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What's next move in the Soviet plan?

*The differing scenarios
for 'after Afghanistan'*

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WASHINGTON — When Marshall Shulman, the State Department's special adviser on Soviet affairs, tries to predict what aggressive move the Soviet Union might make next, he sees a possible thrust into Pakistan against Afghan insurgents in camps there.

When former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger speculates on the same subject, he sees the greatest threat as cooperation between the Soviet Union and India to break Central Asia into tribal states such as Baluchistan, which includes parts of Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan.

University of Chicago Professor Morton Kaplan, a Soviet expert, sees a different short-term threat. The Soviets, he says, are likeliest to make a cosmetic withdrawal of some troops from Afghanistan, thereby lulling the Free World, to be followed by a peace offensive aimed at spitting Western Europe from the United States.

Like blind men feeling different parts of an elephant, these experienced and thoughtful experts view the same situation in widely differing terms. They all agree, however, that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan has brought new and dangerous opportunities for Soviet adventures throughout the world.

"WE CAN ONLY guess at what Soviet intentions are," Shulman told a House International Affairs Committee late last week. "Whatever their original intentions, it [the Afghanistan invasion] does open up further possibilities such as Pakistan. Their intentions may be very broad indeed."

The guessing game about future Soviet actions has reached a fever pitch here. Watching it unfold is a bit like reading a John LeCarre spy novel in which intelligence operatives rush around searching for they know now what. At one moment, the Soviet invasion is an internal affair aimed at proping up a sagging pro-Soviet regime. At another moment, the invasion is a dagger aimed at the West's oil lifeline, the oil fields of Persia and Arabia.

If the answers aren't clear, the ques-

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Shulman said the first hints of invasion came in October when American intelligence reported the massing of Soviet troops just north of the border with Afghanistan. Three teams of Soviet troops just north of the border with Afghanistan. Three teams of Soviet officials, including high KGB and military men, visited Afghanistan in late summer and fall, apparently to report on what steps should be taken to preserve the regime there.

THE LAST GROUP, including 12 generals, probably reported that the Kabul government was "going down the drain," Shulman said, and was likely to be replaced by a fundamentalist Moslem leadership with anti-Soviet leanings. The Kremlin then debated through mid-November about how much force to use.

"The Military probably promised a quick 90-day option. It appears they chose this intermediate option involving five to six divisions. It would require more than twice that to take on the Afghan insurgents."

The Soviets now have 85,000 to 92,000 troops in Afghanistan, Shulman said. If they choose now to crush the rebels, it will require at least doubling that figure, he said.

In addition to propping up the regime, the Soviets must have calculated that a move into Afghanistan put them closer to warm water ports on the Arabian sea and in a stronger position if they want to move on Iran's oil fields.

"Look at the assets they gained," said Chicago's Kaplan. "You're within MIG fighter range of the Persian Gulf, you have the key to stirring up trouble in Baluchistan [which has warm water ports]. It gives you the potential to deny oil to the West if things stir up."

SOME ALSO CITE the illness of Soviet Party Leader Leonid Brezhnev as a cause.

"The defense minister [Dimitri Ustinov] is the strongest personality, the toughest, most aggressive," said Sen. Percy [R., Ill.], a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Shulman agreed the military played a leading role. He said the military has dominated policy on Central Asia and Africa from the days of the czars. He also warned that the military and KGB would have a stronger hand during the transition period when Brezhnev finally departs the scene.

A final underlying cause of the invasion is the presence of 6 million Moslems in the Soviet Union who could be stirred by a successful Islamic rebellion in Afghanistan.

Putting together the collective wisdom

"They may be preparing to extend their power by force through Pakistan and Iran to the Persian Gulf," said Sen. Stevenson [D., Ill.], a member of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. This view covers a host of possibilities.

THE MILDEST is Shulman's warning that the Soviets may make a quick thrust into Pakistan, or simply block the five passes leading from Afghanistan to the refugee camps in Pakistan. The most alarming is a warning that the Soviets have embarked on a "giant pincer" movement to encircle Persian Gulf oil. The other end of the pincer is Ethiopia and South Yemen, where the Soviets have a military presence. The pincer theory has been put forward by the respected Heritage Foundation and others of conservative bent.

"Afghanistan constitutes a flanking movement," a highly detailed policy paper of the foundation states. "The Soviets have occupied most important Afghan air bases, fortified them with surface-to-air missile batteries, and are equipping them with modern command and control facilities. Soviet planes are now situated closer to the strategic Straits of Hormuz—through which pass 40 per cent of Western oil imports—than if they were based in Tehran."

So far the Carter administration response has been one of gradualism, ducking direct confrontation with the Soviets and working to build international support behind such moves as the Olympics boycott, grain boycott, and condemnation resolutions in the United Nations.

Carter's answer to the Russians also has been criticized on grounds he has followed an erratic, superficial course, bending backwards in Cuba when he discovered Soviet military personnel, then drawing a line much farther from home in the Persian Gulf, where the U.S. cannot back up its military threats for a long time to come.

WHAT DO OTHERS offer? The Central Intelligence Agency [CIA] advised Carter early in November when American diplomatic hostages were seized in Iran to set a 7 to 10 day deadline. Carter turned down the advice, and one consequence has been the overlapping of the Iran and Afghanistan crises.

Chicago's Kaplan recommended that Carter impose a naval blockade of Cuba directly after the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan, insisting that Soviet military personnel finally be withdrawn and that nuclear submarine facilities be dismantled. Both the CIA and Kaplan said their advice would have been worth trying only in the early days of those crises.

"The President's actions have been largely cosmetic," said Kaplan. "The Soviets will be able to bring this under control if we had not a naval blockade