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Translator's Commentary – Part 1

The tragic tale of the "Daoud family's annihilation" during the 27-28 April 1978 Coup by the "People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) has been meticulously uncovered through Mr Daoud Malikyar 's exhaustive investigation, detailed in an article published in Farsi-Dari last year. Intrigued by his work, I recently reached out to him, seeking permission to translate it into English and offer my commentary as the translator. The translation will be presented in parts, as outlined below.

Unveiling the Tragic Night: President's Harrowing Decision in a Coup's Shadows"

Introduction: In the annals of a tragic coup, a narrative etched in history was recently unravelled after decades of misconception. Beyond the veil of hearsay, a meticulous investigation and poignant interviews revealed a devastating truth. The president, faced with an agonizing choice, took a shattering decision to spare his family from the clutches of the enemy. The emotionally charged account comes to light through the eyes of a daughter-in-law and a grandson, both survivors of a night where the president's desperate act unfolded, leaving behind a tale of profound sorrow and sacrifice.

In Afghanistan, the royal family-maintained power for five decades, initially installed by the support of Britain. King Mohammad Zahir Shah, ruling for a substantial 40 years. Sardar Mohammed Daoud Khan, served as prime minister for a decade. Doud Khan held a unique position as both the cousin and brother-in-law of the king.

President Daoud Khan, a former prime minister, orchestrated a coup against his own cousin after a long career spanning military and civil roles. From the tender

age of 20, he served in various capacities, including as a general, governor, minister, and prime minister. The shift in power dynamics came with the implementation of a new constitution, barring the royal family from holding high office. This forced Daoud Khan out of power, toppling Zahir Shah, who had held authority for forty years, in a coup executed by the military wing of the Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA).

However, Daoud Khan's motives for seizing power were not rooted in national interest but rather in personal ambition, emulation, and a thirst for absolute control. His aim was to reclaim past sovereignty and exact revenge on rivals, notably his cousin, Sardar Abdul Wali, a prominent figure in the military. *This power struggle had deep roots in Afghanistan's history, where rulers vied for and clung to power within a hierarchical structure.*

Unfortunately, throughout this struggle for dominance, the welfare and progress of the nation were neglected. Rulers engaged in infighting, pitting family members against each other and relying on foreign support to maintain their grip on power. Consequently, education suffered, literacy rates plummeted, and the country became heavily reliant on foreign aid and expertise.

Moreover, proxy regimes exacerbated ethnic and social tensions to undermine unity, fearing that a cohesive populace might threaten their reign. Despite growing calls for justice and equality, Daoud Khan, like his predecessors, prioritized maintaining a despotic regime over fostering national unity and progress.

Daoud's arrogant and abusive conduct towards an innocent truck driver serves as a stark example of his erratic behaviour and mental instability. While driving along the narrow highway towards Shamali, north of Kabul, Daoud encountered the truck driver in front of him. Despite the tight space, Daoud Khan attempted to overtake him, but the driver either could not yield or failed to recognize him.

In a display of arrogance and despotism, Daoud stopped the truck driver on the highway, forcibly pulled him to the ground, and viciously bit and chewed on his ear, akin to a leopard attacking its prey. The brutality of the assault left the driver screaming in agony, blood streaming from his cheeks. Such behaviour raises serious questions about the appropriateness of a head of state engaging in such public displays of violence against ordinary citizens.

The incident underscores Daoud's disregard for basic decency and respect for others, calling into question his fitness for leadership.

Furthermore, Daoud displayed a lack of wisdom as a statesman. He dedicated significant time and resources to advocating for the freedom of Pashtunistan, inadvertently escalating tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan to a harrowing extent. This escalation reached a point where both nations resorted to radio programs to hurl malicious and defamatory remarks at each other.

Additionally, Daoud's failure to exercise foresight is evident in his decision to house his entire family, including his sons and their families, within the citadel. He seemingly overlooked the fact that the head of his security detail comprised military members of the PDPA, leaving him vulnerable to internal threats. Indeed, Daoud found himself besieged in a clandestine prison within the citadel.

Moreover, Daoud's eldest son, Omar Daoud, who opposed his father's regime and ceased communication after the coup, should have taken proactive measures. Recognizing the deteriorating political landscape, Omar ought to have temporarily relocated outside the country. This action could have facilitated the safeguarding of other family members, including siblings, nephews, and nieces, from the imminent danger looming on the horizon.

During his presidency, Daoud 's once-strong leadership seemed to wane compared to his tenure as prime minister. Had he possessed greater foresight, he could have established a robust intelligence network to monitor the infiltration of hostile elements within both civil and military organizations. Unfortunately, his defensive preparations within the palace were inadequate, lacking essential elements such as trenches, air defence, tanks, logistics, and an independent communication system to swiftly mobilize loyal military divisions in times of crisis. Consequently, his military acumen, once lauded, appeared lacking, with his precautionary measures proving insufficient.

Furthermore, Daoud's failure to implement a comprehensive safety plan for his family raised doubts about his ability to safeguard the nation, particularly at the age of 75. His relentless pursuit of power served as the primary motivation for orchestrating a coup with the assistance of the PDPA members. As a result, within five years, Daoud faced a fate like his predecessors. He fell victim to the very forces that propelled him to power, ultimately bringing an end to the despotic absolute monarchy. This transition came at a great cost, with hundreds of patriotic individuals perishing in horrendous prisons under Daoud's rule.

Likewise, Daoud Khan's handling of international relations lacked finesse. His focus on Pashtunstan's independence escalated tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan, leading to propaganda wars and further instability in the region.

As his presidency progressed, Daoud Khan's grip on power weakened. His failure to anticipate internal threats and fortify his defences left him vulnerable. Even within his inner circle, dissent brewed, with his own son, Omar, distancing himself from his father's regime.

Ultimately, Daoud Khan's lust for power led to his downfall. His inability to safeguard his own family reflected a broader lack of strategic planning and foresight. The coup that once propelled him to power would eventually seal his fate, ending decades of despotic rule at the hands of the very forces he had once aligned with.

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