

But what did the four soldiers say when joined Mujahidin at the time of Torgar battle? Information given by them was useful especially as they were in high morale due to their success in running away. The common thing was when we had met those soldiers was the high morale and the enthusiasm for Jihad. Their zeal was even transmitted to Mujahidin themselves as they assured the near collapse of the army.

The captives were working in a training camp attached to the second border bridge. They were: Imam Mali, Mohammad Deen (from Budekhshan), Ghulam Sakhi (from Mazar Sharif) and Mohammad Hashem from the city of Maymanal (the capital of Farab). They all arrived to Khost two months ago within a regiment that came from Kabul for training. They were 105 persons of which 65 ran away. The aircraft landed them in the midst of Mujahidin attack and they quickly jumped out of the aircraft which took off once.

Regarding "Ajab Khan Mazari", they said they did not know him but they heard that they sent him to Kabul and they did not know if he had been wounded or killed. Mohammad Deen said he had been in the hospital when 16 corpses arrived. They were killed at Torgar battle and areas around. The wounded were too many and the food supply was very little. As regarding to Mashgore battle, the soldiers said that 15 government top seniors were killed including Intelligence Administrator (Khad), security Administrator and Tribal Affairs Administrator. As far as they know, the positions were still in the hands of Mujahidin and the government was still bombing them.

With regard to Ismail Kheil battle, they said that during the battle, all residents at the area escaped including the soldiers and militiamen and no one remained except the artillery. They also said that if Mujahidin continued fighting for two more hours, the city would have fallen into their hands. They said that the dead belonging to the government were too many and that three aircrafts were filled with dead bodies and took them to Kabul after two days from the battle.

As far as Torgar was concerned, they said that the Mujahidin succeeded before the last two battles against Torgar to cut off the back road for supplies especially after mines had exploded in under an armored vehicle and a water tanker last December. Since then, most supplies were sent to the mountain on feet in the dark.

It had been the first time I met my friend Mawlawi Hanif Shah, after Ismail Shah battle in which he was injured (January). The interview was conducted in the "Cultural Office" in Miratshan on Monday 29 of January. Hanif Shah (37 years) was angry that other parties let him down in the battle. The program of the attack was full and wide covering areas in the southern side of the valley in addition to the attack against Ismail Khail which was to the east from the famous village of Darraji. The last mission was assigned to Hanif Shah who headed a force of 650 Mujahid supported by two tanks. Attack from the south was supposed to meet another attack from the north east at a deep point in the enemy's territory which would result in splitting or cutting off large areas of the countryside at the west of the valley.

Hanif Shah said that they were able to make a penetration at one thousand meters deep inside the villages until the arrival at a desert flat area called (Tora Gorai) and took over seven military positions and that he intended to go on the village of (Sagi), which was one km far from the city and made preparations for the last jump. He trooped his men in the Dandar riverbed (which means a shallow and dry riverbed that sometimes gets furred) and Hanif Shah started from the beginning to say that the night was moony and that he had moved with his men and started to remove the land mines to open the way to Mujahidin after sunset. Attack was to start early before the enemy discovers the tanks. Therefore, Mujahidin started the battle.

"At five thirty in the morning when we they could see well Hanif Shah said "We defined targets for Mujahidin who had to strike them using RPJ rockets at the rate of 5 rockets per target then the tanks moved followed by Mujahidin".

Commander Hakam Khan was in-charge of two hundred Mujahidin and I began to fire the rockets. Upon firing the fourth rocket, he moved a few meters and stepped on a landmine. The mine exploded under his foot injuring him. The cleared him with the others back to Mranshah. Hakam Khan was a brave leader and he was loved by his men. His injury caused a shock and confusion among Mujahidin. At that difficult time, Harif Shah and the rest of leaders provided encouragement and support for the Mujahidin and said to them: "Hakam Khan is not the important thing, we have to continue with the attack before sunrise otherwise we will all be held captives".

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In half an hour all positions which were being defended by the army and militia were ceased. We went further into enemy's territory. Hanif Shah called Haqani who said: "we are in trouble here; the south tanks are out of order, infantry can not move forward because of the mines, you have to hold to your positions you got.

It seems that the attack from the south should meet with Hanif Shah some way close to (Torgar). As the south attack had stopped, the enemy then was to the south side of Hanif Shah, it was to the north of these troops as was the case in the confrontation. All that took place in an open area that was either desert or agricultural. That is why he replied to Haqani: "we can not do that we are too close to the city and the enemy has positions at the two sides."

What Hanif Shah was afraid of had happened, at eleven o'clock the enemy counter attack began, helicopter tanks and great numbers of infantry participated in the attack. A great number of Mujahidin withdrew without receiving orders from their commanders. It occurred to Hanif Shah not turn away from his position to retreat completely to the back without achieving any result. It occurred to him to turn and attack the enemy at his south wing at the same time the south Mujahidin whose tanks got defected and stopped by the land mines resumed the attack on the same target thus the ...enemy at the south wing would be subject to dual attack and Mujahidin would consequently win more territories and Hanif Shah would secure his right (south) wing. The decision was taken by the following leaders: Mirshadi khan Nizamuldim and Hanif Shah and they were standing beside him while he was calling Haqani to inform him of the new plan.

During his talk his leg hit a wire mine which exploded causing injuries to Hanif shah and the other two leaders thus the four leaders of the attack were injured which resulted in the failure of the attack. Hanif Shah's evaluation of the enemy was that the later was very weak; the main reason for the attack's failure is due to failure in executing the south attack and the disagreement from the part of Haqani to move the tanks on that axis. Hanif Shah was externally resentful for Haqani's attitude. However, he always remained loyal to his old teacher in the Haqani religious school in which he received his education before Jihad broke at the end of my interview with him. He told me that the government forces recovered all positions they lost at Mashgory which improved its position very much in the north.

Who was Hanif Shah?

He was a skinny young man in his thirty seven years of ago. He was of medium height with a strong body and sharp features, he was one of Tangy tribe at the west of Khost in the province of Pakistan, he was born in Lagori village. Education: 3 years at the mosque of the village..., then Lakin religious school..., then Ismail Khalil school (which was attacked by the government forces), then he spent 3 years studying in the school of Fakhri region in Zadran, his teacher was Mawlawi Nizamaldin (Haqani's deputy currently and the brother of martyr Fathallah). Then he studied at the Nizamiyah School in Miranshah Pakistan, then Anjumin Al Qurarn School in the city of Tat, Pakistan, then 3 more years in Al Haqani School in Khatak in Pakistan, where Haqani was his teacher for

a year. Then Harif moved to receive his religious studies at (Akbar Dar Al Uloom) school in Pakistan too then he left school and went to Afghanistan when the communist coup took place on 27/4/1978.

Then he returned to Naryab School in Pakistan as a teacher. He remained there teaching for six months, then he went to Saudi Arabia to work and spent two years then left to Join the Mujahdin under the command of his uncle "Shakirin Jahdiyar" who worked in the fronts under leadership of Haqani. Following the martyrdom of Shakirin, the leadership of the group was assigned to Hanif Shah, who followed the orders from Haqani in 1982. The first front he started in was the Lijah front where he set up a famous ambush against the government forces deep inside the valley of Khost which was to the back of "Gond Malanj" which we previously talked about in this book.

Hanif Shah participated in many significant battles such as: Bari fortress conquer battle, Dibji border site conquer, Shaharnor battle, Maidan border area battle, Sati Kando conquering battle, Tanai area conquer battle, the battles over Nader Shah Cote and Dawamindo Lakan conquering battles, Orogon conquer, Ani Khalil area battles, Diraji conquering battle 1989). Hanif was injured twice in the head and arm. At the time of writing these lines (1998) Hanif Shah was working in Taliban movement forces in Kabul and Khost.

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Late in January, I learned from some friends in Abu Dhabi that Al Itihad newspaper had not approved publishing a series of stories which I left over there before my travel last December. The series comprised six articles entitled "Between the Soviet Hummer and the American Anvil" (What Is Going On In Afghanistan?).

From the beginning I doubted that they would publish the series because of the facts – the ground facts – these stories included. Such ground facts were undoubtedly the strongest attack against the American policy in Afghanistan in a time USA made a portrait of it self as the most sincere friend for Afghan people and the only victorious party in that war.

There were in Al Itihad newspaper a number of leftist journalists of different dimensions. Some of those caused me trouble. They were engaged in backbiting, slandering and criticism against the rule of those who worked for the Afghani case with the cooperation of USA (agents of course). All leftists back then were in one trench with the Soviets against Islam and USA. However, after the defeat of the Soviets in Afghanistan, most of them stood together in one trench with USA against Islam.

Among those respectable Journalists in Al Itihad newspaper whom I dealt with and I paid great respect to them despite the difference in the ideology was the Egyptian journalist "Abd Al Aal Al Baqouri". He held the ethics and the principles of a real gentleman. He was as brave as a knight. It was strange at all because Abul Al Aal AL Baqouri came from Egyptian highland called "Al Said". I believe he was the one who stood firmly behind publishing these articles after a long hesitation that took five months.

In the last day of January, I returned to Miratshah after a round in Peshawar and Islamabad where I gave the first issue of "Manba'a Al Jihad" to a press in the capital.

Abu Al Hareth and I – sat at Haqani's guest house. Abu AL Hareth told me that many Arab young men are protesting against Haqani's project to issue a magazine in Arabic, and they said that is the last step preceding Haqani's declaration to form a political party. What Abu Al Hareth felt embarrassed to say was that campaign defamed me claiming that I was behind every deviation from the part of Haqani's whom I lead to ally with an infidel western power which everyone of them had his opinion as to identify it.

Abu Al Hareth was shaken by the strength of the attack as he himself was subject to be offended due to his relationship with Haqani and his fighting with his group in Khost under Haqani's command.

My supposition was right. When I finished my defense that Haqani does intend to and can not establish a party because Pakistan holds all the cards regarding this issue and because Haqani is a man of combat and battle fields and can not leave the fronts and sits in Pakistan to carry on the "shift" others do. Abu Al Hareth said that his eldest brother came from Jordan to advise him to leave Haqani!!

Abu Al Hareth's family is an old Muslim brotherhood supporter. The stubborn young man, however, refused the patriarchal orders, which he was sure they were orders of the international organization or the international order – tell me about the difference. Then I asked him about that campaign launched by "The House of Services" in Peshawar against Haqani. I told him about a young Saudi man who came to me asking for a device regarding what he had heard from officials at that house who asked him not to go to the battle field by Haqani and never send any donations to him – except under the supervision of Sayaf – because Haqani is seeking to establish a new party for himself.

Abu Al Hareth said that young men who come now to fight are uncontrollable; during their short leaves they run from this front to that looking for a battle. One day, you find them in Khost and another in Jalal Abad and a third in Qandahar.

He said that he was present at sessions for Islamic movement conference which was held in Lahore before the assassination of Dr. Azzam and that he later attacked strangely and fiercely the Islamic movements for their passiveness towards Jihad in Afghanistan, and so did Sheik Zanadani. Magazines of Muslim brotherhood however mentioned nothing of this. Actually, the weight of Abdallah Azzam alone was far more important than all Islamic movements in the world.

I have no illusions, no suspicions as to the fact that they were very much relieved when he had been assassinated and that the tears shed by many hypocrite eyes were tears of joy because the arena was missing its gun hero and dirty game heroes could now play in it as they wish.

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In February the third, I had been waiting and looking for Hajji Ibrahim who disappeared without notice hindering my work and trip to the front. I found out, however, that it was Friday. So, I went to the mosque for prayer. It was "Al Muhajirin Mosque" which was near Haqani's guest house.

In the afternoon, I finished the American president Richard Nixon's book entitled (1999 ... A Victory without a War). I wrote in my notebook commenting on the book: it is the most important book I've read in years. Then I wrote several comments on the book. The guest house was quiet and the number of visitors was few as usual in Fridays. Therefore, I had time after finishing the book to examine a map to the area of Khost. The map was written by an officer working with Haqani aiming at illustrating tribal territories and administrative centers.

I remembered the events of the last battles; two consecutive attacks against Torgar Failed in addition to a third against Ismail Kheil to the west of the valley. It is a tumbling start for the military action this year. As for the airport, it is still operating despite the great casualties of the enemy in aircrafts. The aircrafts still succeed in landing and taking off. The airport remains long days without being given attention from the part of Mujahidin. Every body remembers the airport, which then only gets into trouble and the enemy starts losing aircrafts. This case can be called "Aircrafts Malaria" that is waves of high degrees of temperature to the point of burning followed by very low degrees to the point of freezing. Enemy's casualties, however, still high and substantial.

The siege status made quantities of food and ammunition very little. The city hospital suffers a lot from military cases , causing it to be heavily crowded to the extent that to stay in bed you need one partisan officer to mediate for you. Partisan officers alone have the right to stay in beds till the end of remedy period. Non partisans or soldiers receive little care and soldiers are taken off their beds and thrown to the street and accused of pretending to be sick even their limbs are torn and bleeding. As for the natives and local militia, they have no hope of receiving good medical care. All they get is few colored pills at the gateway of the hospital without medical examination.

What if Khost becomes a target for a comprehensive attack to include Torgar and the airport and other territories? What if this attack comes at the same time when there is a public medical crisis in the city forcing hundreds or thousands rush to the hospital in addition to war injuries already exceeding the limits of the hospital capability, while the airport is closed where neither medicine nor aircrafts come to carry the injured or the bodies of dead senior officers?

The solution is to pollute water sources in the city in un-deadly manner but sufficient to create a severe medical crisis. There is a main water reservoir for the government water transported via water pipes to the modern part of the city, governmental bodies , authorities and the market. There is also "River Shamal" which is basically used for agriculture, but the authorities might resort to it to provide the city with water if they discover that their main reservoir was polluted.

As for the population in the villages most of whom are workers in the government militia they do not depend on any external water source; in every house there is a well of its own within its spacious backyard. The main water reservoir in the city can be accessed by "collaborators" who work in favor of Mujahidin either for emolument, reward or volunteering.

The shallow river which has very little water – except for spring – this river can be polluted by good quantity of insecticides that would prevent utilizing the river by making it a source of intestinal troubles.

At nine in the evening, Sheik Haqani came. The dinner was not delivered yet, so he performed the evening prayers with four of his assistants. When he finished, we sat together privately and I proposed my plan immediately. He agreed provided I should start tomorrow morning executing the plan. We will buy the required insecticide and bring a number of Arabs from Peshawar and undertake polluting the water of the river which should coincide with a comprehensive attack against the city and we will look for a suitable material for the main water reservoir.

I arrived at Peshawar at 4 pm in the fourth day of February. I had backed some of my old zeal that was strong at those beautiful days at Bary and the airport. I was thinking deeply in method of execution. I formed an initial idea how we will carry out that part assigned to us, namely spoiling the river water for a limited time to extend the period before the general attack and little bit after its completion. Such period does not normally take more than a day or two at the most.

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I could finally find Abu-Hafs. He was still working undercover accompanied with Abu-'Obaida and others.

They expected to be arrested by the Pakistani authorities in their campaign which started by killing Dr. Azzam then accusing "Muhtaseb" of the attempt to blow up an airliner.

He asked me to help him, so I explained to him the new plan in Khost. I advised him also to attack instead of stand on the defense only. They should initiate a legal action against the government of Pakistan and to appoint a British or European attorney to represent "Muhtaseb". The reason for this is that the Pakistanis' respect for Britain is so great.

Their fear of the European public opinion is greater than fearing God, may his name be exalted". I also suggested that they should approach the press and non-governmental organizations and ask them to stir the domestic public opinion against them. That's because their case is so weak and it has many contradicting points between its facts. It is funny and clear through the official statements made by the police and intelligence. Fabricating the case needs no proof. I also advised him to close their offices in Peshawar and to move to Khost within one week as a maximum. This way we avoid another assassination plotted by Saudis or the police and intelligence against the group which is lead by Ousama Bin Laden. The Saudi government does not feel good dealing with him. He was still detained there and is forbidden from departing Saudi Arabia since he had left Jalal-Abad.

Abu-Hafs took me to a place they called the religious institute.

He said that groups of young people receive religious teaching in it in the form of courses. A group of students are graduating. After the delivery of the certificate, I was called to give a speech about the military status at Khost and the political aspect of the Afghani issue.

When I got to the point where I had to talk about the control exerted by the economic and military aids presented by the Americans and Saudis on the Afghani political decision, innocent questions regarding the political decision of Al-Qa'ida Organization began. They wanted to know in whose hands the decision was. At that point I stopped, because the answer is out of my jurisdiction.

I explained to Abu-Hafs later that I was in need for six persons to work with me as a group in the "Chemical War" project. He told me to wait till tomorrow for an answer because he wants to think it over.

During the next two days, I was under severe criticism with slandering and defaming and irony from group of some members who belong to Al-Jihad Egyptian organization. I had issued "Manba'-al-Jihad" magazine. They thought that it was a funny war and that Jihad almost ceased. For this reason we issued a magazine "to raise money!!" They suggested we should call it "the last drop".

Next day, they accompanied me until Islamabad. They repeated the same words over and over again that I almost lost my nerves. One of them was charged with working

in the chemical project. His name was Abu-Talha. He was strong, energetic and practical. Actually, those young people and despite their disadvantages that make you feel hopeless, still had really rare and unique advantages especially in our times.

On Saturday February 10, we were on our way from Islamabad to Peshawar in the early morning. Abu-Hafs was driving an old white car and I was alone riding with him. He was driving quietly so that we can finish the important subjects we were discussing together. Abu-Hafs was saying was that the best days we had in Afghanistan had been those in which we used to read a lot and work a lot in the fronts and that our military and political readings benefited our group a lot, which prepared them to assume leading positions in the groups they joined. Then he suggested that I undertake a work like that for the new youth.

I told him that my work in the new magazine was to present a small piece of knowledge about Afghani and international arenas so that they can play their role expected of them which may be decisive and benefit Muslims not their enemy.

As for a program for reading and operations in the front, it can not be done well except for a limited group. I can make the centre of the project in Bari so that a special operation program for that group may begin.

We had stopped to drink tea at a restaurant on the way near the bank of River Indos. We were in the area where River Indos meets River Kabul. The place was charming. Our conversation was sentimental and spontaneous. Abu-Hafs replied: "If we execute your suggestion, then some people would think that we are helping you to form an organization of your own (!!). He also added, "Abu-Abd-Allah (Osama Bin Laden) had changed his mind about you; especially after the course you gave in Miran-Shah and after the papers you had published in Peshawar on Jalal-Abad battle."

It was the first time that I hear that they are afraid of me forming or having an "organization of my own." That was an idea that never occurred to me, but I heard several times after that. As for the anger of Abu-Abd-Allah, that was very strange. I thought these things ended along time ago.

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Sunday 11 February 1990

I arrived at Miran-Shah with a few copies of the first issue of our magazine "Manba'a-al-Jihad". I sat with Abu-Al-Hareth in the cultural office. He told me that Haqani is arriving any minute from "Khaldan" border area – inside Afghanistan – where some leaders from different organizations are pre holding a meeting, he described as urgent, to deal with the problem of the province of Loojer. The interim government and parties in Peshawar did not take a step. It was Haqani who did in order to find a solution from the leaders inside Afghanistan. News was that the leaders who attended the meeting decided to send 200 Mujahid to support Loojer Mujahidin. Haqani was concerned that the government would resume its movement from Jardiz to Khost through "Manjal" thus dispersing my military effort against Khost.

That would turn great part of his forces to defend that long road, which needs allocation of large part of human and material capabilities. His current effort in Khost might be weak. Khost's situation was already swaying. As a result, the future of the regime is swaying too in Kabul, and even the future of the international (American) scheme in Afghanistan. Haqani was the main source of that risk.

Therefore, his personal security was at risk too. Haqani had received threats from some of the merchants of tribal areas. Their smuggling operations of goods of Khost were damaged heavily.

Few months ago, there was an attempt to explode his car by a time magnetic bomb during its stop between Banoon and Miran-Shah before a checkpoint.

While we were talking about that, we did not know that at the same time Haqani was exposed to a new assassination attempt where his car was shot with a number of bullets. Haqani would have definitely been shot if he had not changed his usual position, the rear seat, and sat beside the driver instead. He had changed his position after performing noon prayer in a mosque that was by the road.

No one told us the annoying news the same day, because Haqani and his men stayed silent about it. After their arrival, they parked the cars immediately in the garage. We knew all about it on the next day in the afternoon. Abu-al-Hareth and I saw the holes caused by the bullets on the right side of the car. When I asked Haqani after that about what happened and whether it was a deliberate accident or not, he said that it was a coincidence. The front car in his convoy stopped by chance, and then the hood was opened suddenly. The driver got out of the car to shut it down. After that, it rained with bullets. They were two rival tribes in the area and one of them thought that we are their rivals. My men chased them but they ran away to the mountains.

My suspicions did not calm by his attempt to comfort us. I had a feeling that the driver of the front car must have been a conspirator. It was easy for him to open the engine cover while the car is moving. The location that he chose was not common. It was on a bridge where it would be difficult for the car behind his own (in this case it was

Haqani's car behind) to maneuver and hide. At that moment I remembered the aircrafts that had bombed Haqani above and under the General Command Center; He got bombarded by Scud at Khalil Center and the road leading to it. I remember when the mountain around us was burned with cluster bombs and the dry grass and trees were burned to the extent that we began to cough from the smoke. He cried: "There is a spy watching our movements". What happened is probability similar now.

Tuesday 13 February 1990

Haqani told us that all arrangements were made to start operations in the front. He said that today we would leave to Bari. The guest house was crowded with dozens of chiefs and commanders while Haqani sat in a small internal room and called those waiting either individually or in small groups. He finished with them the forthcoming issues. Haqani used to start such meeting after he has performed his dawn prayer at seven o'clock in the morning.

That activity went on until afternoon prayer. Everybody had his lunch before that. At three thirty, we started preparing for moving. Haqani's car and two guard cars with a big caravan got ready to pick up the vehicle carrying the Mujahidin. Thus, the commanders and the ammunition were ready to move.

The view was magnificent. Haqani and his two brothers Khalil and Ibrahim went out with a number of his younger children to say goodbye. At the door of the house, his old mother stood crying holding a big rosary in her hand. She was muttering prayers. The kids gathered and began to play around the cars.

She ordered them to come by her side and pushed them inside the house scolding them. Some of them tried to hangover to the cars and go with their fathers to the front. So, the old grandmother had to bring a long stick and chase the kids.

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Some guards helped her to move them away from the car wheels. When the cars began to move the grandmother raised her hand to the heaven and went into deep prayer with her eyes full of tears.

Militia checkpoints on the road do not stop the procession more than a few seconds; the front car explains the position, gives some documents and some money naturally. After passing through the last border center at Ghulam-Khan, we stopped by a water stream for ritual ablution and prayer. Then we continued driving in the zigzag valley between the mountains. We were stopped twice by air raids; once by jet aircrafts; another by heavy launcher helicopter.

It took us more time on the road than necessary, but, thank God, we arrived safely and entered into the mosque of Khalil Camp to join those who had started to perform sunset prayer behind Malawi Nizam-al-Deen, Haqani's deputy.

After the prayer, we assembled in the upper cave. Nizam-al-Deen presented his report regarding the condition and situation on the front during that sunny day. He said that there were continuous air strikes since the morning, but without any deaths reported. Then, Haqani told him about Khaldan meeting and the Mujahidin movement to Loojar.

We prayed the evening prayer at the camp's mosque and I spent the cold night on the concrete floor. In such crowded days, it is difficult to have a blanket and if you did, it would be a sign that God is pleased with you. I won a cover and I thanked God so much.

Wednesday 14 February 1990

We woke up responding to the call of dawn prayer outside the mosque. The ground was frozen like glass, that it was so difficult for us to balance ourselves while walking. We performed the preparation for prayers with the ice cold stream water. Our faces and our limbs turned to red and we felt energetic due to the progressive trembles passing through our bodies.

After praying, we went up to meet Haqani in the upper cave. I carried my luggage and climbed the zigzag road leading to the cave. The ice was still extended on the narrow rocky road. Suddenly, what I call the "perfect fall" occurred. It is when a man's foot slides and his body goes up suddenly causing the head to fall. That leads him to a position where he is laying in a complete flat position on the ground accompanied by the sound of hitting the ground and – may be – the laughs from those who see the exciting view. I stood up and went on marching after I had made sure that none of my bones were broken.

The day was shiny which is considered in the fronts a bad omen and a sign of evil air raids. We had our breakfast – tea and milk, our national drink – with Sheik Haqani. We ate also bee honey from the blessed Zadran Mountain. News from Abd-al-Aziz in the observation and Command Center arrived. Two Scud rockets fell on Dir Malk area and no one from the Mujahidin was hurt. The war aircrafts targeted the same area with

several raids which also caused no casualties – it was a very hot start for a day which is still in its first hours.

There was a yard facing the room Haqani sleeps in which was a small cave to which a small store was attached to it with a steel door that looked like a cell door. That cell was used to keep very important things and it was connected with the guest room by a small door.

In the yard, which was covered by the sun beams, I found my dear friend Mawlawi Abd-al-Halim sitting with his head leaning to the rocky wall behind him. There was a smile shining on his pleasant face. His smile rarely left his lips in all circumstances. That good Sheik reminds me of Torghar and the tragedies there. He lost his right leg there while he was trying to lift an Arab young man who was killed between landmines after an unsuccessful attempt to assault the stubborn mountain. The Sheik tried to stand up to embrace me, but I stopped him and embraced him while he was seated and kissed his head. In a short time, a great number of the leaders of the front assembled in the narrow yard. Sheik Haqani was sitting in the middle with Mawlawi Nizam-al-Deen at his side and Sheik Abd-al-Halim as well. The discussion was general and it was about the battles with a recommendation to steadfast and continue jihad.

No one talked about details about the coming battles. They all left and dual meetings began between Haqani and a number of senior commanders.

A surveillance helicopter arrived at a very high altitude above our area. Air raids followed with severe bombing covering the area from Khalil center to Torghar. That continued until sunset.

We had our supper in the mosque. Two new guests arrived. They were Arabs. One was Abu-Mohammad of Syria, a fellow of Abu-al-Hareth group; the other was a Saudi young man whom I saw for the first time.

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Thursday 15 February 1990

I felt extremely glad to hear the dawn call of prayer, which meant for me the end of a long night of suffering and waiting for the sun, because the place was as cold as a cave in the North Pole.

Abu-al-Hareth suggested we should go and greet the Sheik in the core and have a cup of tea with milk to raise our morale. We were five in that trip: Abu-al-Hareth, Abu-Mohammad of Syria, a scholar from Sohat, his Saudi guest and I. We learned from Sheik Haqani that the battle was about to start – it seemed the enemy knew of that and bombed the place with aircrafts two days ago with bombs and rockets and air raids – it was decided that Abu-al-Hareth and Abu-Mohammad of Syria and his Saudi guest should leave to Dr. Nasrat-Allah center at Bouri-Khail (The entrance of Bari Valley from the side of Khost).

As for Sheik Haqani and the Sohat scholar and the humble servant of God, we will be headed to "the observation mount". i.e. Haqani's center at the time of operations. Before we moved, Haqani suddenly said to me feeling that he was suffering from an internal distress, "During the last two days, radio stations said many things. One of these was that the government force had arrived at Jardiz. Radio Kabul and the BBC however, they said that Russia and USA agreed to stop aids to Najib and the Mujahidin, while Russia is still sending two hundred and fifty million dollars monthly to Najib's government.

He added saying that "The West's target is to force the Mujahidin to accept Najib as the president of the country. Haqani continued, "Parties' leaders called by wireless asking me to meet them at Peshawar today, what is the use of such meetings? ... Should we stop the battle for the sake of useless meetings? The amounts they spent on their headquarters at Peshawar was enough to sustain jihad for two years; the weapons in their stores suffice for years, why do not they use them now, if not now, when we will use them? Why do they keep stored for? Say of for example Sayaf possesses 45 thousand rifles still in lubrication. I think those leaders are going to use these weapons to bribe the tribes in the elections they call for. Why do not they come to Khost? They expect us to agree an elevating the battles all over Afghanistan." What encouraged USA and Russia to keep Najib in presidency is the stop of Jihad in many areas in Afghanistan along with a weak Mujahidin government in Pakistan.

Jilani's wife said to the BBC: "We are tired of fighting and blood. We want our people to rest. Look now at the communists, who served the communists for twenty years; look at the officers who got their ranks not because they learned or got trained, but for killing Muslims and breaching of all kind of codes and laws. They call all these now good Muslims to enable them participate in the future government in the country.

The new Saudi young man asked him: "What do you say of Hikmatyar's suggestion that a coup should happen in the army to support Hikmatyar as the next president for the country?" The Sheik said sharply: "In the name of God, I will fight him

as I fight a communist as long as he is a president with all these officers who killed Muslims for twenty years around him. This is just a way to access to power by any means even if it was a hand from the communities. It is just like what happened with Daoud who was surrounded and supported by communists, and then they killed him.

I said to Sheik Haqani: "There is no other solution but to continue the battle at any cost. We shall conquer Khost, if God wills, and many things will change then". He replied quietly: this is right, circumstances now are back to the point Jihad started with in the beginning and it is the same as it was at the beginning of Islam. Everyone is distinctive now. Only the sincere ones remained in Jihad."

Haqani then informed us of the increasing number of soldiers deserting the army in the last ten days. The most remarkable was the escape of 15 soldiers to Hanif-Shah Center. Actually, those soldiers did not escape. They fought fiercely to leave their location, so they killed their officers and the militia present there. Four were killed among those soldiers and another four were wounded. The extraordinary thing was happened there was that they pulled the dead bodies and buried them in "Muslim Cemeteries" considering them martyrs. Their enthusiasm and rushing into Jihad are not less than that of the Mujahidin at the fronts.

We climbed the observation mount leaving Haqani at Khalil center to resume his meetings with the shifts and supervise the supply of food and ammunition for the front centers.

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At three thirty in the afternoon, the Mujahidin hit with their artillery bombs the main oil reservoir at the city. They burned it. A black column of thick smoke emanated from it and lasted for one hour.

Air raids are too many, but they are not accurate because no one reported any causality. Most of them were focused on mount Torghar and Bari area then Leejah Bari. It is in a supportive area for the attackers in Torghar; Leejah supports the Mujahidin of the west in Ismail Khail and Dir Malk).

In the afternoon, a military transport aircraft landed at the airport. No one among our gunmen was waiting. Abd-al-Aziz yelled "Batcha Dina" to the one in charge of artillery among the Kotchi group. He did not respond. After some yelling and agitation, a round was shot at the airport runaway.

The aircraft moved immediately after taking 15 minutes to complete its task. This had bothered me a lot, because I was so interested in the airport more than any thing else. It was a historic concern as I said earlier. This accident and others similar to it, added emphasis to the need for allocating artillery pieces for the airport; thus, making them ready and available for action at any minute. They would not "engage" with any other target so as to leave no "time lag" that can be utilized by the aircrafts to be in the airport, which we did several months later.

At night while I was preparing my bed to sleep, a car came from Khalil Center. The driver called me saying Haqani was asking for me. I went down with. A British journalist was there who was just about to make an interview with Haqani. No one could interpret for them except me. The journalist was a skinny young fellow wearing an Afghani dress. He had a rigid face as if it was a figure carved in limestone, bearing no specific feelings.

The journalist's name was Tim who was working for the BBC and for an American magazine. The important thing about the interview was that the questions reflected mostly the new outlook of the West towards Afghanistan. His main concern was to know exactly what happened in Khost and Jardiz. These are the only places witnessing a real war while the rest of the country was in peace.

He then concentrated on Haqani's potentials and possibilities; whether they were enough to conquer Khost; whether Haqani was prepared to stop fighting if a settlement would take place between the interim government and Najib's government. Finally, he concentrated too much on the subject of drug farming and trafficking in Afghanistan, which was a door widely opened by the West to defame the Mujahidin. Then, I asked him about what Mawlawi "Nasim Akhonzadah", the powerful leader in Halmond. Nasim said that would plant drugs in his territory so as to be able to resume Jihad because foreign aid has been stopped.

These were the statements that lead to the assassination of Akhonzadah's brother in law by orders from the USA, in agreement with Pakistan and also from the organization of which Akhonzadah was a member".

In the West, they knew that the battle of Khost (if it succeeds) would absolutely change the destiny of the country politically. They knew also that Haqani is a source of danger to determine destiny on the ground by the power of the guns. That is why attempts to kill him in Pakistan became numerous. I think that Pakistan's security needs to keep Haqani alive, because they needed stability and security in the regions close to Pakistani border. That need was greater than the American need to get rid of Haqani. That is why Pakistan cooperated hesitantly in the few attempts of assassinating Haqani, including the one that happened a few days ago before the last Torghar battle.

We spent the night having in mind that we were going to move in the morning to the observation and command mount accompanied by Haqani and Tim.

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Torghar ... the last battle

Friday 16 February 1990

The car was ready to move. The sun had been rising up in the sky. We, the British journalist, Tim and I, took off in the car to the observation mount. Haqani was going to be late a little bit. He had to follow up on some of today's attack details. He told me they were ready for today's operation on Torghar. The group that, however, will attack the eastern side is not large. As for the south, which is the longest front of the mountain from the Mujahidin's side, the Mujahidin were not able to open a pass between the landmines and consequently work stopped.

The car moved carrying us towards the mountain. What I heard from Haqani was discouraging. This shiny weather and clear skies made me feel depressed, because there will be violent air raids. The enemy's fires will be far more accurate, and it is certain that there will be casualties for this day. The only difference today is that the Mujahidin will attack from the eastern side with a small group. Would this be more useful?

It was so obsessed thinking about it by the time we reached the top of the mountain. We put our luggage in the small room. The journalist began to ask. I explained to him the general situation. Then we came back to the room again to wait until Haqani arrives. I knew that no operation will take place until he has arrived, so he can follow it up from this summit.

We started talking about the political situation in Afghanistan. I told him frankly about the role of USA and the West in causing harm to the Afghans. They kept the fact that the Afghans were the ones who should be credited to liberate Eastern Europe, after defeating the Soviet Empire in Afghanistan, a secret from the world. Even the people of Russia and Western Europe see that Afghans' victory was an auxiliary factor in the downfall of the Soviet Union. I replied saying: "It was even the decisive factor; had the soviet regime been able to subrogate the Afghans; it would have gone on for another century at least, which is not considered a long time if we talk about the lifetime of countries."

Since eight o'clock in the morning, aircrafts had started action actively in a splendid weather. The day had sunny skies and a perfectly clear vision. The heavy bombing helicopters shelled tons of bombs on the locations that were expected to support an attack or where an attack might be launched from. They focused on Leejah and Bari and continued bombing regularly till eleven o'clock. Then, jet war aircrafts took over and the Antinov took a rest.

At last, Sheik Haqani arrived followed by two guarding vehicles. He was accompanied by two guests. I thought they are Saudis. One of them was a journalist; the other had a huge body and looked like a wrestler. His speech indicated that he was a

preacher in a mosque. His appearance showed that he is more fundamental than his friend.

Two Haqani's guards saw me coming out of my favorite trench and hanging a binocular from my shoulder. They borrowed the binoculars from me and sat in my place in the trench. I tried hard to take it back from them, but couldn't, until an hour later...

At 11:38 noon smoke appeared for the first time above Torghar summit as a result of the Mujahidin's bombardments. The clouds began to increase slowly, but it did not get as thick as it was in the last operations. It would anyway hinder relatively war aircrafts' action.

The Sheik said that he wants the battle to start on Friday prayer, so that the Mujahidin may benefit from the prayers of Muslims around the world. Then he prayed leading us to noon prayer in a small rocky yard prepared by the Mujahidin to serve as a site mosque. They put rocks around and made a curve to indicate the place of Mihrab.

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