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Part- 3

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How were Daoud, the former President of Afghanistan and his family killed?

A witness from inside the presidential Palace (Arg /citadel) reveals significant mysteries.

Contents

The name and identity of persons involved and mentioned in this report Will be added when the whole text is published later as a collection.

Introduction:

- The reason for the delay in the statements of the late Gulalai Malikyar Omar Daoud,

The main resources of this report.

1. The text of the conversation with Ms **Gulalai** Malikyar Omar Daoud.
2. Statement of the head nurse of Jamuriate (Republic) Hospital.
3. Talking with **Daoud Ghazi**, Mohamad Daoud Khan's grandson.

4. The Statement of *Mr Fazulrahman Tajyar*, Deputy commander of the Republican Guard

Conclusion

A secret that was not a secret at the beginning

Introduction

About 43 years ago, when I migrated to California, I heard firsthand accounts of the events that transpired inside the Kabul Palace during the PDPA pro-Soviet coup d'état on April 27-28, 1978. These events resulted in the tragic death of Mohammad Daoud and several members of his family. The narration was provided by an authentic and honest eyewitness on the events inside the palace over the course of those fateful days and nights.

A few weeks before our arrival in Palm Springs, California, Gulalai (G) Daoud, the wife of Omar Daoud, the eldest son of President Daoud, stayed for a few weeks to rest at the home of one of our family members, Mr Zaher Shalizi. After spending some days there, she returned to the state of Maryland. Zaher, who heard about the killing of some family members and the wounding of others by Mirwais, the son of Daoud Khan, while hosting the distraught Gulailai, shared this information with me (the writer) and other family members.

During my early years in the United States, I did not have the opportunity to meet Gulalai, the eldest daughter of the late Mr Abdullah Malikyar, and hear the story of the event directly from her. However, in the subsequent years, Gulalai travelled to California with her father, Abdullah, on several occasions. During her visits to Santiago, our home, to see my late father, General Abdul Salam Malikyar, and other family members, I had the chance to meet them and hear about the events firsthand.

On one of her visits to our house, with several people gathered around her, she shared the heartbreaking story of her young daughters who were tragically killed in the Palace. She described the harrowing events in detail, recounting each moment.

During our conversation, I inquired about the actions of Mirwais, Daoud Khan's son, who was reported to have fired upon several family members. She confirmed the truth of his actions with a solemn nod, acknowledging the painful reality of the situation. She just said, "Yes, that is true. "

There was not any more time to ask questions that night. However, in 2008, during Gulalai's visit to California for a family celebration. I had multiple chances to meet with her. Eager to hear the detailed account of the tragic events at the citadel and the grief in her heart, I was determined to listen attentively. After listening to Gulalai's account of the events and the loss suffered by Daoud Khan's family members, I realized the importance of recording her words for posterity. I resolved to do so to avoid any inaccuracies or misquotations that might arise from the passage of time or the limitations of memory.

It is important to note that before they became guarded secrets, these events were initially public knowledge, witnessed by approximately fifteen to twenty people. However, over time, out of reverence for those who lost their lives that day, they became shrouded in unspeakable silence. As years passed, articulating them became increasingly challenging.

It is noteworthy that some years ago, this writer penned and published undisclosed facts about the events at the citadel spanning from the seventh to the eighth days of April, encompassing the onset and culmination of the April coup. These accounts, though void of the eyewitness's name, were met with vehement opposition from Daoud Khan's devoted supporters. *They vehemently objected to its dissemination, resorting to curses and insults in their efforts to suppress further publication.*

On the contrary, Gulalai, the eyewitness to that tragic day, recounted the events numerous times but opted not to disclose her identity in fear of causing offense to her family or inviting ridicule from a few reckless and frivolous individuals. Despite recording these conversations for accuracy, out of respect for her and to maintain peace of mind, I refrained from publishing the full accounts for fifteen years.

Now that nearly a year has passed since the demise of Gulalai, and upon hearing repeated advice from friends about the transient nature of life, we are reminded of the importance of considering the testimony of this credible and sorrowful witness. Let me share, my fellow countrymen, to ensure that this dark chapter of our nation's turbulent history is not consigned to oblivion.

The text of conversation with Ms Gulalai Malikyar Daoud

What you are reading below is not the text of a standardized interview, but rather personal conversations with Ms. Gulalai. The most detailed of these conversations was conducted on August 4, 2008, with me, Daoud Malikyar (DM) and it is now presented for the study of our compatriots.

After exchanging courtesies and sharing stories of the Ms Gulalai, the discussion turns to the issues related to the life of this grieving lady within the Daoud Khan family, followed by reflections on the tragic events of the April 28th.

- DM

Could you share a bit about your experiences within Daoud Khan family?

- G

When I married Omar, I was warmly welcomed into their family. The President Daoud affectionately called me "Gulai" and expressed his happiness about our marriage, wishing Omar success in keeping me happy. He also held great regard for my father and his cousins.

I recall an occasion when Omar and I visited the president upstairs, and he inquired about the relationship between Salam Khan and Jabbar Khan with Maiwandwal's wife. I explained that they were Ms Maiwandwal's brothers, to which he remarked on their noble and honest character, particularly emphasizing his acquaintance with Salam Khan.

During the period of democracy, the Prime minister regularly received and perused the Masawat paper (Equality News). He appreciated Maiwandwal's critique of the government and the monarchy, evident in his keen interest while reading the newspaper.

- DM

What nickname did you use for Daoud Khan at home?

- G

I never addressed him directly by his name or nickname; I simply said "you". In his absence, I referred to him as Baba Daoud, or Prime minister. Bibijan, Ms Daoud (Daoud Khan's wife), used to call him "General" until the very end. It was amusing that even the wife of the Foreign Minister continued to refer to Sardar Nayem Khan as "Minister of Education" until the end. (laughs)

- DM

How did their sons and daughters address their parents?

- G

The boys and girls all referred to their father as Baba and their mother as Bobo(mum).

- DM

What was the atmosphere like at home and among family members?

- G.

- It was characterized by utmost respect. I held everyone in love and esteem. Shaima Wais and Oma Khalid, my sisters-in-law, reciprocated the affection and respect, both being wonderful ladies.

After the coup d'état on July 17th, 1973, he distanced himself from his father's views and grew closer to Sardar Nayem Khan, particularly after Elias Muskinayar shared the story of Zaman Khan fortress with Omar. This event marked a turning point in his life, leading him to oppose both the regime and his father. Certain individuals, like Akbar Jan, the head of the president's office, frequently visited our home, attempting to tarnish his father's image in Omar's eye. On one occasion, I confronted Omar about not allowing Akbar to go too far, and later, I directly addressed Akbar Jan, expressing my disapproval of his actions. He did not tell me anything. Despite this, I later learned that he had complained to Omar about me. Another suspicious figure was Abdul Ahad Nasir Zia, who was closely aligned with Sardar Nayem Khan. Those who were dismissed from their positions would often approach Omar to air their grievances. When Hassan Sharq was appointed ambassador, he and his wife visited Omar, expressing their disappointment at being forced to leave their homeland.

The foreign minister had a close relationship with Omar. During one visit to our home, while Wasifi talking with Omar, the foreign minister remarked that if they had ten people like Wasifi, the country's situation would be different.

After the April coup, Wasifi was imprisoned with us in Puli-Charkhi prison. Despite this, he remained kind to us, providing financial support whenever needed, ranging from 1,000 to 100,000 Afghanis.

The foreign minister, Nayem Khan, did not have good relations with Qadir Nooristani and Abdel Lelah, but like Omar he maintained close ties with Wasifi and a few others.

At one point, five ministers, including Ataei, Wasifi, Wahid Abdullah and two others visited Omar and subsequently went to the president to offer their resignation together. I heard that the president sarcastically questioned Wahid's status as a minister, asking why he was associating with these individuals.

I remember the day when we visited Ayesha's house, Omar's aunt, where all three brothers (Omar, Khalid, and Wais) were playing bridge with their uncle, Sardar Nayem. The uncle, asked his nephews for their opinions about the state of the country.

Omar expressed his concern, stating that the country's situation was deteriorating and becoming increasingly precarious. He believed that those who had been promoted should have resigned after their promotions. Khalid, on the other hand, was neither excessively optimistic nor pessimistic. However, Wais in agreement with his father, held a slightly more positive view and had some credibility with the president. Wais tended to associate with figures like Qadir Nuristani, the Minister of Interior, indicating his alignment with the regime.

Omar was well-educated, having earned a master's degree from Switzerland. I hesitate to define Omar, as he was my husband, but I can attest that Omar was a principled and fearless individual. He stood firm and expressed his view in front of both the king and his father. For several years, Omar's relationship with the president was strained, but they reconciled a month before the April coup during Nawruz (New Year on 21 March), when Omar embraced the president warmly in Jalalabad.

- DM

Can we discuss the events of April 27 with your permission? Where were you, and how did you find out?

- G

That morning, I learned that my sister, Laila, was sick with a severe headache. At ten o'clock, before I went to see her, I visited Bibi Jan, the president's wife, to inform her about Laila's condition. Bibi Jan offered to accompany me to see Laila. Shinkai, Omar's sister, also joined us to give us a lift. We decided not to take the driver and remained with Laila until shortly before noon, then returned home.

Upon arriving near our house around noon, I spotted Omar standing on the sidewalk in his nightgown, surrounded by a crowd of people. When Omar noticed us, he urged me not to get out of the car and instructed his mother to go to the citadel. I refused, insisting on staying with him, and stepped out of the car. Shinkai and Bibi Jan proceeded towards the citadel.

While rushing to change clothes at home, Omar lamented that his fears had unfortunately come true. After quickly preparing ourselves, we boarded a government car that arrived to pick us up and headed to the children's school. As

we neared the school, Abdulahi the Police approached us and informed us that a car from the citadel had already taken the children. Although Omar initially hesitated to go to the citadel, I insisted that I would not go without him. Reluctantly, Omar agreed, and we proceeded to the citadel.

As we ascended the citadel steps, Omar expressed his anger, repeating, "Gulak! What should not have happened, happened." I attempted to calm him, emphasizing that anger and resentment were futile at that moment. Upon entering the citadel amidst the chaos of fires, we found some individuals downstairs. Upstairs, the President sat behind his desk, with Omar kissing his hand upon arrival. Present in the President's office was the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Sardar Naem), as well as family members, including the president's sons and daughters. Among non-family members were Qadir, Sayed Abdul Lelah and Akber, the head of the presidential office. Briefly, I caught sight of Sayed Wahidullah.

Omar, Khalid, and Wais were busy going up and down the stairs, briefing the President on the situation, while the distant sound of gunfire was heard and later, jets firing upon the citadel, filled the air. Despite the initial hope due to resistance, the reality of the dire situation soon set in.

- DM

Was Daoud Khan in contact with someone outside via phone?

- G

Yes, initially the phones were operational, and a radio call was established, but later communication was abruptly cut off. President Daoud remained in his office until almost dinnertime, but prior to evening, he descended with others to the ground level. That cannot be referred to as a room or saloon, but rather a hall. Addressing his ministers and colleagues gathered there, the President solemnly declared, "I did not anticipate this turn of events. I take full responsibility for this incident. Each of you is free to decide whether to save yourselves; you are not obligated to remain here." Following the President's address, some ministers, such as Sayed Wahidullah and Timur Sha, opted to flee the citadel.

The President, monitoring the radio, remarked upon hearing Watan Jar's voice broadcasted, "Look, Watan Jar is also among them."

- DM

Was it true that Daoud Khan wanted to leave the citadel but was shot?

- G

No, the President had no intention of leaving. However, at the beginning of the night, three cars were brought in case anyone decided to leave the citadel. Omar and I both refused to leave. Sardar Nayem Khan and Zarlisht (the president's daughter) attempted to leave, but as they reached the gate, a fire broke out and Naem Khan was shot in the leg below the knee, while Zarlisht injured her toe. Subsequently, the gate was closed, and nobody attempted to leave.

Omar, the children, and I remained in the upper floor until midnight. All lights were turned off to prevent visibility from the outside, but gunshots could still be heard amidst the darkness of the night. Despite the situation, we remained relatively calm. However, Akber Jan, the head of the office, was noticeably frightened and had lost his composure.

In the lower house, Nayem Khan sat on a couch with a wounded leg, near a gate. Akbar knocked on the gate once and mentioned that it was locked. However, she suggested that if they were attentive and pushed the door with the strength of two or three people together, it would open, providing an escape route to every side of the citadel. It is puzzling why no one had considered this option.

Near midnight, Khalid came upstairs to our room and expressed that there was little hope of external assistance and that the situation favoured the enemy. Omar suggested that we continue to resist the enemy until the last bullet. Due to the increased risk of aerial bombings, the President instructed Omar to move downstairs with the children, away from the upper floors.

As we descended, not yet reaching the lower hall, gunfire erupted from outside the window, leaving all four of us wounded. Omar succumbed to his injuries within minutes, struck fatally in the heart by a bullet. I bore multiple wounds, in my legs, buttocks, and back. Our thirteen-year-old daughter, Ghazal, suffered a stomach wound, while our fifteen-year-old, Hailai, though injured, was fortunate to escape mortal harm. When Hailai noticed her father's maimed hand, tears welled up as she realized his fate. Cradling her in my arms, I whispered reassurances, "Calm down, my daughter. Dad is no longer with us, and neither of us knows what tomorrow holds."

Last midnight, Khalid too fell victim to the violence, succumbing to his wounds amidst excruciating pain. He pleaded with his brother, Wais Daoud to end his suffering, but Wais hesitated. Khalid's final words, "Be swift, be merciful," echoed through the night as he passed away an hour later. Khalid was a remarkable soul, selfless to the end. The women, children, and wounded sought

refuge in the inner room, the door leading from the hall. Seven of us were injured. "The seven injured could be including Sardar Nayem, Zarlisht, Gulalai, Hailai, Ghazal, Khalid, and Daoud Ghazi, (according to writer)."

My thirteen-year-old daughter, lay unconscious, her condition grave, near Homa. Around midnight, I implored Homa to check on Ghazal condition. With a heavy heart, she confirmed, "Aunt Gulik, Ghezal has passed, her limbs cold and lifeless."

Later, Khalid's head rested in his wife Homa's lap, his life extinguished. Omar's head found solace on my knee. In the dim light of early dawn, Daoud Khan entered, his countenance pallid, and tenderly kissed the foreheads of both his sons, Khalid, and Omar. Bibi Zainab alerted the President to the grim reality, "Look, sir, they're soaked in blood." With a sombre nod, the President acknowledged, "I understand the gravity of your plight," before departing the room.

Throughout the night, amidst the agony of my wounds, I put my head resting on Shima's (Wais's wife) shoulder. Shima, too, bore the weight of her children's sorrow, attending to their needs, fetching water to quench my thirst as I bled. In the early morning Nezam Ghazi briefly entered the room. I asked him to assist me in adjusting my daughter Ghezal's skirt, but his demeanor suggested he did not hear or acknowledge my request. Later, we learned that he had been fatally wounded by a bullet in the final hours. Throughout the night, Sardar Nayem Khan sat on a couch with his injured leg, and in the morning, his lifeless body remained in the same spot. Daoud Ghazi, grandson of president Daoud sustained a wound below his knee but managed to move between rooms during the night.

Qadir Nooristani was injured near dawn, his moans and groans echoing loudly throughout the hall. The sound of gunfire drew nearer, heightening the tension as we braced for what seemed like our final moments. As the enemy approached the palace's gate, Wais burst into the room. Without hesitation, he aimed his weapon first at those closest to him, firing at his wife and then at his two sons.

The tragic demise of Weigel, a tender two-and-a-half-year-old child, struck down by his father Wais's Kalashnikov machine gun, is a sorrow too profound for mere words to convey. Following this heart-wrenching event, Wais turned his weapon towards me. Despite my plea, he fired, striking me in the stomach. My daughter Hailai, seated beside Shima (Wais's wife), suffered the same fate, as Wais unleashed his fury upon us.

In tears, I recount the haunting memory of my daughter Hailai, standing alongside

Homa and Bibi Zohra (Nayem Khan's wife), and Sultana, against the wall where Wais mercilessly fired upon them. As Wais approached our room, I urged Hailai to seek refuge beside me. Her compliance proved futile protection as Wais aimed his weapon directly at us. I implored her (my daughter Hailai) to stretch out her legs, a desperate attempt to hasten our ordeal. Tragically, her obedience sealed her fate, as Wais's bullet found its mark in her stomach. The recount of Gulalai's narrative brought us to tears, unable to contain our grief.

• DM

You mentioned Wais's ability to inflict harm. How many individuals do you believe he targeted, and why do you think he did not harm others?

G.

Since Wais was firing toward the gate, those on the side of the wall remained unnoticed. He targeted his sister, Zarlisht, and several others. However, the reason some survived was Wais's limited time. As the enemy breached the hall, Wais was preoccupied with the onslaught within our room, possibly meeting his end in the process. This may explain why he could not target everyone or those positioned by the wall like Zohra, Sultana, Homa, and a few others. Later, we discovered Wais's lifeless body lying in the doorway.

DM.

(The same door that led from the "Hall" to a room where women, children, and the wounded were sheltered overnight?)

Shenkai, the daughter of President and Zalmay Ghazi's wife, escaped Wais's violence as she tragically took her own life. When soldiers entered our room in the morning and evacuated us. Shenkai was found sitting with her head bowed. Also, during our evacuation with the assistance of soldiers, I witnessed Daoud Khan lying on the floor of the same hall with his hat beside him and Nayem Khan's body resting atop the couch where he had sat last night.

DM

You previously mentioned an encounter with Wais during the night, where he stated: "We have decided not to surrender ourselves alive to the enemy." Did he seek your opinion or confirmation?

G.

No, he did not. He simply relayed that message. Then, in the morning when he returned, he emphasized the importance of the women not falling into enemy hands. Perhaps his dad, Daoud Khan instructed him to ensure none of us would be captured by the enemy.

To be continued.....