

# Counter-Revolution in Afghanistan.

By M. N. Roy.

King Amanullah is overthrown. Incipient forces of progress in Afghanistan are overwhelmed by reaction. The events in the far-off Asiatic kingdom are not only of local importance. They are closely connected with the preparation of war against the Soviet Union. King Amanullah lost his throne, because he represented a new Afghanistan, still in embryonic state, which threatened more than the purdah (women's veil) and the fez (red head-gear of the Moslems). Taking a long view of the situation, it threatened British domination of the Middle East; and, immediately, was an obstacle to the preparation of war against the U. S. S. R. His overthrow renders an important base of military operation against the Workers' Republic, secure.

Control of Afghanistan has always been the key to the British policy in that part of the world. Previously, Tsarist Russia disputed this control. The struggle between Tsarism and British imperialism for the control of Afghanistan led to many an armed conflict. Revolution in Russia eliminated one factor in the struggle; but for British imperialism the New Russia is much more of a menace than the old. Therefore, for British imperialism control of Afghanistan has become of much greater importance than ever.

Before, the task was to keep the enemy away from Afghanistan. Now the problem has become much more complicated. The enemy, now, is in Afghanistan. It grows out of the soil. Previously, it was comparatively easy to control Afghanistan on the pretext of safeguarding it against the Russian menace. When Russia became a friend of the weak and oppressed Afghanistan, the situation grew much more difficult for the British to handle. The disappearance of one of its traditional oppressors, namely, Tsarist Russia, improved the position of Afghanistan. Taking advantage of the favourable position Afghanistan tries to stand on its own feet, — to assert its national independence, and reconstruct itself on the basis of this independence.

Amanullah objectively representend the forces hostile to imperialism. As such he was inclined to be more friendly to the U. S. S. R. than to the British. But events proved time and again that he was neither particularly friendly towards the former, nor unduly hostile to the latter. This being the case, it was possible to tolerate the evolution of the new Afghanistan into a buffer state with progressive tendencies, had British policy been simply to maintain the status quo. The class basis of the new Afghan State together with the general socio-economic conditions of the country would be a sufficient guarantee against its

coming so much under the influence of the U. S. S. R. as could transform it into a direct enemy of the British Indian empire. So, it is evident that the present British policy in Afghanistan is not to maintain the status quo. The policy in that region is an integral part of the general policy of British imperialism, the cardinal principle of which is war against the U. S. S. R.

Under normal conditions, British imperialism need not be unduly alarmed by the developments that were taking place in Afghanistan under the direction of Amanullah. But the new Afghanistan of Amanullah cannot be depended upon in case of war. Indeed, the British have made such formidable military preparations all along the north-western frontier of India — from the sea to the Himalayas — as place Afghanistan in a position in which it can be easily crushed. Britain's policy, evidently, is not to neutralise Afghanistan in the prospective war against the U. S. S. R., but to use it as an active factor of aggression.

The situation in India imposes this policy upon British imperialism. With a gigantic revolutionary movement in the rear, the British cannot undertake an open attack upon the U. S. S. R. from that side. In order to win over the support of the Indian bourgeoisie, in addition to that of the other reactionary classes, it is necessary to create plausible reasons for such a war. A government in Afghanistan completely subservient to British dictation, willing to act as a provocative agent, would be very useful for the purpose. This cannot be expected of Amanullah. He would not take such provocative steps against the U. S. S. R. as might embroil the latter in actions providing the plausible pretexts sought by British imperialism for the realisation of its policy. In other words, Amanullah was an obstacle to the policy of using Afghanistan as a weapon of aggression against the U. S. S. R.

It is hardly necessary to prove that British imperialism was behind the counter-revolution. All the profuse protestations of the British to the contrary are ridiculous, and do not convince anybody having knowledge of the local conditions. Events leading up to the outbreak of the counter-revolution show how the affair was organised. It is generally believed that his visit to Europe fired Amanullah with the zeal for reform which presently cost him his throne. It is a mistaken belief created by imperialist propaganda. Amanullah evolved his programme of reform long before he visited Europe. Indeed, his visit to Europe was an evidence of his progressive tendency. His prolonged absence from home was utilised by his enemies for undermining his position and consolidating theirs. Indeed, one can reasonably suspect that his premature journey abroad was encouraged by his foes for this purpose. It cannot be believed that this astute plan for the fomentation and organisation of counter-revolution was worked out by the tribal chiefs who revolted against him. A cleverer head behind the scene directed the whole affair.

Then, take the military aspect of the affair. Amanullah's army was fairly modern, equipped with up-to-date weapons of warfare. This army could not be beaten unless the rebels were equally equipped. And they were equipped with modern artillery which they knew how to use. Until now, these tribes have always operated only with old fashioned guns smuggled in small quantities with great difficulty from the Persian gulf ports. Suddenly they appear with artillery, machine guns etc., and use them effectively. Under the given circumstances, the things could come to them only from India, and their artillerymen trained by British officers, unless these were actually directing the rebel field operation. The recent construction of the **Kheyber Railway** must have provided the opportunity for transporting these heavy weapons disguised as railway materials.

It is evident that without the help of the British the rebellion could be crushed by Amanullah's forces. Indeed, without British instigation reaction might not have raised its head at all in Afghanistan.

Amanullah is gone; but the nascent new Afghanistan he represented remains. The violent attempt to crush it will only quicken its development. The attempt to mobilise the forces of reaction in the country as a weapon in the aggression upon the U. S. S. R. will surely draw the incipient progressive elements in the Afghan society closer to it making them ever stronger. So, the forces of democratic anti-imperialist forces, for representing which but half-heartedly Amanullah is overthrown, will not be crushed by the counter-revolution; on the contrary, it will quicken their crystallization into a decisive factor of the situation operating ever more relentlessly against foreign domination and its agent, native reaction.