

To Candidate Member of the Politburo of the CC CPSU
USSR Minister of Defense
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Moscow, USSR Ministry of Defense

The Afghan problem continues to attract attention in the sphere of international affairs. It begins to cause a certain concern on the part of the Soviet people as well. This is precisely why I would like to present my view of the existing military-political situation in the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, the perspectives of its development, and some proposals regarding strategy and tactics for the period of the forthcoming withdrawal of the Soviet limited military contingent. I am undertaking this motivated by my understanding of the complexity and urgency of the issue, with the feeling of my party and military-professional duty, regardless of the consequences that are awaiting me. Truth and honor for me are more valuable than personal comfort.

1. The military and political situation in the country is characterized by an exceptional tension, and the increasing aggravation and instability. A deep political crisis of the Afghan society is obvious. The revolution entered the phase of “rollback”. The coalition of social forces continues to change in favor of the counter-revolution. The state regime is not capable of stopping the counter-revolution on its own without principally new cardinal changes.

2. We should honestly admit that our efforts over the last 8 years have not led to the expected results. Huge material resources and considerable casualties did not produce a positive end result – stabilization of military-political situation in the country. The protracted character of the military struggle and the absence of any serious success, which could lead to a breakthrough in the entire strategic situation, led to the formation in the minds of the majority of the population of the mistrust in the abilities of the regime. That objectively led to demoralization of the masses, and to the erosion of the social base of the revolution. The experience of the past years clearly shows that the Afghan problem cannot be solved by military means only. Within the framework of the old thinking, old approaches we are doomed to the negative end result in the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA). We should decisively reject our social illusions and

undertake principally new steps, taking into account the lessons of the past, and the real situation in the country . . .

3. The national reconciliation, announced by the Afghan leadership, has not led to a breakthrough in the military-political situation in the country and will not lead to one.

First of all, the masses did not express their extensive or consistent support for that course. And the reason here is to be found not only in the defects of the term “national reconciliation.” The people are tired from the war, they want peace. However, the people are against the source of the idea of the national reconciliation as such, i.e. against the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). The regime has no serious positions in the kishlak zone, where the main mass of population is concentrated. This zone is under the complete control of the counter-revolutionary forces.

Secondly, the practice of the national reconciliation was mainly limited to the conversations about the “decisiveness” without any decisive actions.

Thirdly, the policy of national reconciliation did not find extensive support in the CC PDPA either. One could not argue that it was decisively, consistently and undisputedly accepted even by the Politburo of the CC PDPA either. A similar situation exists in the state apparatus and in the armed forces. This cannot but worsens even more the weakening of the revolution and the formation of the negative content of public consciousness.

Fourth, the PDPA is not the only political organization in the DRA. The course of the PDPA leadership to the national reconciliation does not enjoy consistent support in the leadership of other democratic political parties.

Fifth, the PDPA appeal for the national reconciliation did not find positive response on the part of the counter-revolution. Moreover, the frequency of combat actions has increased along with its exasperation and harshness . . . the counter-revolution is not planning for the search of ways to resolve the problems peacefully, but continues its course for putting an end to the regime by military means . . . At the same time, one has to keep in mind that the counter-revolution is aware of the strategic decision of the Soviet leadership to withdraw the Soviet troops from the DRA . . . The counter-revolution will not be satisfied with partial power today, knowing that tomorrow it can have it all.

Six, one of the fundamental principles of the national reconciliation – is the proposal to create a coalition government. The Afghan leadership is hoping that someone from the Peshawar “seven” would accept that proposal. That is a groundless illusion, although one cannot exclude from one’s political arsenal a possibility that the former King Zahir Shah might enter the Afghan arena. In that case, S. Modjaddadi, S. Gilani, M. Nabi could join him. However, all the main forces of the counter-revolution comprise the internal base of Gulbedinn and Rabbani . . . Creation of a coalition government with Zahir Shah or with any other combination of the figures from the “seven” – is not a solution to the situation.

Seven, the course on the national reconciliation has had a profoundly negative influence on the moral state of the personnel of the Afghan armed forces. The morale and the combat qualities of the officers, and the main mass of soldiers and sergeants, which were already quite low, were eroded even further. The number of desertions in the armed forces is growing. At the same time, one could predict that beyond the framework of the period of the national reconciliation that process could become massive. The army will continue losing its confidence in achieving victory in the armed struggle with the counter-revolution more and more. Of course, this is happening not without ideological influence of the counter-revolution. And here one has to admit that in the ideological struggle the counter-revolution has succeeded in seizing the initiative. .

Therefore, the following conclusions are in order:

-- the policy of national reconciliation will not lead to the expected result . . . the [policy of] national reconciliation without support of active practical activity of the party and the regime led the revolution to “run in place”, to the formation of a political indifference not only among the working masses, but even among the absolute majority of the party members and officers of the armed forces;

-- the counter-revolution actively uses the period of national reconciliation for the purposes of its consolidation and in its forward [campaign of] anti-state and anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda work among the population;

-- by the time the period of national reconciliation is over one should expect a rapid intensification of the armed struggle . . .

4. The main issue in the DRA – is the state of the PDPA. Incorrect information, or information, which is fed by illusions is especially dangerous in this issue. In analyzing the processes taking place in the PDPA it is especially important to be objective, and to take into account the existing situation, rather than presenting the desired for the actual. It is also important to be able to see the lessons of the road traveled, and the real future tendencies behind the grandiloquent declarations from the PDPA leadership. How do they look to me?

(a) The PDPA from the moment of its founding (January 1965) has never been a monolithic, organically united political party. It was an artificial combination of two independent political tendencies “Khalq” and “Parcham” . . .

(b) The fierce struggle for the leadership not only between “Khalq” and “Parcham,” but also between their most prominent representatives has been and will be an important characteristic of the PDPA . . .

(c) At the present time, the PDPA is the only political organization in the DRA, which relies on the organizational structure throughout the country (in all the provincial and in part of district centers). However, it is a kind of circulatory system without blood. The level of participation of the PDPA members was never adequate. At the present time, the party members can be characterized by thorough political apathy. Many of them, who see the perspectives of the development of the situation in the country quite clearly, and who are motivated by the instinct of self-preservation are now acting not in the interest of the PDPA, but against the interest of the party . . . Had the analysis of the PDPA situation been done on the basis of real developments, and not on the basis of reports from Leshchinsky and Petrova, it would have been quite obvious that the PDPA had already become not a party of active members, but a party of membership cards . . .

The PDPA is objectively moving toward its political death. No actions aimed at resuscitating the PDPA would produce any practical results. Najib’s efforts in this respect can only prolong the death throes, but they cannot save the PDPA from its death.

In these circumstances, we should concentrate our efforts not on fire rescue measures to save the PDPA, but rather on creating conditions for achieving our strategic goal, which I see as follows:

---to find opportunities to overcome the deepening political crisis of the Afghan society. Here we need radical measures, taking into account demands of wide masses of population as well as those of the internal armed counter-revolution;

---to prepare the withdrawal of the limited contingent of Soviet troops from the DRA, as it was announced by our leadership;

---to help the progressive political forces of the country preserve the democratic content of development of the Afghan society;

---to rebuild the traditional friendship among that part of the Afghan population, which under the force of the circumstances formed hostile attitudes toward the Soviet people.

---to ensure future development of social processes in the DRA in the direction of our long-term interests.

Moscow, August 13, 1987

With deepest respect,
Doctor of Philosophy,
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[from Alexander Lyakhovsky, *The Tragedy and Valor of Afghan*, Iskon, Moscow
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Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya, The National Security Archive.

