

# Tajikistan in Ruins

## *The Descent into Chaos of a Central Asian Republic*

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Several years ago a Dutch student asked an intriguing question: “Why are the sovereignty movements in Central Asia so weak relative to the Baltic republics?” Considering this, Galsworthy’s *The Forsythe Saga* came to mind. Galsworthy writes of a judge who had lived in India for many years. Shortly after going there, he said that he did not understand the Hindu character at all. Ten years later he declared that he understood it rather well, but after forty years, he was sad to admit that he had indeed failed to gain an understanding of it after all.

One recalls this example upon hearing complaints of the Tajik democrats’ defeat caused by the civil war and when this conflict is explained in terms of democrats versus orthodox Communists. This understandable and quite forgivable mistake is typical of analysts and journalists trying to grapple with the problems in post-Soviet Central Asia. They attempt to apply terms such as “democrat,” “totalitarianism,” “civil rights,” “constitution” and so on from the arsenal used to describe events in Europe and its liberal political culture. These words cannot accurately describe the events in modern Central Asia. Unfortunately, the politicians read the analyses of the scholars and of the journalists and apply the wrong medicines to the disease—often leading to bloody clashes and even graver misunderstandings.

This article will attempt to explain the current conflict in Tajikistan, making an effort to leave out political sympathies or antipathies, one-sided appraisals, and to distinguish fact from fiction. In order to understand the roots of the conflict, let us begin with the history of the region.

### **Sources of the Conflict**

The Tajiks, one of the oldest ethnic groups in Central Asia, formed a nation-state as early as the ninth century, but lost power in the following century. This Persian nation was fragmented and divided between various Turkic states. They managed to preserve their high culture and language, which became the state language for the Turkic governors, and the Tajiks faced partial assimilation with the Turkic peoples surrounding them. This process occurred mostly in the northern plains and affected some Tajik sub-ethnicities, and took place to a lesser extent in small rural towns and in the mountains. Such divisions, which occurred since time immemorial in Tajik

history, continued into the nineteenth century when several northern Tajik groups became incorporated into Turkestan as the result of the struggle between Russia and England for dominance of the region. Most of the Tajiks however, remained in the eastern Pamirs Mountains within the Bukhara emirate, a medieval principality and a Russian protectorate. Other groups remained in Afghanistan and China.

In 1924, Soviet authorities further splintered Central Asia under heavy influence of pro-Turkic lobbies in the Bolshevik leadership. As a result, traditional centers of Tajik culture and history, Samarkand and Bukhara, found themselves outside of the recently carved Tajikistan, and inside Uzbekistan as autonomies. Only in 1929 did Tajikistan become an influential Union republic, and as compensation, perhaps, for the loss of two of its greatest cities, the predominantly Turkic Khodjent area was placed under it, yet remained a stronghold of Uzbek influence. Soviet policies only continued and institutionalized the fragmentation of the Tajik nation. The capital, Dushanbe, failed to become the center of national consolidation. The Tajiks continued to be organized around the *kishlak* (village), organizing weekly fairs and bazaars.

From the 1930s, the epoch of industrialization, the discrepancy between the industrial centers of the north (Leninabad or Khodjent *Oblast*, Dushanbe, the Vakhsh Valley) on the one hand, and a group of backward agrarian regions (Garm *Raion*, the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous *Oblast*) on the other, added to the growing disassociation between Tajik sub-ethnicities. Tensions and contradictions grew with the practice of resettling people from the highlands to the valleys in the course of industrialization. The trend continued following World War II, when after the earthquake at Khait the highlanders of central Tajikistan (Karategini) were settled in the fertile Vakhsh Valley, a unique region of the former USSR which produces a type of fine-fiber cotton. This valley was also opened up to hordes of Russians and Ukrainians from early in the 1930s, who were later joined by ethnic Germans, Uzbeks and Tatars. The area was to become the epicenter of the Tajik civil war some decades later.

In general the destination of the immigrants during industrialization was the big cities, leaving the rural areas to the Tajiks, burdened by overpopulation and unemployment. Their influx was so large that ethnic Tajiks comprised merely 60 percent of the population in their own republic by the late 1980s. Tajikistan became a source of raw materials for the European part of the USSR, receiving huge cash donations from Moscow in return. But Europeans were not the only ones moving to the cities, as hordes of impoverished Tajiks left the overpopulated countryside and also moved to the ill-prepared urban centers, often joining criminal elements. Gang warfare erupted frequently—especially between the Pamirs groups, also known as the Pamiri, and the Kulyabi. This underclass became a time bomb which

exploded later during the dissolution of the USSR. The Tajik republic though, with such demographic discrepancies and inequalities, remained standing throughout all those decades thanks to the steel girders the Soviet system provided.

While the Communists considerably altered Central Asia, they did so by working within the framework of existing hierarchies and power structures. For centuries the region was ruled by clans, with the clan head possessing absolute power and controlling all activities of his subordinates. Each Tajik clan, by comparison with those in the Caucasus, maintained a real feudal

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hierarchy. The clan head possessed absolute power, controlled the activities of his subordinates, and gave orders dealing with their lives and incomes. In the bottom of the pyramid were the suppressed and powerless, reminiscent of medieval slaves. The often-used word *rais* (boss), was pronounced by them with extreme fear and servility.

Such society, accustomed to feudal rule, was certainly susceptible to Communist authoritarianism. Similarly, the mafia also utilized this clan social structure for its own purposes. Just as various clans controlled different regions of Central Asia, the mafia specialized in different fields. The Leninabad mafias—with powerful ties to Uzbekistan—did well under the Soviet system, while the traditionally powerful Pamiri, Garm, and Kurgan-Tyube clans did less well. The Pamiri specialized in the drug trade while the northern clans took control of the trade and cotton industry—the main branches of the republican economy.

Another equally important pillar of Tajik society is Islam. Despite the seventy years of Soviet atheistic propaganda and despite the fact by the 1980s only eight mosques remained and that there were no ecclesiastical schools, no Tajik ceremonies such as weddings, births, and funerals were held without the appropriate religious celebrations—even those of Party officials.

Therefore, by the time of Gorbachev's perestroika, Tajikistan, stratified and suppressed for seventy years, was full of latent as well as active animosities and contradictions between sub-ethnicities, between the European-like cities and the backward countryside, and between the mafias.

### **February Prelude**

At first, perestroika was scarcely noticed, let alone implemented in Tajikistan. The only change that occurred during perestroika was the resignation of the Tajik Communist Party first secretary, Rakhmon Nabiyeu, a representative of

the Leninabad clan. However, his successor, Kakhor Makhkamov, also from the Leninabad clan, was hardly a reformer himself.

While Russia, the Ukraine, and the Baltic republics were caught in the whirlwind of rapid politization, creating new political parties and advocating democracy, Tajikistan's sole political party remained the Communist Party. The majority of the population, politically ignorant and loyal to their leaders, was one of the biggest obstacles to democratization. The ruling clans stood to benefit from the conservation of the existing social contract in a country which jumped from medieval feudalism to "developed socialism" in a short time. Only in the Tajik intellectual elite did a sense of national consciousness occur.

Soviet power did begin to crumble in the late 1980s due to the worsening socio-economic situation connected with Gorbachev's failing reforms and the Soviet Union's

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defeat in Afghanistan—where many Tajiks participated on both sides of the conflict. With the myth of the invincible Soviet empire discredited, Islamic activists and clan leaders rushed to fill the power vacuum, assisted by missionaries from outside, primarily from Afghanistan. Moreover, the reduction of subsidies coming from Moscow and the lessening of the rigid command-administrative system all led to a worsening of the existing contradictions in Tajikistan.

Different groups rushed to the struggle for power, especially the "victimized" Pamiri and Garm clans. The demonstrations of February 1990 became the first in that direction. Many analysts suggested that these events were similar to those which had occurred earlier in East Germany and Czechoslovakia: democratically inspired masses coming out to demand democracy and to overthrow the rule of the almighty Communist Party. In reality, the demonstrations reflected just inner quarrels between the first and the second echelons of the state and Party apparatus. The Leninabad clan, backed by the Soviet Army and KGB forces, managed to temporarily quell the opposition, but the old hierarchical structure and the unwritten division of powers between the clans had been effectively destroyed.

With the majority of the southern and Pamiri clans removed from the Party, the Leninabad clan had the Party and state Olympus all to itself, but even this failed to consolidate its strength. Many groups began to form their own parties and movements, at first underground then legally. But these parties not only did not resemble European parties but, worse, could not even be compared with those parties and movements which originated in

Russia and the European part of the USSR during and after perestroika. These political parties were created by the same ethnic and regional principals that had guided Tajikistan for centuries and were essentially combat detachments of different clans vying for power. The main participants in the future Tajik conflicts were those backing the Rastokhez movement, a shapeless group similar to the "people's fronts" in other republics; the Tajik Islamic Renaissance Party led by Davlat Usmon, which originally emerged as a regional organization of the All-Union Islamic Renaissance Party but then sprang off to become a powerful independent group, and which at first downplayed Islamic fundamentalism and even suggested the Pakistani and Turkish models for the country; and the Democratic Party of Tajikistan led by Shodmon Yusup, which had the least adherents of the three and which was mockingly referred to as "the party of ten teachers," since it consisted of nationalist intellectuals from the capital.

Democratization quickly lost its fervor in Tajikistan. Shodmon Yusup in an interview with the author emphasized his commitment to liberal Western

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democracy, and said that his collusion with Islamic organizations was only temporary and tactical. However, the situation worsened and democratic slogans began to be ridiculed, replaced by extreme nationalist, anti-Turkic and pro-Islamic sentiments. It was Yusup himself who called the Russian-speaking

population of Tajikistan hostages. Thus the sole legitimate opponent of communism became Islam, not democracy. The events of February 1990 were to be the dress rehearsal of the approaching civil war. Too busy arguing between themselves, the Islamic groups had written off the Communist Party and its power. Weak and gentle, the new Party leader, Kakhor Makhkamov, had attempted to resign several times under pressure from the opposition, and kept procrastinating to begin even modest economic reforms. All political control in the country by that time had disappeared, and not even the intervention by Moscow would help. Besides, many key officers of the local KGB and the Ministry of Internal Affairs were from the southern regions, sympathizing with the opposition to the Leninabad-dominated government, which would explain their passivity during the coming bloodshed of 1992.

After having suppressed the opposition with Moscow's help, the Tajik Leninabad clan then in power must have assumed that the USSR would exist forever. Unlike Presidents Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan and Saparmurad Niyazov of Turkmenistan, who tactfully placed under their control the reins of power in anticipation of the inevitable, the Tajik leaders did not foresee

the disintegration of the Soviet Union—and paid for it.

### **The Fall Marathon**

By the fall of 1991, a turbulent and chaotic fate for Tajikistan seemed inevitable as mass demonstrations and rallies every day were taking place in Ozody (Freedom) Square. Calling for the resignation of the Communist Parliament and the adoption of a new constitution for an independent Tajikistan, thousands of people filled the plaza. These “October sittings,” as they became known, were unstoppable. Their leaders and organizers also obviously had means. Despite a general lack of food in the republic, one could see plenty of bread and the traditional *plov* rice and mutton meals everywhere among the many tents that had been placed there. Radio stations blared messages inciting the masses to overthrow the Communists and to establish Islamic power. Most of the participants were either very young or old men, and several religious leaders could be spotted in the crowds. Ostensibly a democratic rally, the majority of the participants scarcely understood what they were clamoring for as the words “democracy” and “constitution” do not even exist in the Tajik language. A member of the Tajik Youth Alliance summed up the stance of the protesters fairly well: “We stand for a sovereign, independent Tajikistan where Islamic values, previously crushed by the Communists, are to be reestablished. We are not against the Russians, but since they are against Islam, they had better go back to Russia.” Another youngster said “of course we would like to live like those people in Germany or America, but our people are ignorant and they must be kept in check.”

Despite the discontent incited by these demonstrations and the extreme activity of the opposition, due to either fear of Islamization or out of nostalgia for firm power, former first secretary of the Tajik Communist Party Rakhmon Nabiyev was elected president in November with 64 percent of the vote cast out of a list of six candidates. The choices included the leader of the Islamic Renaissance Party, Davlat Usmon, and a prominent public figure, Davlat Khudonazarov, who was known for his democratic views. Nabiyev, accustomed solely to following Party instructions from Moscow, could not solve any of the republic’s social and economic problems. Therefore, the victory of the conservatives of the Leninabad clan proved to be pyrrhic.

### **“Martyrs” Versus “Freedom”**

In April 1992 the anticommunists launched new attacks from Shokhidon (Martyrs’) Square which lasted two months. Contrary to the previous demonstrations of the fall, these were very violent and aggressive. The Leninabad and Kulyab clans, supporting President Nabiyev, camped out at Ozody Square, with the president himself handing out automatic weapons. At Shokhidon groups of Islamists were relatively well equipped too, and were

receiving constant moral support from the mujahedin groups in Afghanistan. The demonstrations at Shokhidon resulted in an alliance between the Rastokhez movement, the Democratic Party of Tajikistan, and the Islamic Renaissance Party. Together, they forced Nabiyeu to create a coalition government, leaving his defeated supporters sworn to crushing the Demo-Islamists.

The Demo-Islamists' victory in Dushanbe spawned opposition movements and conflicts throughout Tajikistan—beginning spontaneously at the village level in July mainly from around Kurgan-Tyube before spreading elsewhere. By this time the Leninabad clan, which still had some say over economic policy under the coalition government, lost its predominance as the opposition to the Demo-Islamists. This role was taken over by the Kulyab clan led by the former criminal (he had been imprisoned for 20 years under the Communist regime for a criminal, not political act) and military officer Sangak Safarov. Having formed the Popular Movement of Kulyab (the precursor to the Tajik Popular Front), Safarov showed his worth not only as an organizer and a military man, but also as an emerging populist figure. He claimed to represent the downtrodden, and like a Central Asian Robin Hood, he began to confiscate wealth from the rich and give to the poor.

By the end of the summer Safarov had taken the military initiative from the Demo-Islamists, especially in the outlying regions. The latter maintained a stronghold in Dushanbe, however, and in September, a group of young Islamists captured the airport and forced the president to resign. The democrats and the Islamists restructured their agreement and a representative from the leadership of the Pamiri clan, Akbarsho Iskandarov, became acting president. But all key positions in the security structures and the mass media went to the Islamists. Tajik TV started to call on all the true believers to *namaz* (Islamic prayer). A creeping fundamentalist revolution seemed to be in the offing. But already on October 23, the Gissar group, headed by the former speaker of the Tajik Parliament Safaraly Kendzhayev, launched an unsuccessful assault on Dushanbe. At the end of October the Popular Front entered the capital, and the political tide was turned. The deputies of the recently convened Supreme Soviet made a decision to liquidate the country's presidency and declared Tajikistan a parliamentary republic. The newly elected head of the Parliament, Emomali Rakhmonov, the former chairman of a collective farm in the Kulyab *Oblast*, was blessed as the new Tajik political leader by the *bobo* ("people's father") Sangak, whose presence in the session was greeted with a standing ovation by the deputies.

### **Why Did the Demo-Islamists Fail?**

Tajikistan's bloody civil war, seen as merely a conflict between Communists and the Demo-Islamists, is an oversimplification. The Tajiks, wielding banners (many of which, by the way, were adopted from old Russian

groups—the Kulyabi for example had Bolshevik-type red banners) and chanting slogans conveying broad political ideals, were fighting ancient, ethnic and clan battles for control of the region.

Many of the same analysts who simplified the conflict in the region as “Communists versus democrats” also mistakenly attributed the failure of the Demo-Islamists to the aid given by Uzbekistan to the guerrillas which overthrew the coalition Tajik government. While Uzbek aid to the Kulyabi was a crucial factor in the Demo-Islamists’ failure, it was not the decisive one. Initially, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan pursued policies of neutrality and non-intervention. Flights between Tashkent and Dushanbe were sharply reduced, and those from Bukhara and Samarkand to the Tajik capital were canceled. But as the crisis heightened, Uzbekistan did begin to provide assistance to the Kulyabi, first in a clandestine way then more openly. There were important reasons for the aid, in Uzbekistan’s view. The first is the colony of ethnic Tajiks in Uzbekistan, which was growing restless and could have demanded unification

with Tajikistan (by taking advantage of continuing border disputes); second, a potential victory of the Demo-Islamists would inspire both the democratic and Islamic fundamentalist elements in Uzbekistan to

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incite against the government. Finally, Islamist elements from the now-porous border with Afghanistan could reach Uzbekistan from bases in friendly Islamic Tajikistan.

In reality, the blame for the defeat of the Tajik Demo-Islamists is due more to their own inability than to the Uzbek interference. The latter could have done nothing in Tajikistan if it were not for the serious divisions within the country and the civil war. Without these internal factors the Uzbek meddling would have been as ineffectual as the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. During the short period of their rule, the Demo-Islamists proved to be completely incapable of stabilizing the situation, let alone of implementing any reforms. Plunder of state property reached astonishing heights. An ambulance station in Dushanbe for example was completely ransacked and the caravans filled with the stolen medicine and food were hijacked to Afghanistan in exchange for narcotics. Tajikistan was quickly becoming a crossroads for international drug traffickers. Also, the Demo-Islamists’ extreme nationalist stance turned away not only the Russian-speaking population, but Uzbeks, Arabs, Lakas, and others living in the region. The villages, or *kishlaki*, originally neutral or even sympathetic to the new regime, took the side of the Kulyabi. The Kulyabi even had the support of some moderate Muslims who feared the prospect of total Islamization. Taking all of these circumstances into account, the choice for most was



greatly simplified. Despite its characteristics as a Communist regime, the Kulyabi, with their slogans of internationalism and order, and their populist policies, were infinitely more appealing in contrast to the Demo-Islamists with their outlaw politics, drug mafia, and Islamic fundamentalism.

### Winners and Losers

Russia played an important role in establishing the Tajik Demo-Islamic opposition to the Communist regime. Soon after the failure of the August 1991 coup in Moscow, an influential Russian people's deputy, Yevgeny Ambartsumov, called upon the Russian government to take a firm stand against the Communist and neo-Communist regimes in Central Asia. The

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sympathies of the Russian government went to the Tajik opposition. They supposed that the main role in that Tajik coalition government would be played by the democratic liberal elements, by those urban, cosmopolitan and partly Russified intellectuals sympathetic to Western ideals and to Yeltsin. It is not by chance that at that period Russian media actively started to create an image of a great democratic ruler

around the person of the well-known producer Davlat Khudonazarov. The latter, though in effect democratic, might have been erroneously seen as a Tajik Václav Havel by the dreamy Russians—the desired leader of a free and independent Tajikistan. Many politicians were not aware that within the opposition to the Tajik Communists, the democrats formed a narrow and very powerless circle, especially among the agrarian masses. They just did not enjoy a social base.

Nabiyev's resignation was predetermined by the Russian position. According to reliable sources, the Tajik president carelessly expressed his disappointment at the collapse of the USSR, even suggesting that the newly formed Commonwealth of Independent States was illegitimate. Such a politician was not the right man in the eyes of the Russian leadership.

But the Russians realized the reality of the situation only too late. By that time they saw that Tajikistan was descending into another Afghanistan, which would put Russia's southern boundaries at risk. Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev paid an unofficial visit to the informal leader of the republic, the *bobo* Sangak Safarov. According to some present at the meeting, the diplomat was received in a very unfriendly way. Safarov is quoted as telling the well-mannered Kozyrev: “you, dog, are selling Russia at every corner! If you dare, we can show you what is what!” This naturally brought their

meeting to a close.

Taking its geopolitical interests more seriously than before, Moscow is pursuing a cautious and loyal approach towards the new Tajik government. But time has passed and Moscow now, despite a strong troop presence in Tajikistan, has minimal influence.

Big Islamic states such as Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan perhaps can also consider themselves to be losers in the Tajik tragedy. They gambled too much on an Islamic victory, and many analysts informed on the subject declare that the slow and nearly successful power grab by the Islamists was masterminded by the Pakistanis and engineered by the Saudis. The Islamists in Tajikistan certainly accepted whatever help they could get from any source, including Iran. None of the analysts can ascertain with confidence which of the big Middle Eastern players has more influence on Tajikistan today, after the Islamists lost power.

An important role was played by the mujahedin of Afghanistan, and above all by their most extreme and powerful element—the Afghan Islam Party headed by Gulbeddin Hekmatiar. In this respect, the Tajik conflict cannot be regarded outside of the political situation of the region. Taking into account that Burkhanuddin Rabbani, an ethnic Tajik and the head of the Islam Society of Afghanistan has been challenging Gulbeddin for a long time, a general de-stabilization of the situation in Tajikistan would be very important to Gulbeddin. It would allow him to move gradually from the Tajik groups in Afghanistan into the north, to the Tajik-Afghan boundary. The objective is clear—to form a special Tajik enclave in the region, to influence events in Tajikistan proper by influencing its new government from his new group and, with luck, his own Afghanistan.

### **Internationalization**

Following commotions in July 1993, a new escalation of the military conflict began by thirteen military detachments of Russian Ministry of Security border guard troops, the Demo-Islamists and the mujahedin. The timing was not coincidental: discord intensified within the Dushanbe regime and between the Leninabad clan, the Kulyabi and the Gissari. The Islamic fundamentalist troops of Gulbeddin, siding with their brethren in Tajikistan proper, fortified their positions in the outlying regions of Afghanistan.

The new border problems sent shock waves not only to Tajikistan, but to the Kremlin. Russian public opinion had been divided. This division was not merely between the government and its multicolored opposition, but between the opposition themselves. Nobody a few months before could have assumed that Russia would find itself militarily involved in a Central Asian quagmire, risking once again another “Afghan syndrome.”

Those who opposed intervention were largely ignored. But for those who favored intervention, the Russian Federation was destined to act as the

protector of civilization against Islamic fundamentalism deep within the Eurasian landmass. Russia deployed troops with surprising agility, as those in the Kremlin had been forced to make a decision in favor of siding with the “pro-Communist regime” in Dushanbe against the Islamic fundamentalists. In a far cry from the “Ambartsumov Doctrine,” Russia’s government pushed its former ideological opposition and personal antipathy towards the Dushanbe government aside in favor of a new doctrine that declares that the Near Abroad is indeed in Russia’s direct vital sphere of interests. This dilemma was best summed up by Yevgeny Kozhokin, then an influential Russian people’s deputy. Paraphrasing Franklin Roosevelt, he declared in reference to the Dushanbe regime “Sure they’re sons of bitches, but they’re *our* sons of bitches.”

In the final analysis, the situation in the border after the Russian military intervention has stabilized considerably, though not as much as the Kremlin and much of the Russian media sympathetic to it would make one believe. The downplaying of the Tajik events serves to justify the politicians and generals who have staked their reputations on this war, and to further justify Russia’s increasing role in the Near Abroad to establish a presence in the former empire. In September of 1993, Foreign Minister Kozyrev discussed this very notion. Meanwhile the generals and their armies firing shots in the snowy Pamir Mountains, have received additional funding. The conflict in Tajikistan has ceased to be a Tajik internal affair.

### **The Exodus**

Tajikistan’s civil war has provoked a massive exodus of all ethnic groups into all of the country’s neighbors and into the European parts of the former Union. The bulk of the Slavic and Russian-speaking population in Tajikistan had taken an extremely negative position towards the Demo-Islamists. This did not happen because this group ardently backed the Communists. It was due to the fact that after having lived in the republic all their lives, they were well aware of the choice between the Communist regime which, despite being unjust, at least provided some social stability, a certain level of social guarantees, and personal safety. The other choice was a threatening, alien Islamic republic with all of its consequences: deportations, violence, discrimination against minorities, etc. In fact, the Slavs at the beginning were not part of the conflict at all, since the different Tajik clans did recognize the sub-ethnic character of the fratricidal war and made no serious attempts to get the Slavs involved—particularly because of fear of the Soviet (later Russian) 201st Mechanized Infantry Division located in the region.

The bloody civil war forced many to leave the republic despite the indifferent official attitude of Moscow towards its erstwhile brethren. At present, fully half of the Slavic population has left Tajikistan. If the new Tajik authorities fail to stop the hemorrhage, the country will face the

onerous breakdown of factories, electric power stations, communication facilities, aviation, transport and other strategic sectors as the highly skilled Slavic population goes back to the Motherland.

But the Slavs are not the only group affected. Tens of thousands of ethnic Tajiks alike have fled the fighting into other former Soviet republics and 80,000 into Afghanistan—where many of them are being indoctrinated by the radicals in the mujahedin for possible future incursions back into Tajikistan. Sixty thousand have found shelter in Russia and the Ukraine. Another 80,000 have gone into hiding in the mountains.

### What Next?

Future prospects for Tajikistan are far from peaceful and more than grim. The economy is in shambles due to the extensive and prolonged looting and corruption. Not only are Tajikistan's material resources drained, but its population is as well. Stabilization is highly unlikely to occur without exceedingly harsh and repressive measures similar to those taken under the Soviet War Communism. Therefore, hopes for democratization in Tajikistan in the near future are nearly futile, as are prospects for the consolidation of the present regime. The recent mysterious deaths of the *bobo* himself, Safarov, of his close associate Faizali Saidov, as well as that of the former Party leader and president Rakhmon Nabiyev, confirms this hypothesis. Consequently, the fate awaiting Tajikistan is either of continued chaos and destruction or, most optimistically, of an undemocratic but stable post-Soviet state implementing authoritarian reforms following in the footsteps of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

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