will make sure that its interests are secured. In Iran, the supporters of Raza Shah are considering the return of Zahir Shah as the return of the monarchy and due to this reason the Iranian Government consider the new set up under Zahir Shah as a threat for it and are supporting the Taliban setting aside all past differences.

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So the future government will not be able to solve any single problem of the Afghan masses nor will it be a representative government. It will generate contradictions inside and outside. This will be a dependent government, which will not be strong or able to maintain peace. This government will only defend the American interest and these interests are profit from the export of oil. The oil pipeline will not pass through Iran because this route is very expensive, the most possibility is that this will pass through Pakistan but the profit will go in the pockets of Americans. There will be very little benefit to Pakistan and Afghanistan. So Pakistan wants to become a gate way to central Asia and this objective will not be fulfilled. Pakistan can change its present strategy.

Similarly in Afghanistan if the expectations of the tribes are not fulfilled they can opt for civil war. Poppy production can also become a focal point of contradiction between America and local tribal leaders.

It is also clear that America does not trust Pakistan. The Pakistan intelligence agencies are also not able to provide concrete information which could lead to massive successes in short span of time. After the fall of the Najib-Ullah government in 1992 America gave a Pakistan a free hand. In return Pakistan promoted terrorism. This time America will not give Pakistan a free hand. On this point there could be tension between Pakistan and America.

What is your party's point of view in the new set up?

Our party does not support any imposed set up in Afghanistan. This new set up will defend the American interests. The problem of the Afghan people will not be solved by them neither it is their agenda. Former King Zahir Shah's talk of elections and transitional government is a deception. Because of ignorance and mass murder, the Afghan may consider Zahir Shah as an alternative but they will come out of this deception very soon. The grand son of Zahir Shah, Mustafa Zahir and grand daughter Humera Wali are active for the restoration of kingdom. It is possible that Zahir Shah and the new set up with so-called election process are "elected". But this will be a sheer deception. Through these elections it will not be the genuine people's representatives but the American stooges who will be elected. American will not tolerate an opposition to come into power.

Since 1964, our party is opposing Zahir Shah. His and other governments have killed hundreds of our party comrades. We cannot set aside or forget our party martyrs. We will do our best to expose this fraud and we will strengthen the class movement to establish a genuine government of the Afghan masses. Although, several groups are supporting Zahir Shah, considering him the lesser evil. This will be a big mistake. Our party cannot afford that.

We are fighting a dual war and we are hopeful that the victory will be of the poor Afghan masses.

Translation from Worker Struggle Weekly, Lahore, Pakistan by Tariq Iqbal Bhutta