

Communist Party of the Soviet Union

Central Committee

Anatoly Chernyaev's Notes from the Politburo Sessions

February 23 and 26, 1987

On Afghanistan.

The reaction to our decision to withdraw is not simple. We did enter, how do we leave now? We can leave quickly, without thinking about anything: say that the former leadership was to blame for everything. But we cannot do so. We hear from India, and from Africa that if we just leave, it would be a blow to the authority of the Soviet Union in the national-liberation movement; the imperialism would start its offensive in the developing countries if we leave Afghanistan.

Another issue. A million of our soldiers went through Afghanistan. And we will not be able to explain to our people why we did not complete it [i.e. the war]. We suffered such heavy losses! And what for? We undermined the prestige of our country, brought bitterness. What for did we lose so many people?

It is essential to preserve Najib's regime. If we start bustling around and rushing now, the regime will fall. Najib's personnel is panic. He even asks for introduction of 500,000 troops; it is a bluff, of course.

We should not exclude America from agreements on Afghanistan, up to some serious things on our part. We need to establish contact with Pakistan. Maybe we should even invite Zia ul-Haq to Tashkent for a meeting with me. Maybe we should even "pay" him with something. In short, we need flexibility and quick reaction, otherwise, there will be bloodshed, a civil war, and Najib will be removed immediately.

We should continue negotiations with him, and maybe we would even have to give in on the dates of withdrawal.

Maybe some of you have doubts about what I have just said?

Voices: no, no.

Then that is how we will act.

(...)

Material assistance. Huge expenses. And they would be justified if they could solve the Afghan problem. To withdraw the troops is the only possible solution. But we are not going to open up the discussion about who is to blame now. Let us talk now about the material aid.

Gromyko, nonetheless, started the discussion. He said that we decided to introduce the troops too easily, made a mistake, did not foresee the consequences. But they asked us to introduce troops 11 times. We refused. Of course, there was a simplified understanding of that action. But now I do not believe even for a moment that an Afghan army can be created, regardless of how much we invest in it. Nonetheless, we do not have an alternative, except to invest in it.

Gorbachev: There is an "alternative"! If we introduce 200,000 troops more, then our entire policy [i.e. *perestroika*] will collapse. That is why withdrawal of troops is the only correct decision. But the present time may require other decisions also.