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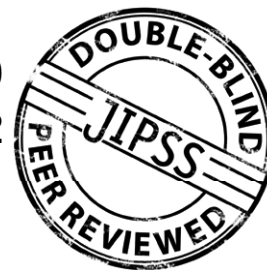
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Zusammenfassung:

SOWJETISCHE AKTIVOPERATIONEN IN WEST-, SÜDOST- UND OSTASIEN MIT BEZUG ZU AFGHANISTAN, 1980-1982

Im Februar 1980 genehmigte der Vorsitzende des KGB, Jurij Andropow, einen Aktionsplan für Pakistan. Dies war vermutlich der erste Plan für aktive Maßnahmen des KGB zur Gestaltung der Außenpolitik und der öffentlichen Meinung im Ausland bezüglich der sowjetischen Intervention in Afghanistan im Dezember 1979. Der KGB wurde ferner beauftragt, die Bildung eines afghanischen Geheimdiensts zu unterstützen, der – sobald er für Auslandseinsätze bereit war – bei der Kampagne mit aktiven Maßnahmen helfen sollte. Insgesamt geben die KGB-Aktionspläne für aktive Maßnahmen im Ausland betreffend die sowjetische Präsenz in Afghanistan einen Einblick, wie die UdSSR verdeckte und irreführende Operationen zur Unterstützung ihrer Außenpolitik ins Werk setzte. Dabei nutzte sie nicht nur den KGB, sondern auch andere ihrer Institutionen sowie ausländische Gruppen und Einzelpersonen, um gezielte, zeitlich koordinierte Aktivitäten mehrdimensional (in den Bereichen Politik, Wirtschaft, Militär, soziale Netzwerke, Medien usw.) zur Durchsetzung ihrer Interessen durchzuführen. Dieser Zugang ist nicht nur von historischem Interesse. Bereits Gerüchte über laufende aktive Maßnahmen schaffen Verwirrung, binden die Aufmerksamkeit und Ressourcen des Gegners, diskreditieren politische Schlüsselpersonen im Zielland und erzeugen den Eindruck von Macht, selbst wenn eine Beeinflussung scheitert. Die Entwürfe rund um die Geschehnisse in Afghanistan 1979 erlauben daher ein Urteil darüber, wie derartige Pläne für aktive Maßnahmen im 21. Jahrhundert aussehen könnten.

“First. The Western powers, chiefly the U.S., have unleashed a broad hostile propaganda campaign against the Soviet Union and revolutionary Afghanistan [...] Tenth. In connection with the decision of the U.S. to expand the quantity of weapons deliveries to Pakistan, it is necessary to state an opinion that some external forces, in particular the U.S., are interested not in establishing peace, but on the contrary, in aggravating the situation, in inflaming a conflict situation in this region.”

Soviet Foreign Minister Andrey Gromyko to Democratic Republic of Afghanistan Minister of Foreign Affairs Shah Mohammad Dost, 4 January 1980.¹

ACTIVE MEASURES

During the Cold War, the Soviet Union made attempts with what it referred to as active measures to split the unity of the Free World.² The primary target was the concord between the United States and Western

Europe but active measures were also used to split national unity within Western countries. Active measures encompassed various means including clandestine support to local communist parties and activist organizations such as those within the peace movement.³ The term active measures was a literal translation from Russian *aktivnyye meropriyatiya*, which the U.S. government then interpreted as “covert or deceptive operations conducted in support of Soviet foreign policy.” The goal of active measures was regarded as distinct from both espionage and counterintelligence, on the one hand, and from traditional diplomatic and informational activities, on the other. Relying on deception, the goal of active measures was to influence the opinions and/or actions of individuals, governments, and/or the public.⁴



Fig. 1: Badge of the Committee for State Security of the Soviet Union (KGB).

The Soviet foreign intelligence service, the KGB, in an internal dictionary defined active measures as

“Agent-operational measures aimed at exerting useful influence on aspects of the political life of a target country which are of interest, its foreign policy, the solution of international problems, misleading the adversary, undermining and weakening his positions, the disruption of his hostile plans, and the achievement of other aims.” With particular regard to the KGB, active measures were explained as “agent-operational measures directed at exerting influence on the foreign policy and the internal political situation of target countries in the interests of the Soviet Union and of other countries of the socialist community, the World Communist and National Liberation Movement, weakening the political, military economic and ideological positions of capitalism, undermining its aggressive plans, in order to create conditions favourable to the successful implementation of the Soviet Union’s foreign policy, and ensuring peace and social progress.”⁵

Among the various types of active measures, it was political influence operations that the United States found most difficult to counter. In a 1982 hearing on Soviet active measures before the U.S. Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, John McMahon, Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, concluded: “Political influence operations are the most important, ambiguous, but least visible of Soviet active measures. They range from the use of agents of influence, through the manipulation of private channels of communication, to the exploitation of unwitting contacts. These operations have a common aim: To insinuate Soviet policy views into foreign governmental, journalistic, business, labor, academic, and artistic opinion in a nonattributable fashion.”⁶ In Soviet terminology, one aspect of this was referred to as the “method of special positive influence” which entailed the passing of information, through agents and confidential contacts (that is, foreigners who, without being agents, provided information or services of an intelligence nature⁷), in conversations designed to influence key individuals.⁸ This was either the same as, or a variant of, what elsewhere was referred to as the “method of special positive pressure.”⁹

The essence of active measures was deception, and the desired result was typically the imposition of disunity among the adversaries. That active measures formed part of Soviet strategy during the Cold War is documented by various sources, including those cited in the present paper. However, at present some

observers have concluded that Russia has aimed for a similar divide and rule policy in the 21st century. While there seems to be some evidence for such conclusions, no complete Russian active measures plan has surfaced. This leaves the observer in the position that he or she is limited to draw conclusions based on the outcome observed, without in fact being able conclusively to prove that active measures were employed.

For this reason, we will examine the only complete active measures campaign plan that has surfaced.¹⁰ Based on it, a number of conclusions can be drawn on what characterized Soviet active measures during the Cold War, and for this reason might still characterize contemporary Russian active measures.

First, a warning. The active measures plan available for study did not reach us as an intact original document, but as a compilation copied in secret by the late KGB archivist Vasiliy Mitrokhin from the archives of the KGB First Chief Directorate in Yassenevo outside Moscow before he retired in 1984. Mitrokhin brought his collection of handwritten notes with him when he defected to the West in 1992. For this reason, Mitrokhin wrote an entire Afghanistan manuscript in 1986-87, based on notes that he had copied.¹¹ Mitrokhin claimed that his notes were based exclusively on KGB information and where possible, this seems corroborated by other evidence. However, the possibility remains that Mitrokhin exaggerated the power and deviousness of his former employer, since his notes were written with a view to defect to the United States or Great Britain, and the Afghanistan manuscript was his ticket out.¹² Eventually, Mitrokhin also wrote a compilation of Soviet active measures relating to Afghanistan. Mitrokhin's active measures compilation was written long after the end of the Cold War, for presentation during a 2002 conference devoted to the war in Afghanistan, at a time when there no longer was any need to present materials pleasing to Western intelligence.¹³ On the other hand, his original notes were written with a view to defect, and it remains possible that some bias crept into them.

Another point to keep in mind is that active measures were not aimed at the Soviet population. There was certainly domestic propaganda, but this was a separate phenomenon. Moreover, the United States at times reported active measures that seem not to have been devised by the Soviets. In most cases, it seems that it was Soviet propaganda aimed

at a purely domestic audience that was mistaken for active measures against the Western countries. This might have been a misunderstanding among Western analysts; however, it seems to have been common in the West to assume that every Soviet exaggeration or outright lie was a deliberate attempt to influence the West. There was, no doubt, a shared interest among Western intelligence analysts and the Western press to report Soviet active measures as particularly prevalent and efficient, even when evidence was slim or non-existent. In short, the analysis credited Soviet active measures with being more prevalent and more damaging than even the KGB could have hoped for.

THE KGB ACTIVE MEASURES PLAN, FEBRUARY 1980

In February 1980, KGB Chairman Yuriy Andropov approved a KGB action plan relating to Pakistan. This was probably the first KGB plan for active measures abroad to shape foreign policy and public opinion with regard to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan that had taken place in December 1979.¹⁴ Mitrokhin later noted that the disinformation component of active measures consisted of three categories: documentary (written), non-documentary (oral), and demonstrative.¹⁵ The active measures plan worked out in 1980 encompassed the first two of these categories. The



Fig. 2: Chairman of the Soviet KGB, Yuriy Andropov, in 1983.

original KGB action plan, approved by Andropov in February 1980, consisted of nine distinct components, one direct threat, six disinformation campaigns, and two regular information campaigns.¹⁶ Some campaigns would be carried out in the target country, Pakistan, while others would be carried out in other countries, but with the view of influencing General Zia ul-Haq's Pakistani military government in Islamabad.

First, the direct threat. The Pakistani embassy in Moscow would be warned that if Pakistan turned its territory into a base for permanent armed struggle against Afghanistan, the Institute of Oriental Studies of the USSR Academy of Sciences, whose director then was former KGB co-optee and future foreign intelligence chief Yevgeniy Primakov, would be instructed to come up with ways of exploiting the Baluchi and Pashtun separatist movements in Pakistan, as well as other groups within the internal opposition to the Islamabad government. Second, the six disinformation campaigns. Four of them were aimed at Pakistan:

A. 500 leaflets, critical of Pakistan's policies, would be produced in Moscow for dissemination in Islamabad (and neighboring Rawalpindi, as will be shown) and Karachi, some of which would be issued in the name of a group of Pakistan Army officers so as to give the impression that elements within the Army opposed present policies.

B. In an operation codenamed SARDAR ("commander-in-chief"), another 300 leaflets (probably in English, since at least the later operation SARDAR relied on English-language materials) would be produced and disseminated in Pakistan, so as to give the impression that there was extreme dissatisfaction with present policies in both public and military circles. The Urdu and English leaflets were distributed on the night of 29 February to 1 March 1980 by KGB officers who drove around Islamabad, Rawalpindi, and Karachi, and on 25 March Andropov was informed that operation SARDAR had been successful and led the General Zia government to believe that the United States was conspiring with dissidents in the Pakistan Army.¹⁷

C. Information would be planted in the local press in Pakistan to the effect that the Islamabad military government was artificially creating tensions relating to events in Afghanistan with the object of building up the Pakistan Army, further increasing its influence in the country, and maintaining the ban on the activities of political parties indefinitely. By

the third quarter of 1980, the KGB claimed to have planted 527 articles in the Pakistani press.¹⁸

D. In Thailand, information would be conveyed to the Pakistani embassy to the effect that the Administration of American President Jimmy Carter doubted the utility of further military assistance to Pakistan, and that U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance wanted to replace Pakistan's military dictatorship with a civilian government.

Disinformation campaigns would also be directed at India and Iran, the two neighbors of Pakistan most affected by turmoil there. In India, information would be conveyed to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to the effect that Islamabad intended to continue artificially creating tensions relating to events in Afghanistan with the object of obtaining a significant increase in U.S. military assistance and the lifting of restrictions on the development of its nuclear program. In Iran, information would be conveyed, through the United Nations leadership, to the Ayatollah Khomeini government that, in return for growing military assistance to Pakistan, the United States sought permanent military bases on Pakistani territory, including in Baluchistan near the Iranian border.

Finally, there would be the two regular information campaigns. In India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Indonesia, Jordan, Italy, and France, there would be continued publication in the press of materials about the direct involvement of Pakistani intelligence and military in organizing the armed interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. This, it should be noted, was not disinformation, since Pakistan was engaged in such operations. However, the placing of articles in the press was certainly an active measure. Moreover, in 1980 5,000 leaflets were disseminated through meetings, seminars, and other occasions in Colombo in the name of a fictitious organization, the Union of Muslim Youth, which supported the Karmal government and condemned the actions of the United States and China against Afghanistan. The KGB also formed a Sri Lanka-Afghanistan Solidarity Committee which organized meetings to condemn interference by the United States, China, and Pakistan in Afghanistan. In addition, the KGB arranged a session of the Sri Lankan National Center of the Asian Buddhist Peace Congress (ABPC) which condemned the policy of China and Pakistan.¹⁹

Finally, the KGB would, through various circles in member countries of the Nonaligned Movement, take steps to discredit Pakistan's foreign policy,

emphasizing that Pakistan had breached the basic principles of the Nonaligned Movement by allowing the United States and China to use Pakistani territory as an instrument of their policy in Asia. Again, this was not disinformation, although the plan certainly gives the impression that these steps would be carried out clandestinely.

An analysis of the action plan suggests that it already at this early stage was quite sophisticated. With regard to the target country, Pakistan, there was both an explicit threat that the Soviet Union would take action and an implicit threat that the United States might no longer support the Islamabad government and instead aim for regime change. The latter might certainly split the unity between Islamabad and Washington, especially since the information apparently would be brought to Islamabad's attention by roundabout means in a third country. Then there were the documentary disinformation campaigns, consisting of leaflets disseminated in Pakistan's leading cities and information planted in the Pakistani press. Such means would work to divide Pakistani society and cause uncertainty in Islamabad. Meanwhile, both India and Iran would receive information that caused additional distrust between these countries and Pakistan, thus creating a framework for border incidents and other problems that ultimately would harm Pakistan. In addition, regular but apparently mostly clandestine information campaigns would be carried out in a number of countries in order to influence their policies toward Pakistan.

THE EXTENDED ANDROPOV PLAN, SEPTEMBER 1980

Islamabad reacted to the Soviet involvement in Afghanistan and, likely, KGB operations on its own territory by expelling a large number of Soviet diplomats in August and September 1980.²⁰ The US State Department explained: "Alleged espionage activities and violations of the rules governing the dissemination of propaganda in Pakistan reportedly led to the departure of about 100 Soviet diplomats and staff members from Pakistan."²¹ This was presumably not the outcome expected by the KGB leadership. In response, Vladimir Kryuchkov, the head of the KGB First Chief Directorate (foreign intelligence), in September 1980 approved an extended version of the Andropov plan. A working group was set up with the task to devise complex active measures,

coordinate the various actions, and monitor implementation.²² This may have been sorely needed. In 1980, Mitrokhin noted, the number of KGB agents who were engaged in work against the Afghan mujahidin was still comparably low. In Afghanistan and India, twelve each; in Pakistan, eight; and in Bangladesh, six.²³

OPERATION TORKHAM, FEBRUARY 1981

In February 1981, the working group had devised a broad operational plan codenamed TORKHAM, named after a major border crossing point between Pakistan and Afghanistan in the Pashtun tribal territories.²⁴ TORKHAM was, like the previous plan, to be carried out in several countries. The overall aims were as follows:

- compromise the Zia ul-Haq government;
- step up the anti-government activities of Pakistani émigrés and separatists, particularly in Baluchistan;
- disrupt Afghan mujahidin organizations;
- intensify the local Pakistani population's hostility toward Afghan migrants;
- weaken the positions of the United States and China in Pakistan;



© US Government

Fig. 3: General Muhammad Zia ul-Haq during a visit at the White House in Washington in 1982.

- exacerbate relations between Pakistan and Iran;
- intensify the conflict between Pakistan and India and inspire new irritants between them;
- reinforce Indira Gandhi's and other Indian leaders' personal antipathy and suspicion toward Zia ul-Haq;
- compromise Zia ul-Haq in the eyes of the Muslims of India and worldwide;
- induce the government of India to seek to secure the end of Pakistan's support for the Afghan rebels.

This list of objectives shows that operation TORKHAM consisted of several distinct elements. First, there was an emphasis on increasing the anti-system opposition in Pakistan, both generally (among other measures, the KGB attempted to locate and make contact with a Pakistani opposition leader in exile in Britain²⁵) and among separatists. At the same time, an objective was to cause disunity between Pakistanis and Afghans, in particular with regard to Afghan mujahidin organizations but also more generally between Pakistanis and Afghans in Pakistan. On the foreign policy level, TORKHAM aimed to cause divisions between Pakistan and its two foreign sponsors, the United States and China, and to increase existing divisions between Pakistan and its regional neighbors, Iran and India. In addition, TORKHAM would aim to discredit General Zia further in the eyes of the Indian leadership, which was not difficult, but also more generally among Muslims worldwide. The last objective, to induce India to apply pressure on Pakistan, seemed like an afterthought and was, at the time, probably not very realistic.

Both India and Iran would receive information to the effect that Pakistan was building up its military forces for aggression not only against Afghanistan, but also against India and Iran. Prime Minister Gandhi was again a particular target, and TORKHAM envisaged disinformation to be conveyed to her about joint operations by the United States, Pakistan, and the People's Republic of China to destabilize the situation in Jammu and Kashmir. Again, the notion that Gandhi would fall for this might not have been very realistic. Bangladesh too would become the target of active measures related to Afghanistan. The aim was to prevent President Ziaur Rahman's government from supporting the Afghan mujahidin, and to intensify disagreements between Bangladesh and Pakistan on a number of existing disputed issues that caused resentment in Bangladesh toward Pakistan.

Specifically, TORKHAM consisted of a considerable number of individual disinformation campaigns, most of them ambitious in scope. The general idea was clearly to fan existing tensions. Although all campaign elements relied on deception and disinformation, the issues they aimed to intensify disagreement around were already serious problems in the target countries. Broadly, operation TORKHAM can be divided into three components, with the respective aims to fan existing conflicts within Pakistan and vis-à-vis the Afghan mujahidin, to reduce the international standing of Pakistan and its American and Chinese sponsors, and to fan Pakistan's traditional conflict with Iran.

TO FAN EXISTING CONFLICTS WITHIN PAKISTAN, INCLUDING VIS-À-VIS THE AFGHAN MUJAHIDIN PARTIES

A. Operation SARDAR would continue, with the dissemination in Islamabad and Karachi of English-language leaflets in the name of a fictitious group of Pakistan Army officers so as to give the impression that elements within the Army opposed present policies.

B. TORKHAM also included the continuation of ongoing work for exploiting the Baluchi separatist and Pakistani opposition groups that by then were based in Afghanistan.

C. Additional compromising news materials would be placed in the press of various countries.

D. Disinformation would be disseminated in Pakistan with the intent to intensify Pakistani hostility toward Afghan refugees, for instance by asserting that the presence of Afghan refugees gave the government the advantage of obtaining substantial material assistance, isolating the Baluchi and Pashtun nationalist leaders, and increasing the central authorities' control in districts where refugees were located.

E. Disinformation would also be aimed, at times through journalists, at the Pakistani government to create distrust vis-à-vis the Afghan mujahidin parties, which were based in Pakistan. So would, for instance, information be conveyed that mujahidin leaders such as Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Nabi Muhammadi in fact aimed to set up an independent Pashtunistan on Pakistani territory, which was an old worry of Islamabad's. In addition, information would be conveyed to Pakistani intelligence that a significant portion of the weapons that were delivered

to the Afghan mujahidin was sold on to members of opposition political parties. There would also be information that the mujahidin commanders attempted to develop cooperation with U.S., Chinese, and Saudi intelligence outside Pakistani control.

It remains unclear exactly how much of this information would be conveyed. The KGB apparently had contacts within a number of Pakistani political parties, including the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), the Tehrik-e Istiqlal, all factions of the Muslim League, and several others.²⁶ It is quite possible that the plan intended such contacts to be used.

TO REDUCE THE INTERNATIONAL STANDING OF PAKISTAN AND ITS AMERICAN AND CHINESE SPONSORS

A. With regard to India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, information would be conveyed to the press of these countries to the effect that the expansion of military cooperation between Pakistan and the United States would result in the establishment of U.S. military bases in Pakistan that would undermine Pakistan's relations with Islamic and nonaligned countries.

B. Active measures would be carried out to expose cooperation between the United States, China, and the Zia ul-Haq government to develop Pakistani nuclear weapons.

C. Information would be conveyed to hostile countries as well. Through India and the U.N. Secretary General, information would be conveyed to the United States to the effect that the American plans to expand military and other assistance to Pakistan would provoke a very negative reaction within the democratic opposition to the Zia ul-Haq government. If General Zia was overthrown, the United States would be faced with similar anti-American feelings in Pakistan as had emerged in Iran in 1979.

D. Through Hungary, information would be conveyed to NATO that the Pakistani opposition was growing in strength, including in the Pakistan Army, and that the country grew increasingly unstable. We will see that the KGB almost certainly enlisted Hungarian intelligence for this purpose.

E. In Bangladesh, the KGB had assets that would "inspire parliamentary questions and speeches" by public and political personalities and leaders of the main opposition parties. As noted, the aim was to prevent President Ziaur Rahman's government from

supporting the Afghan mujahidin, and to intensify disagreements between Bangladesh and Pakistan on existing disputed issues that caused resentment in Bangladesh toward Pakistan.

F. India would receive information to the effect that the United States and NATO had plans to set up an anti-Indian alliance in South Asia in which Pakistan would play a key role. Moreover, the information would note that the Western countries not only strengthened Pakistan's military but also encouraged its subversive activities against India, and incited it to inflame disputes between Hindus and Muslims, as well as the Sikh aspiration to set up an independent Khalistan on Indian territory.

G. India was targeted in Bangladesh as well. Indian diplomats in Dhaka would receive biased but credible information about the Pakistani leadership's aggressive intentions against India and the Zia government's strategic plans with regard to the American and Chinese attempts to weaken India's positions in the subcontinent and rapidly build up its client Pakistan's military potential.

TO FAN PAKISTAN'S TRADITIONAL CONFLICT WITH IRAN

A. Leaflets critical of Pakistan's policies from a Shia perspective (including appropriate comments by Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Khomeini about Zia ul-Haq) would be produced and disseminated to various establishments, newspapers, and foreign missions in Islamabad, and by scattering copies in Karachi. The ostensible Shia orientation was intended to implicate Iran in its production, thus causing tensions between Iran and Pakistan.

B. To increase tensions further, a forged "personal letter" would be produced ostensibly from Pakistan's Home Affairs Minister, Mahmud Harun, a Shia, to Ayatollah Khomeini. The letter would convey the information that Zia ul-Haq intended to take drastic new measures against the Shias in Pakistan, and that the Shias accordingly appealed to Iran for help. A photocopy of the forged letter, with a covering note from "a well wisher", would be sent to one of the chiefs of Pakistani intelligence.

C. So as to fan the conflict between Iran and Pakistan further, there was also a plan regularly to supply the Iranian leadership with disinformation about Pakistan's use of Afghan mujahidin to pass arms to Baluchi and Arab separatists in Iran and to

instigate mass disorders and anti-government incidents in the Iranian provinces of Khuzestan, Sistan, and (Iranian) Baluchistan. This information was linked to intelligence, conveyed to the Iranian leadership, that the CIA, with the support and agreement of the local authorities, had set up bases in Oman and in Pakistan to train armed units of the Iranian opposition and separatists in order to send them into Iran to carry out sabotage operations. The training was conducted by, among others, CIA officers and fighters from Afghan mujahidin parties in Pakistan.²⁷

OPERATION GWADAR, MARCH 1981

The working group was probably responsible for another operation as well. In March 1981, yet another plan, codenamed GWADAR, was devised.²⁸ Gwadar was a small port on the Southwestern coast of Pakistani Baluchistan. The Pakistani government had in 1977 made Gwadar the district headquarters of the newly formed Gwadar District. As the codename suggested, operation GWADAR would exploit Baluchi separatism in Pakistan. This issue had already been used in previous operations; however, henceforth Baluchi separatism would be made a key enabler for the Soviets. By then, the Soviets had also, as we will see, established a reliable and competent Afghan intelligence service, the KhAD, to assist. Operation GWADAR included several elements of disinformation. By fanning Baluchi separatism, the operation would aim to create distrust between Pakistan and the United States, between Pakistan and the rest of the Islamic world, and between Iran and Pakistan.

TO FAN BALUCHI SEPARATISM

Through the KGB Residencies in Islamabad and Karachi and the KhAD, information would be conveyed to Baluchi leaders that the Pakistani government aimed to give the Afghan refugees in Baluchistan permanent land rights there. The intention was to fan armed clashes between the Baluchis and the Afghan mujahidin parties represented in Baluchistan. The KhAD would produce and disseminate leaflets to aggravate the situation further between the Baluchis and Afghan refugees in Baluchistan. The KGB would also investigate the feasibility of establishing links with the Baluchi diaspora in Europe, to exert influence on the Baluchi movement there and to give the

impression that the Soviet Union would offer broad assistance. The KGB accordingly searched for such a leader who reportedly lived in France.²⁹ The KGB would also examine the possibility of establishing a radio station in Afghanistan which, in the name of the Baluchis, would call on the population of Baluchistan to fight for the establishment of an autonomous state. The KGB and the KhAD would jointly examine the possibilities to incite the Baluchis into uprisings against Islamabad. Presumably as part of the latter objective, they discussed the formation of a Free Baluchistan government-in-exile in Afghanistan. However, this turned out to be too complex a task, so it was postponed indefinitely.

TO CREATE MISTRUST BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND THE UNITED STATES

There was also a foreign policy aspect. The KGB planned to convey biased information to Islamabad about American intentions and actions to exploit Baluchi separatism to put pressure on the Zia ul-Haq government in order to acquire further use of Pakistani territory. The KGB would provide disinformation about the CIA's contacts with individual Baluchi leaders, including some who had emigrated to the West. The disinformation would be supported by forged letters ostensibly from Baluchis to the Pakistan Embassy in the United States and some countries in Asia, containing threats against General Zia and other key Pakistani leaders. Taken as a whole, the disinformation campaign would suggest that the Baluchi leaders received U.S. support and financial assistance for establishing an independent Baluchistan.

TO CREATE MISTRUST BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND LIBYA

The KGB would convey information to Pakistani diplomats in Sri Lanka to the effect that Pakistani Baluchi leaders had asked Libya for assistance in the struggle to set up an autonomous state, and that senior Libyan officials were studying the request. One reason for this objective may have been to sow mistrust between the Pakistani government and the influential mujahidin party leader Sibghatullah Mujaddidi, who had well-known links to the senior Libyan leadership.



Fig. 4: Sibghatullah Mujaddidi in September 2014.

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TO CREATE MISTRUST BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND THE ISLAMIC WORLD

The KGB would convey information to Palestinian Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat and to the press of various countries to the effect that the United States merely used Pakistan to deflect the Muslim countries' righteous anger at Israel's annexation of Jerusalem and to undermine their unity on this issue, in particular if an emergency Conference of Islamic States would be convened on the latter issue.

TO CREATE MISTRUST BETWEEN IRAN AND PAKISTAN

Biased information would also be conveyed to the Iranian leadership on how the United States, together with Pakistan, aimed to detach Iranian Baluchistan from Iran and, by arrangement with Islamabad, set up an autonomous united Baluchistan within Pakistan. In 1981 and early 1982, Moscow indeed requested that the Residents in Tehran and Islamabad (an individual referred to as Akim) would suggest "sensitive points in relations between Pakistan and Iran which could be worked on to lead to an acute worsening of relations between them, even to the extent of causing open hostilities against each other, and which would contribute to achieving the aims of our Service in this region."³⁰

THE KASHMIR OPTION

The KGB also explored another option, the formation of an Azad Kashmir (Free Kashmir) movement

independent of both Pakistan and India. This would surely have caused additional irritants in the already hostile Pakistan-India relationship. However, the complexity of this option resulted in it being postponed indefinitely.

OPERATION ZAKHAR, APRIL 1981

By spring 1981, when the KGB aimed to create mistrust between Iran and Pakistan and between Pakistan and the Islamic world, the KGB produced leaflets that attacked General Zia as an enemy of Islam. The operation, codenamed ZAKHAR (sugar) was submitted to the KGB leadership on 18 April 1981 and approved by Andropov on 21 April. The operation included leaflets written in Urdu in the name of a fictitious opposition group that called for an Islamic revolution against the Zia government. These should be distributed in Islamabad and Karachi. Meanwhile, the Residencies in Bangladesh and India should place articles in the press about a powerful opposition group in Pakistan which had been formed by Iranian intelligence.³¹

Afghan intelligence agencies too participated in the active measures. In the second half of May 1982, the Afghan intelligence service KhAD carried out its part of operation ZAKHAR which entailed the distribution of 990 leaflets calling for the overthrow of Zia ul-Haq in Pakistani Baluchistan. A KhAD agent among the leaders of one of the Baluchi tribes had some of his men throw out the leaflets along the railway line to Zahedan, in the area between Quetta and the Iranian border. He paid them for the task in Iranian rials. The agent reportedly told those who were carrying out the task that he had been given the leaflets and the money by the leader of one of the Baluchi tribes in Iranian Sistan, and warned them not to say anything of this to any Afghans. Meanwhile, another KhAD agent, the leader of a small resistance group referred to as Mohammad Khano, sent two of his men to throw out leaflets in southern Pakistan, between Quetta in Baluchistan and presumably Sukkur in Sindh. He paid the men Iranian rials for expenses and explained that he had taken on the assignment at the request of an Iranian. The cover stories were intended to hold up even if the executants were detained, as they then could not add anything to the fictitious information.³²

THE NEW DELHI RESIDENT'S PROPOSAL, MAY 1981

The KGB Resident in Delhi, Prokhorov (real name Gennadiy Afanasyevich Vaumin), on his own initiative proposed active measures in India (in his telegram No. 1669 of 5 May 1981). Fundamentally, Mitrokhin wrote (without giving details), the Resident argued that in order to keep the Babrak Karmal government in power in Afghanistan, a war between India and Pakistan would be advantageous for the Soviet Union, and the two countries should be steered in that direction.³³ There is no information that the Resident's proposal was acted upon, or even endorsed. The proposal probably went the same way as the already mentioned Kashmir option, which also was regarded as too complex and difficult to assess the likely outcome of.

INDIVIDUAL ACTIVE MEASURES OPERATION TOKSIK

Operation TOKSIK (Toxic) was designed to compromise Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan. It focused on the idea that the Afghan mujahidins' main problem was a lack of funds. For this reason, they were allegedly extensively engaged in the narcotics trade in the West.³⁴ The code name for the operation may have derived from the fact that drugs are toxic, or alternatively, it may have aimed to emphasize the point that links to the mujahidin were toxic to the West, too. Either way, the assumption was wrong. The mujahidin parties in Pakistan were well funded.

AGAINST LEO

LEO was a presumably American official whom the KGB worked to discredit. In 1980, use was made of a journey to Baluchistan by a U.S. State Department official, the Consul in Karachi, and LEO. They supposedly had meetings with Baluchi separatist leaders. Apparently, a brief item in a local newspaper reported that a policeman had stopped the motorcar of a member of the American Embassy. In the subsequently placed news report, this was transformed into an incident of smuggling by the Americans and confirmation of their link with separatists.³⁵

LEO was presumably the U.S. official George G. B. Griffin who was mentioned, and eventually also named, in the testimony of John McMahon, Deputy

Director of Central Intelligence, at a hearing on Soviet active measures before the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence in July 1982. It should be remembered that the griffin is a legendary creature with the body, tail, and rear legs of a lion; the head and wings of an eagle; and an eagle's talons as its front feet. Perhaps Griffin's name inspired the code name LEO. According to McMahon, Griffin was a U.S. Foreign Service officer against whom the Soviets ran a "vicious oral and written disinformation campaign" because of his press briefings on Soviet actions in Afghanistan. McMahon pointed out that on 2 July 1982, an Urdu language daily newspaper in Lahore had published a rumor that the American was involved in the 1975 assassination of the former president of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. According to McMahon, by December 1980 Griffin, who was stationed in Kabul, would visit New Delhi once a week to meet his family and, incidentally, give regular press briefings on events in Afghanistan. After his tour in Kabul, the United States wanted to make him chief of the political section of the embassy in New Delhi. According to McMahon, the Soviet disinformation campaign made the Indian government refuse his appointment.³⁶

The first article accusing Griffin of spreading falsehoods about the situation in Afghanistan appeared in the Indian newspaper *Patriot* on 4 December 1980. Five months later (4 May 1981), the weekly *Blitz* described Griffin as a CIA operative in charge of operations against the Afghan government. In both instances, the Soviet press agency TASS picked up the story and distributed it throughout the world, thus amplifying the rumor.³⁷ *Blitz* was a well-known propaganda outlet.³⁸ The Soviet campaign against Griffin continued in 1982, when TASS, *Literaturnaya gazeta*, and *Izvestiya* in several articles focused on alleged CIA officer Griffin. Among other claims, the articles claimed that Griffin had entered India illegally, and that he was in charge of a covert operation codenamed Khalistan aimed at supporting Sikh separatists.³⁹

There may have been some truth in McMahon's claims of innocence, but Griffin had a history in India. In 1971, he had been a U.S. political officer in Calcutta. During the 1971 crisis when India was moving toward war with Pakistan over Bangladesh, his meetings with members of the Bangladeshi government-in-exile had caused the rumors that he was a CIA operative.⁴⁰ On 4 December 1980, *Patriot*

accused Griffin of spreading falsehoods about the situation in Afghanistan. TASS, the Soviet press agency, picked up the news item and reported it further.⁴¹

The Indian government formally refused Griffin's appointment on 28 July 1981,⁴² although McMahon clearly knew all about it well in advance, since he could report the refusal already on 13 July.⁴³



Fig. 5: Badge of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) of the US Department of State.

Griffin may not have been a CIA officer, but he dealt with intelligence issues throughout his career and during 1975-1979 was in the South Asia Division of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR).⁴⁴ When in the summer of 1981 Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Dennis Kux was selected as the first chairman of the Active Measures Working Group (AMWG), the argument was that the State Department would not be considered part of the U.S. intelligence community and accordingly be regarded, by the public and other countries, as inherently more trustworthy than any intelligence agency. However, this was not the full story. Based on Griffin's own testimony, the INR certainly considered itself part of the intelligence community, although one without covert intelligence collection capability. Griffin noted that the INR "collaborated and competed with" the CIA, and like other elements of the intelligence community had the right to indicate disagreement with other intelligence agencies through the use of footnotes in reports that went to the President.⁴⁵ Moreover, allegations of CIA involvement in the Sheikh Mujibur Rahman assassination did not end with the Cold War and have been made by others than the Soviets.⁴⁶

AGAINST THE CIA

In 1980, one active measure consisted of the production and distribution in Pakistan of posters about the CIA. In addition, the newspaper *Patriot* was again used. On 5 April 1980, *Patriot* in New Delhi published an article under the heading "The American cloak and dagger agency's war against Zia ul-Haq." The article described the CIA's involvement in an anti-government officers' plot. The background was a scheme in which a secretary in the Political Section of the American Embassy allegedly lost a wallet containing documents of an anti-Pakistan nature. The wallet was supposedly found by a Pakistani in a public place and handed to a policeman.⁴⁷

OPERATION TARAKANY

Eventually Moscow devised a particular operation to discredit the United States which was codenamed TARAKANY (cockroaches). KGB Residencies in Pakistan, India, and Iran were instructed to report any press news of gastric diseases. Such news would be used to discredit the American bacteriological laboratory attached to the Lahore Medical Center and its personnel. Operation TARAKANY was a continuation of the ongoing operation to compromise the United States and NATO over chemical and bacteriological weapons. In 1980-82, articles appeared now and then in the press of India, Iran, Bangladesh, and Lebanon, alleging that preparations were ongoing in Pakistan, with the support of American specialists, for bacteriological warfare and subversion against Afghanistan, Iran, and India. The press reported that cases of intestinal diseases in humans in the Pishin, Surkhab, Muslimbagh, and adjacent districts of Afghanistan, and of cattle plague and infectious diseases in the states of Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Jammu and Kashmir were caused by the migration from Pakistan of people and animals infected by the American specialists. There was seasonal migration of cattle-raising tribes from Pakistan to Afghanistan, Iran, and India, and for sure carriers of new types of disease could be infiltrated by such means. According to the press reports, the American and Pakistani plan was to promote chaos and disorder in the afflicted countries.⁴⁸

As a further twist to encourage sectarian conflict between Iran and Pakistan, a rumor was spread in Iran that in Pakistan the Americans were using Shias

as human guinea pigs to study the effects of new chemical and bacteriological warfare agents, with many already either dead or crippled. The rumor was that the Pakistani leadership had authorized these experiments since they wished to rid themselves of a potential internal enemy and sectarian rival.⁴⁹ In Bangladesh, there were news articles that demanded, based on the rumors from Pakistan, an investigation into the nature of experiments conducted by American specialists in the country, under the aegis of the International Center for the Study of Intestinal Diseases and in cholera hospitals in Dhaka and other cities.⁵⁰

In many ways, operation TARAKANY was highly successful. First, public opinion was set against the American bacteriological services in all the affected countries. Second, Dr. David Nalin, the head of the bacteriological laboratory and of a team of scientists from Maryland University attached to the Lahore Medical Center, was expelled from Pakistan. Third, the Indian government cancelled a joint Indo-American commission on healthcare and an Asian conference on intestinal diseases which were to take place in India.⁵¹ Dr. Nalin had previously served in Dhaka, so the news spread to Bangladesh as well.

Nalin stated that his expulsion was the result of intrigues by his Pakistani colleagues, including Professor Aslam Khan and Brigadier M. A. Choudhry. In response, the KGB instigated the dispatch of protest letters to World Health Organization headquarters ostensibly from Pakistani medical scholars. Furthermore, anti-American articles which condemned Nalin and his team as the instigator of bacteriological weapons of mass destruction were planted in many countries. The *Daily News* (Karachi) on 11 February 1982 published the story about Nalin, and it was followed, in the same month, by an article by one I. Andropov in the *Literaturnaya gazeta* which continued the story.⁵² Typically, published articles abroad were picked up by TASS (which did so on 16 February 1982⁵³) and then reprinted, or commented upon, in the Soviet press. On 23 February 1982, *Dawn* (Pakistan) reported on the event, confirming and amplifying the conclusion that Pakistan allowed the United States to carry out bacteriological experiments for the probable use of such weapons against India, Iran, and Afghanistan.⁵⁴ On 27 February 1982, the *Pravda*, too, reported about the case, noting that the activities of American bacteriological specialists in Pakistan and Bangladesh had resulted in India cancelling a

meeting of the joint Indo-American commission on health care and the Asian conference on intestinal diseases. As a result, *Patriot* (New Delhi) argued for an investigation into the activities of American scientists and doctors in India as well.⁵⁵ In May 1982, articles datelined Islamabad were published by the Indian press about the deployment of American chemical and bacteriological weapons from American chemical weapon arsenals located on Johnston Atoll in the Pacific Ocean and in Japan in locations close to the Pakistani cities of Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Quetta, and Peshawar. The weapons were allegedly similar to those used during the Vietnam war and formed part of bacteriological stocks built up in Pakistan for potential use by American rapid deployment forces in the broad region of South and Southwest Asia.⁵⁶ The CIA concluded that the campaign was to deflect U.S. allegations on Soviet use of chemical and bacteriological weapons in exactly the same region, that is, South and Southwest Asia.

POLITICIANS

The KGB maintained links with local politicians in a variety of countries. These were frequently used for the carrying out of active measures. On 10 November 1980, an Iranian Parliamentary Deputy from the town of Zahedan gave a speech in Parliament based on a KGB briefing. He used this information to expose the hostile activities of Pakistan, Oman, and “other puppet states in the region” against Iran. He emphasized the part played by Afghan emigration in subversive activities, and urged the Iranian government to take steps against such hostile acts and to define the status of the Afghans on Iranian soil.⁵⁷

The Soviets also enjoyed friendly links with politicians in India and Bangladesh.⁵⁸ In Bangladesh, the KGB conveyed information to several of its senior political contacts to reduce anti-Soviet attitudes among party members and to direct their attention toward alleged U.S. and Chinese activities in the Northeastern states of India and China’s intention to create a buffer state between India and China there, out of the Chittagong Hill District, Tripura, Mizoram, and Manipur.⁵⁹ In Sri Lanka, what the KGB referred to as conversations of influence were held among political, state, and public figures in the entourage of President J. R. Jayewardene and Prime Minister Ranasinghe Premadasa, in leading circles of the ruling party and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

and within trade unions and religious organizations with the aim of influencing the position of Sri Lanka toward Afghanistan.⁶⁰

Similar means were used against Pakistani diplomats in Colombo and New Delhi. References were made not to Soviet but Western sources. In June 1980, information was conveyed to Pakistani diplomats in Colombo that in the view of French diplomats, Zia ul-Haq's policy toward Afghanistan was dangerous and would have tragic consequences. India would like to see regime change in Pakistan, and the United States, too, no longer believed in the Zia government, and accordingly aimed to establish undeclared contacts with the opposition. But there was also a carrot, and not only warnings. At the same time, it was suggested to Pakistani diplomats in New Delhi that there was finally a real possibility of normalizing relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan on the so-called Durand Line which exacerbated relations between the two countries. The Karmal government might be willing to compromise on the matter, they were told.⁶¹

ACADEMICS

Academics, too, were used for active measures. On 6 July 1981, a Soviet scholar and orientalist who worked for the KGB had a meeting with the Pakistani



Fig. 6: The embassy of Pakistan in Moscow.

charge d'affaires in the Soviet Union. He passed on the information, in a confidential conversation, that the Soviets regarded the American arms deliveries to the mujahidin through Pakistani territory as a threat. For this reason, he said, the Soviets would have to increase the scale of their own assistance to the Afghan government, in effect escalating the conflict.⁶² As noted, the use of the Institute of Oriental Studies to convey a warning to the Pakistani Embassy in Moscow had formed part already of the first active measures plan of February 1980.

JOURNALISTS

In active measures operations, a key role was frequently played by journalists who for one reason or another were amenable to KGB direction. In New Delhi, the KGB Residency used an agent codenamed VANO who was a journalist and had access to Prime Minister Gandhi.⁶³ In September-October 1982, VANO visited Pakistan. The KGB prepared information for him, both with regard to what he was supposed to convey to the Pakistani administration and, after the trip, what he was supposed to convey to the Indian leadership and publish in the Indian press. It was pointed out that in the published articles, VANO should be careful to provide balanced information so that he might be able to visit Pakistan again. To Prime Minister Gandhi, VANO emphasized that although Pakistan was going to receive additional advanced military equipment from the United States and material and military assistance from China, Saudi Arabia, and other countries as well, there were tensions between the local population and the Afghan refugees because of pasture and water rights, among others.⁶⁴

In Colombo, the KGB Residency (under a certain Grinevich) had an agent among Sri Lankan journalists with access to the Indian High Commissioner in Sri Lanka, T. Sri Abraham. Among other KGB information, the agent passed on information on an alleged U.S. twenty-year plan to establish its domination in the Indian Ocean at the expense of India's interests.⁶⁵ The KGB also cooperated with the Warsaw Pact states on active measures. Hungarian intelligence was in contact with an Indian journalist in Vienna. The journalist received texts from the KGB which he then published under his own name. The Hungarians had another agent, codenamed OTTO PALMA, whom they used to convey biased information to government circles of Western countries, through the head

of the Disinformation Department of Hungarian Intelligence, Josan. The KGB provided suitable texts for OTTO PALMA as well.⁶⁶ Presumably, this was the information to be conveyed to NATO, already mentioned as part of operation TORKHAM, that the Pakistani opposition was growing in strength, including in the Pakistan Army, and that the country grew increasingly unstable.

PERIODICALS

It is clear from the various operations that the KGB often placed articles in periodicals of various kinds. Based on information in the Mitrokhin archive, the KGB had a variety of options at its disposal. *NIVA* (not yet identified) was a periodical published in Islamabad which Mitrokhin described as being controlled by the KGB Residency. In 1980, the KGB placed 239 articles in *NIVA*, and in the first half of 1981, 216 articles.⁶⁷

Patriot was a daily newspaper published in Delhi, which also was under KGB control.⁶⁸ It was used again and again for placing articles.⁶⁹ *Patriot* was not the only one. The Soviet Embassy in New Delhi ran as many as 53 front organizations (friendship societies, youth and student organizations, workers' and farmers' associations, and so on). The front organizations ran 47 newspapers and periodicals and also published books and leaflets. Among them were publications that for years had been ready to accept items for publications, including the aforementioned daily *Patriot*, *Link* (a weekly), *Century*, *Mainstream*, and the weekly *Blitz*.⁷⁰

This kind of work had been going on for decades. Aleksandr Kaznacheyev, a Soviet diplomat in Burma who defected to the West in 1959, described how articles were received from the KGB in Moscow, sent to Soviet embassies abroad, translated, and planted into local newspapers. The published articles were then returned to Moscow through TASS channels. The Soviet press then republished the materials as if they were genuine foreign articles.⁷¹ Kaznacheyev specifically mentioned *Blitz* as a commonly used outlet for such materials.⁷² The choice of the Soviet Embassy in Burma for this kind of activities can be explained by the fact that the USSR maintained good relations with socialist Burma. Moreover, some members of the Burmese intelligence and security agencies received training and assistance from the KGB.⁷³

In Bangladesh, too, there were friendly newspapers. In January-February 1980 alone, 56 articles were placed dealing with Afghan issues, including 12 editorials that justified the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan.⁷⁴ In Sri Lanka, the KGB Residency controlled the *Lanka Guardian* and *Tribune*.⁷⁵ Leaflets and appeals about alleged American plans to make young people and student organizations focus on events in Afghanistan in order to distract them from the U.S. plans to destroy the Iranian Revolution were sent out to public organizations in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Pakistan. Articles were printed in *Gonokongh*, *Jonpod*, *Sansbad*, *Notun Bangla*, and *Democrat*.⁷⁶ In Iran, a leaflet was produced and disseminated in the name of the Iranian People's Wrestlers organization, calling for an end to Iran's and Pakistan's provocations against Afghanistan.⁷⁷

FORGERIES

The KGB already had a long history of forgeries. This time, a document notionally entitled "The Haig Memorandum" (after U.S. Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig, Jr.) was produced.⁷⁸ The document's purpose was to persuade the Indian leadership that the United States and China conspired with Pakistan against India. Its main elements were reported as follows:

- The United States considers that Pakistan must be a bastion of the Free World on the borders of Iran, Afghanistan, and the Indian Ocean, in order to block India's claims to the leading role in the Indian Ocean.
- The United States is ready to help Pakistan to build its Navy (lending it one or two aircraft carriers), naval bases at Gwadar, and extended anchorages in Karachi harbor.
- The Reagan Administration welcomes Zia ul-Haq's attempts to create the appearance of good will towards India, but there can be no illusion about the fact that while Indira Gandhi remains in power, New Delhi is bound to follow the Soviet political line.
- Consequently, there must be no let-up in joint efforts in the Washington-Peking-Islamabad triangle to destabilize the Indian government.
- The United States is prepared to consider Pakistan's request for the supply of Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft for use along the border with India, subject to

the subsequent equitable sharing of the data acquired between the United States, China, and Pakistan.⁷⁹

AFGHAN OPERATIONS

In addition to other responsibilities in Afghanistan, the KGB was tasked to assist in the formation of an Afghan intelligence service. When it was ready for foreign operations, it would assist in the Soviet active measures campaign. Immediately after the Soviet December 1979 intervention and appointment of Babrak Karmal as Afghanistan's head of state, a group of some 1,200 "activists" belonging to Karmal's faction of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), was tasked to form an embryo intelligence service. Under the direction of Dr. Muhammad Najibullah and Dr. Baha, they from December 1979 until March 1980 worked, with Soviet support, to establish a new intelligence service.⁸⁰

On 10 January 1980, Karmal formally established the KhAD, which until 1985 was led by Najibullah.⁸¹ Baha was put in charge of a special counterinsurgency unit.⁸² At first responsible to the Minister of the Interior, KhAD was within months detached from the Ministry of the Interior and transformed into a directorate-general within the Office of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, that is, the office of the head of state. KhAD was subdivided into six or more directorates, responsible for various intelligence and security activities.⁸³ Unlike its predecessors, which to a considerable extent, perhaps primarily, operated against potential rivals within the government, KhAD due to the series of intensifying civil wars between various groups, against the state and each other, had to spend significant efforts fighting insurgents inside and outside the country.⁸⁴

In time, Afghan intelligence began to play a prominent role in these activities, since Afghan officers often were more suitable for carrying out operations in the neighboring countries. There were also two separate security functions, a military KhAD (KhAD-e Nezami), which formed part of the Ministry of Defense and functioned as a military security service, and a KhAD-e Polis within the Ministry of the Interior, which was responsible for security within the ministry and police.⁸⁵ KhAD was upgraded to a ministry on 9 January 1986 and renamed WAD. Under this name, it remained in existence until the fall of the Najibullah government in 1992. WAD,

which apparently came to include the military and police KhAD as well, consisted of three directorates-general: The Directorate-General for Security, the Directorate-General for Military Security, and the Directorate-General for the Interior.⁸⁶

U.S. ALLEGATIONS UNMENTIONED BY MITROKHIN

An oddity with Mitrokhin's paper is that previous to his defection, the U.S. government had already made public various alleged Soviet active measures that Mitrokhin did not include in his extensive list. This suggests that whatever lay behind these allegations, the active measures, if such they indeed were, were not carried out by the KGB. Whether other Soviet agencies were involved, and if so, whether these measures formed part of a larger joint campaign, remains unknown but at least the latter conclusion seems unlikely.

In September 1980, U.S. officials acquired a forged State Department telegram which allegedly was supposed to have been found after a fire in the American Islamabad Embassy. The forged telegram even had a burn mark for additional provenience. The text referred to the disappearance of an alleged CIA courier to the late Afghan President Hafizullah Amin. The CIA argued that the telegram had been intended to be used as additional evidence that Amin had been a CIA agent. However, the forged telegram was never presented to the press.⁸⁷ Years previously, Amin had studied at Kabul University and Columbia University in New York and had also worked as a teacher.⁸⁸ While at Columbia, he had some contacts with the CIA. Not denying the contacts, Amin later claimed that he had been short of money and merely played the CIA for what it was worth, yet both Afghans and Russians later worried about these links.⁸⁹ Amin was fluent in English but spoke no Russian.⁹⁰ Although the rumors about Amin and the CIA were remembered when the Soviet Politburo contemplated what to do with Afghanistan in late 1979, there is little evidence that they were deemed to be of great importance, nor were they used in active measures. However, they were used in domestic propaganda in Afghanistan. One may speculate that the forged telegrams possibly was the result of KhAD, not KGB, activities.

On 11 November 1981, *Patriot* published an article which claimed that the CIA airlifted special



Fig. 7: Hafizullah Amin, President of Afghanistan from September 1979 until his assassination in December 1979.

maps of the region to Pakistan for the distribution to terrorist leaders paid by the United States. The map, which was not reprinted but identified by its serial number, was the standard unclassified map of Afghanistan produced by the CIA.⁹¹ Its publication may have been instigated by the KGB, since it frequently placed articles in *Patriot*, but it might just as well have been part of the newspaper's regular journalistic activities since the story conformed to its editorial policy.

This raises the question of whether the KGB also aimed to use non-communist periodicals to propagate disinformation, rather than have these stories originate in Communist Party organs or publications known or widely suspected to be linked to Soviet activities. Sometimes articles in reputable newspapers such as *Dawn* formed part of KGB active measures. Was this because of gullible journalists, or was publication in *Dawn* intended from the outset? Each case may have been different, and it is unlikely that those journalists and editors involved, if still active, would admit to either possibility.

CONCLUSIONS

All active measures operations depended on deception and misinformation, but the successful ones were also mostly based on a kernel of truth. Operation SARDAR was credible since there was an opposition against General Zia. The same could be said of operation TORKHAM, since there were existing conflicts within Pakistan. Operation GWADAR depended on the fact that Baluchi separatism was active and that there were tensions between Iran and Pakistan. As for LEO, finally, Griffin was, in fact, engaged in intelligence activities although on behalf of the State Department's INR. As a result, most effective active measures operations succeeded because they fanned existing conflicts, not attempted to make up new ones. For these reasons, the main value of Soviet active measures was to create dissension and disunity, spread confusion, tie up an adversary's attention and resources, discredit political key figures in the target country, and give an impression of power, even when an influence operation failed.

An oddity with regard to KGB active measures was that the chosen codenames showed little imagination and often were quite obvious. For instance, operation SARDAR (active measures focused on elements within the Pakistan Army) was named after the local term for Commander-in-Chief. Operation TORKHAM (active measures against Pakistan) was named after a major border crossing point between Pakistan and Afghanistan in the Pashtun tribal territories. Operation GWADAR (active measures involving Baluchistan and Iran) was named after a port in Pakistani Baluchistan. Operation TARAKANY (active measures involving news of gastric diseases) was appropriately named after the Russian word for cockroaches. LEO, finally, was apparently named after George G. B. Griffin himself, since the griffin is a legendary creature with the body, tail, and rear legs of a lion; the head and wings of an eagle; and an eagle's talons as its front feet.

Both the Soviets and the Free World engaged in propaganda campaigns. For this reason, the realities of these operations are often difficult to untangle. It is certain that KGB active measures took place. However, an examination of the KGB action plans relating to Afghanistan shows that the United States at times reported active measures that seem not to have been devised by the Soviets (at least not the KGB), and possibly were unlinked to any intelligence

operation. Moreover, Soviet propaganda aimed at a purely domestic audience may have been mistaken for active measures against Western countries. Some in the West may have assumed that every Soviet exaggeration was a deliberate attempt to influence the West. Both Western intelligence and the Western press reported Soviet active measures as particularly prevalent and efficient, even when evidence to this effect was slim or non-existent. As a result, Soviet active measures were credited with being more prevalent and more damaging than even the KGB could have hoped for. The real value to the Soviets of an active measures operation was to create dissension and disunity, not to achieve victory on its own.

Taken as a whole, the KGB action plans for active measures abroad to shape foreign policy and public opinion with regard to the Soviet presence in Afghanistan present a blueprint for how the Soviet Union carried out covert and deceptive operations in support of Soviet foreign policy. The USSR used not only the KGB but also other Soviet institutions as well as foreign groups and individuals to carry out focused activities, coordinated in time, in a multi-dimensional

manner (that is, within the spheres of politics, the economy, military, social networks, media, and so on) in order to enforce its interests. This approach is not merely of historical interest. To the present-day intelligence practitioner, the KGB action plans illustrate, based on documentary evidence, how 21st century Russian active measures campaigns might be executed. At present, there are allegations of covert Russian disinformation operations in many countries, but the allegations are seldom backed up by evidence. Indeed, it is at times hard to escape the feeling that leading Western countries at times name Russia as a country which interferes merely so as to highlight the potential threat from such interference and to warn allied countries against this particular threat. In effect, Russia is used as a bogeyman. On the other hand, there are cases in which exposed links to Russia do suggest that Russia indeed uses a multi-dimensional approach to influence others, and that a degree of opportunism is involved as well. The blueprint from Afghanistan gives an opportunity to assess what a genuine Russian active measures action plan might look like.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Record of the Main Content of a Conversation of Soviet Foreign Minister Andrey A. Gromyko with DRA [Democratic Republic of Afghanistan] Minister of Foreign Affairs Shah Mohammad Dost, 4 January 1980, in: Cold War International History Project Bulletin 14/15 (Winter 2003/Spring 2004), 241f., here 241.
- ² This paper was first presented at the International Conference Need to Know VII: The Hidden Hand of Intelligence, Budapest, 9-10 November 2017.
- ³ See, e.g., CIA study on Trends and Developments in Soviet Active Measures, released at a hearing on Soviet active measures before the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, House of Representatives, Washington, DC, 13-14 July 1982, 56-69.
- ⁴ United States Department of State, Active Measures: A Report on the Substance and Process of Anti-U.S. Disinformation and Propaganda Campaigns (Washington, DC 1986). United States Department of State, Soviet Influence Activities: A Report on Active Measures and Propaganda, 1986-87 (Washington, DC 1987).
- ⁵ Vasilii Mitrokhin (ed.), KGB Lexicon: The Soviet Intelligence Officer's Handbook (London 2002), 13.
- ⁶ Testimony of John McMahon, Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, at a hearing on Soviet active measures before the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, House of Representatives, Washington, DC, 13 July 1982. Transcript, 7. An agent of influence (agent vliyaniya) was defined by the KGB as an agent operating under intelligence instructions who used his official or public position to exert influence on policy, public opinion, or political or other activities. Mitrokhin, KGB Lexicon, 3.
- ⁷ On confidential contacts (doveritel'nyye svyazi), see *ibid.*, 34.
- ⁸ Vasilii Mitrokhin, KGB Active Measures in Southwest Asia in 1980-1982, in: Cold War International History Project Bulletin 14/15 (Winter 2003/Spring 2004), 193-203, here 201.
- ⁹ In Russian: Metod spetsial'nogo pozitivnogo vozdeystviya. Mitrokhin, KGB Lexicon, 67.
- ¹⁰ Other archive documents on active measures certainly exist in the archives of former Eastern Bloc nations. However, the documents relating to Afghanistan which Vasilii Mitrokhin selected from the still classified KGB archive in which he then worked were those that he at that time regarded as guiding a coherent active measures campaign. He aimed to use the documents as a means to defect. This, no doubt, is the best possible guarantee that his Afghan documents constitute a reasonably complete set. No other archive documents on active measures have benefited from a comparable treatment by an insider.
- ¹¹ Vasilii Mitrokhin, The KGB in Afghanistan. Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Cold War International History Project, Working Paper 40 (Washington, DC 2002).
- ¹² See, e.g., Michael Fredholm, The First Jihadists, in: Przemyslaw Gasztold, Thomas Wegener Friis (eds.), Terrorism during the Cold War: Eastern and Western Perspectives (Warsaw, forthcoming). Michael Fredholm, Soviet Approaches to Muslim Extremism and Terrorism, in: Adrian Hänni et al. (eds.), Terrorism in the Cold War: State Involvement and Covert Operations (London, forthcoming).
- ¹³ Mitrokhin, KGB Active Measures. Treating Mitrokhin's presentation as the best available original source on relevant active measures, the present paper makes extensive use of his compilation.

- ¹⁴ For further background, see Michael Fredholm, *Afghanistan Beyond the Fog of War* (Copenhagen 2018).
- ¹⁵ Mitrokhin, *KGB Active Measures*, 194.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁷ Christopher Andrew, Vasiliy Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive II: The KGB and the World* (London 2005), 356.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 357.
- ¹⁹ Mitrokhin, *KGB Active Measures*, 202.
- ²⁰ Andrew, Mitrokhin, *Mitrokhin Archive II*, 357.
- ²¹ US State Department, *Foreign Affairs Note*, February 1982.
- ²² Mitrokhin, *KGB Active Measures*, 194.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, 199.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 194-196.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 199.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, 197. Mitrokhin refers to entities he calls the Musawat Party, the National Democracy Party, and the Pakistan National Party, none of which was of major importance.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 198.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, 196f.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, 199.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 200.
- ³¹ Andrew, Mitrokhin, *Mitrokhin Archive II*, 361-363. Andrew provides an example, which he claims was intended to appear to be the work of Shia groups loyal to Khomeini. However, although Mitrokhin reported such operations, there is nothing significantly Shia in the example provided by Andrew. Incidentally, Andrew refers to the operation codename as ZAKHIR, not ZAKHAR.
- ³² Mitrokhin, *KGB Active Measures*, 199.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, 200.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, 198.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 197.
- ³⁶ Testimony of John McMahon, 9, 14.
- ³⁷ Ladislav Bittman, *The KGB and Soviet Disinformation: An Insider's View* (Washington, DC 1985), 199.
- ³⁸ Testimony of John McMahon, 37.
- ³⁹ CIA study on Trends and Developments in Soviet Active Measures, 55.
- ⁴⁰ Dennis Kux, *India and the United States: Estranged Democracies, 1941-1991* (Washington, DC 1992), 385. For Griffin's side of the story, see interview with Griffin by Charles Stuart Kennedy, Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, *Foreign Affairs Oral History Project*, 2002, 110-112.
- ⁴¹ *New York Times*, 2.9.1981.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*
- ⁴³ Testimony of John McMahon, 14. Griffin subsequently claimed that the refusal was the effect of a mistake by the U.S. Passport Office, although he admitted that the Indian government did not want him. Interview with Griffin, 107.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 62.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 74.
- ⁴⁶ Lawrence Lifschultz, in: *Daily Star* (Bangladesh), 16.9.2011.
- ⁴⁷ Mitrokhin, *KGB Active Measures*, 197.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 201. Andrew, Mitrokhin, *Mitrokhin Archive II*, 364-366.
- ⁴⁹ Mitrokhin, *KGB Active Measures*, 201.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵² *Ibid.*
- ⁵³ CIA study on Trends and Developments in Soviet Active Measures, 55.
- ⁵⁴ Mitrokhin, *KGB Active Measures*, 202.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 201.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 202.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 198.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 197f.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 198. The KGB contacts were identified as members of the Central Committee of the RKB, the SARKER wing of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) and the MOHI wing of the CPB.
- ⁶⁰ Mitrokhin, *KGB Active Measures*, 203.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁶² *Ibid.*, 198.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*, 200. Christopher Andrew identifies VANO, whom he apparently considered a female, as Indira Gandhi herself, but this is surely wrong, since VANO visited Pakistan and Indira Gandhi did not. Alternatively, Mitrokhin is mistaken and the agent who visited Pakistan was the individual named Agent "S" who was mentioned by Andrew in a similar context. Andrew, Mitrokhin, *Mitrokhin Archive II*, 316, 337.
- ⁶⁴ Mitrokhin, *KGB Active Measures*, 200.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 200f.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 201.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 197.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁹ Thomas Boghardt, *Operation INFEKTION: Soviet Bloc Intelligence and Its AIDS Disinformation Campaign*, in: *Studies in Intelligence* 53, No. 4 (2009), 1-24, here 4.
- ⁷⁰ Jayanta Kumar Ray, *India's Foreign Relations, 1947-2007* (New Delhi 2011), 649.

- ⁷¹ Alexander Kaznacheev, *Inside a Soviet Embassy: Experiences of a Russian Diplomat in Burma* (Philadelphia 1962), 172f.
- ⁷² *Ibid.*, 177.
- ⁷³ Michael Fredholm, *Burma: Ethnicity and Insurgency* (Westport, CN 1993), 92f.
- ⁷⁴ Mitrokhin, *KGB Active Measures*, 198.
- ⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 202.
- ⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 198.
- ⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 199.
- ⁷⁸ This was not the well-known Memorandum for General Haig on supporting the Kurdish rebellion, dated 27 March 1972, but another document. U.S. Department of State Archive, Information released online from January 20, 2001 to January 20, 2009. <https://2001-2009.state.gov/documents/organization/70886.pdf>.
- ⁷⁹ Mitrokhin, *KGB Active Measures*, 199f.
- ⁸⁰ UNHCR, *Note on the Structure and Operation of the KhAD/WAD in Afghanistan 1978-1992* (UNHCR, May 2008), 2.
- ⁸¹ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Security Services in Communist Afghanistan*, 9f. UNHCR, *Note on the Structure and Operation*, 2. KhAD was the acronym for *Khadamat-e Atala'at-e Dawlati, Dari* for “State Intelligence Service.”
- ⁸² Larisa Kucherova, *KGB v Afganistane* (Moscow 2009), 36.
- ⁸³ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Security Services in Communist Afghanistan*, 14. UNHCR, *Note on the Structure and Operation*, 2f. Directorates were known as *reyasat* in Dari.
- ⁸⁴ Fredholm, *Soviet Approaches*.
- ⁸⁵ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Security Services in Communist Afghanistan*, 15. UNHCR, *Note on the Structure and Operation*, 3.
- ⁸⁶ Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Security Services in Communist Afghanistan*, 4, 10, 15. WAD was the acronym for *Wazarat-e Amniyat-e Dawlati, Dari* for “Ministry of State Security.”
- ⁸⁷ CIA study on Trends and Developments in Soviet Active Measures, 89f.
- ⁸⁸ Rodric Braithwaite, *Afgantsy: The Russians in Afghanistan 1979-89* (London 2011), 38.
- ⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 40.
- ⁹⁰ Vladimir Snegirev, Valeriy Samunin, *The Dead End: The Road to Afghanistan* (Washington, DC 2012), 422. <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu>.
- ⁹¹ CIA study on Trends and Developments in Soviet Active Measures, 93f.

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