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MEETING OF THE POLITBURO
OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE
OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE SOVIET UNION

March 17, 1979

Comrade L. I. Brezhnev, Presiding

In attendance: Y. V. ANDROPOV, A. A. GROMYKO, A. N. KOSYGIN, A. Y. PELSHE, K. U. CHERNENKO, D. F. USTINOV, P. N. DEMICHEV, B. N. PONOMAREV, M. C. SOLOMENTZEV, N. A. TIKHONOV, I. V. KAPITONOV, V. I. DOLGIKH, M. V. ZIMYANIN, K. V. RUSAKOV, M. C. GORBACHEV

Re: Deterioration of Conditions in the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan and Possible Responses From Our Side

KIRILENKO. Leonid Ilych [Brezhnev] has asked us to commence our Politburo session today at this unseasonable hour, and he will then join us tomorrow, in order to discuss the circumstances that have emerged in the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. The situation is urgent. Comrades Gromyko, Andropov and Ustinov today have put together some proposals which have been completed and are now in front of you. Let us consider this matter closely and determine what measures we ought to take, what actions should be undertaken. Perhaps we should hear first from Comrade Gromyko.

GROMYKO. Judging by the most recent communications that we have received from Afghanistan in the form of encrypted cables, as well as by telephone conferences with our chief military advisor Comrade Gorelov and temporary chargé d'affaires Comrade Alekseev, the situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated sharply, the center of the disturbance at this time being the town of Herat.

There, as we know from previous cables, the 17th division of the Afghan army was stationed, and had restored order, but now we have received news that this division has essentially collapsed. An artillery regiment and one infantry regiment comprising that division have gone over to the side of the insurgents. Bands of saboteurs and terrorists, having infiltrated from the territory of Pakistan, trained and armed not only with the participation of Pakistani forces but also of China, the United States of America and Iran, are committing atrocities in Herat. The insurgents infiltrating into the territory of Herat Province from Pakistan and Iran have joined forces with a domestic counter-revolution. The latter is especially comprised by

and
to rebels

religious fanatics. The leaders of the reactionary masses are also linked in large part with the religious figures.

The number of insurgents is difficult to determine, but our comrades tell us that they are thousands, literally thousands. ^{Here?}

Significantly, it should be noted that I had a conversation this morning at 11:00 with Amin -- Taraki's deputy who is the minister of foreign affairs -- and he did not express the slightest alarm about the situation in Afghanistan, and on the contrary, with Olympian tranquility, he said that the situation was not all that complicated, that the army was in control of everything, and so forth. In a word, he expressed the opinion that their position was under control.

KIRILENKO. In short, judging from the report of Amin, the leadership of Afghanistan is not experiencing the slightest anxiety in connection with these events.

GROMYKO. Exactly. Amin even said that the situation in Afghanistan is just fine. He said that not a single incident of insubordination by a governor had been reported, that is, that all of the governors were on the side of the lawful government. Whereas in reality, according to the reports of our comrades, the situation in Herat and in a number of other places is alarming, and the insurgents are in control there.

As far as Kabul is concerned, the situation there is basically calm. The borders of Afghanistan with Pakistan and Iran are closed, or more accurately, semi-closed. A large number of Afghans, formerly working in Iran, have been expelled from Iran and, naturally, they are highly dissatisfied, and many of them have also joined up with the insurgents.

The measures that we have drawn out for the aid of Afghanistan are set forth in the proposals that you have in front of you. I should add that we have appropriated an additional 10 million rubles to Afghanistan in hard currency for the protection of the border.

Inasmuch as Pakistan, in essence, is the principal place from which the terrorists are infiltrating into Afghanistan, it would appear to follow that the leadership of Afghanistan should send a letter of protest to Pakistan or issue a declaration, in a word, to come out with some kind of written statement. However, the Afghan leadership has not done that. To be sure, it looks very strange.

I asked Amin, what kind of actions do you consider necessary from our side? I told him what kind of aid we might be able to render. But he had no other requests, he simply responded that he had a very optimistic appraisal of the circumstances in Afghanistan, that the help you have given will stand us in good stead, and that all of the provinces are safely under the control of lawful forces. I asked him, don't you expect any problems from neighboring governments or a

domestic counter-revolution, and so forth? Amin answered firmly that no, there are no threats to the regime. In conclusion, he conveyed his greetings to the members of the Politburo, and personally to L. I. Brezhnev. And thus was my discussion today with Amin.

After a short time, approximately two or three hours, we received news from our comrades that chaos had erupted in Herat. One regiment, as I already indicated an artillery one, fired on its own troops, and part of the second regiment went over to the insurgents. Consequently, only a portion of the 17th division, which is guarding Herat, remains loyal to the Government. Our comrades also tell us that tomorrow and the next day, new masses of insurgents, trained on the territory of Pakistan and Iran, may invade.

About a half hour later, we again received news from our comrades that Comrade Taraki had summoned the chief military advisor Comrade Gorelov and chargé d'affaires Alekseev. And what did they discuss with Taraki? First of all, he appealed to the Soviet Union for help in the form of military equipment, ammunition and rations, that which is envisioned in the documents which we have presented for consideration by the Politburo. As far as military equipment is concerned, Taraki said, almost in passing, that perhaps ground and air support would be required. This must be understood to mean that the deployment of our forces is required, both land and air forces.

In my opinion, we must commence from a fundamental proposition in considering the question of aid to Afghanistan, namely: under no circumstances may we lose Afghanistan. For 60 years now we have lived with Afghanistan in peace and friendship. And if we lose Afghanistan now and it turns against the Soviet Union, this will result in a sharp setback to our foreign policy. Of course, it is one thing to apply extreme measures if the Afghan army is on the side of the people, and an entirely different matter, if the army does not support the lawful government. And finally, third, if the army is against the government and, as a result, against our forces, then the matter will be complicated indeed. As we understand from Comrades Gorelov and Alekseev, the mood among the leadership, including Comrade Taraki, is not particularly out of sorts.

USTINOV. Comrade Gorelov, our chief military advisor, was with Taraki along with Comrade Alekseev, our chargé d'affaires in Afghanistan. I just spoke with Comrade Gorelov by telephone, and he said that the leadership of Afghanistan is worried about the state of affairs, and that matters in the province of Herat are particularly bad, as well as in the province of Pakti. The bad part is that the division which is supposed to be guarding Herat has turned out to be ineffective, and the commander of the division at this time is located on the airstrip, more to the point, he is seeking shelter there and, obviously, he is no longer commanding the actions of any regiments remaining loyal to the government. Bearing in mind that tomorrow (March 18), operative groups will be deployed into Herat.

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We advised Comrade Taraki to redeploy several forces into the regions where the insurgency has erupted. He, in turn, responded that this would be difficult inasmuch as there is unrest in other places as well. In short, they are expecting a major response from the U.S.S.R., in the form of both land and air forces.

ANDROPOV. They are hoping that we will attack the insurgents.

KIRILENKO. The question arises, whom will our troops be fighting against if we send them there. Against the insurgents? Or have they been joined by a large number of religious fundamentalists, that is, Muslims, and among them large numbers of ordinary people? Thus, we will be required to wage war in significant part against the people.

KOSYGIN. What is the army like in Afghanistan - how many divisions are there?

USTINOV. The army in Afghanistan has 10 divisions, including more than 100 thousand soldiers.

ANDROPOV. Our operational data tells us that about three thousand insurgents are being directed into Afghanistan from Pakistan. These are, in main part, religious fanatics from among the people.

KIRILENKO. If there is a popular uprising, then, besides those persons coming from Pakistan and Iran, who for the most part consist of terrorists and insurgents, the masses against whom ^{our} troops are engaged will include ordinary people of Afghanistan. Although it is true that they are religious worshipers, followers of Islam.

GROMYKO. The relationship between the supporters of the government and the insurgents is still very unclear. Events in Herat, judging from everything, have unfolded violently, because over a thousand people have been killed. But even there the situation is unclear enough.

ANDROPOV. Of course, the insurgents coming into the territory of Afghanistan will be joined first of all by those who would rebel and solicit the Afghan people to their own side.

KOSYGIN. In my view, the draft decision under consideration must be substantially amended. First of all, we must not delay the supply of armaments until April but must give everything now, without delay, in March. That is the first thing.

Secondly, we must somehow give moral support to the leadership of Afghanistan, and I would suggest implementation of the following measures: inform Taraki that we are raising the price of gas from 15 to 25 rubles per thousand cubic meters. That will make it possible to cover the expenses that they will incur in connection with the acquisition of arms and other materials

by a rise in prices. It is necessary in my opinion to give Afghanistan these arms free of charge and not require any 25 percent assessment.

ALL. Agreed.

KOSYGIN. And third, we are slated to supply 75 thousand tons of bread. I think we should reexamine that and supply Afghanistan with 100 thousand tons. These are the measures that it seems to me ought to be added to the draft of the decision and, in that fashion, we would lend moral assistance to the Afghan leadership. We must put up a struggle for Afghanistan; after all, we have lived side by side for 60 years. Of course, while there is a difficult struggle with the Iranians, Pakistanis and Chinese, nevertheless Iran will lend assistance to Afghanistan - it has the means to do so, all the more so since they are like-minded religiously. This must be borne in mind. Pakistan will also take such measures. There is nothing you can say about the Chinese. Consequently, I believe that we must adopt the fraternal decision to seriously assist the Afghan leadership. I have already spoken on the subject of payments, to talk more of that is unnecessary, and moreover, as here written, in freely convertible hard currency. Whatever freely convertible currency they may have, we are not going to receive any of it in any event.

USTINOV. Everything that is described in the draft declaration in connection with the supply of arms to Afghanistan, all of that is being done, shipments and deliveries of this equipment are already taking place. Unfortunately, I do not know whether we will be able to supply everything before April; that is going to be very difficult. I would request that we adopt the decision in connection with the supply of arms that is set forth here. As far as concerns payment for the arms, I would delete that.

KOSYGIN. All the same, we must dispatch everything, literally beginning tomorrow.

USTINOV. Fine, we are doing that, and we will ensure that all of these things are shipped by tomorrow.

KIRILENKO. Let us authorize Comrade Kosygin to implement those amendments to the draft of the decision of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. which we have before us, as relates to those points which we have discussed. Tomorrow he will present the document to us in final draft.

KOSYGIN. Absolutely. I will come here tomorrow morning and do everything.

KIRILENKO. We must undertake measures to ensure that all of the military supplies are sent in March.

KOSYGIN. And if, as Comrade Ustinov has pointed out, it is impossible to ship everything completely in March, then perhaps, a second portion can remain for April, but let that portion be insignificantly small.

I also want to raise another question: whatever you may say, Amin and Taraki alike are concealing from us the true state of affairs. We still don't know exactly what is happening in Afghanistan. What is their assessment of the situation? After all, they continue to paint the picture in a cheerful light, whereas in reality, we can see what is happening there. They are good people, that is apparent, but all the same they are concealing a great deal from us. What is the reason for this, that is hard to say. In my view we must decide this question with the ambassador, Andrey Andreevich, as soon as possible. Although as a practical matter he is not authorized, and he doesn't do what is required of him.

In addition, I would consider it necessary to send an additional number of qualified military specialists, and let them find out what is happening with the army.

Moreover, I would consider it necessary to adopt a more comprehensive political decision. Perhaps the draft of such a political decision can be prepared by our comrades in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defense, or the Foreign Department of the KGB. It is clear that Iran, China and Pakistan will come out against Afghanistan, and do everything within their power and means to contravene the lawful government and discredit its actions. It is exactly here that our political support of Taraki and his government is necessary. And of course, Carter will also come out against the leadership of Afghanistan.

With whom will it be necessary for us to fight in the event it becomes necessary to deploy troops - who will it be that rises against the present leadership of Afghanistan? They are all Mohammedans, people of one belief, and their faith is sufficiently strong that they can close ranks on that basis. It seems to me that we must speak to Taraki and Amin about the mistakes that they have permitted to occur during this time. In reality, even up to the present time, they have continued to execute people that do not agree with them; they have killed almost all of the leaders - not only the top leaders, but also those of the middle ranks - of the "Parcham" party. Of course, it will now be difficult to formulate a political document - to do that our comrades will be required to work, as I have already said, for a period of three days.

USTINOV. That is all correct, what Aleksey Nikolaevich says, this must be done as soon as possible.

GROMYKO. The documents must be prepared immediately.

KOSYGIN. I don't think that we should pressure the Afghan government to request a deployment of forces from us. Let them create their own special units, which could be redeployed to the more difficult regions in order to quell the insurgents.

USTINOV. In my view we must not, under any circumstances, mix our forces with the Afghan forces, in the event that we send them there.

KOSYGIN. We must prepare our own military forces, work up a statement relating to them, and send it by special messenger.

USTINOV. We have prepared two options in respect to military action. Under the first one, we would, in the course of a single day, deploy into Afghanistan the 105th airborne division and redeploy the infantry-motorized regiment into Kabul; toward the border we would place the 68th motorized division; and the 5th motor artillery division would be located at the border. Under this scenario, we would be ready for the deployment of forces within three days. But we must adopt the political decision that we have been talking about here.

KIRILENKO. Comrade Ustinov has correctly stated the issue; we must come out against the insurgents. And in the political document this must be clearly and pointedly stated.

In addition to that, we must bear upon Taraki; if we are already talking about the deployment of forces, then the question must be considered thoroughly. We cannot deploy troops without a request from the government of Afghanistan, and we must convey this to Comrade Taraki. And this must be directly stated in a conference between Comrade Kosygin and Taraki. In addition to this, Taraki must be instructed to change his tactics. Executions, torture and so forth cannot be applied on a massive scale. Religious questions, the relationship with religious communities, with religion generally and with religious leaders take on special meaning for them. This is a major policy issue. And here Taraki must ensure, with all decisiveness, that no illicit measures whatsoever are undertaken by them.

The documents must be prepared no later than tomorrow. We will consult with Leonid Ilych as to how we can best accomplish this.

USTINOV. We have a second option which has also been prepared. This one deals with the deployment of two divisions into Afghanistan.

ANDROPOV. We need to adopt the draft of the decision which we have examined today, accounting for those changes and amendments which have been discussed. As far as the political decision is concerned, that also must be immediately prepared, because bands are streaming in from Pakistan.

PONOMAREV. We should send around 500 persons into Afghanistan in the capacity as advisors and specialists. These comrades must all know what to do.

ANDROPOV. Around Herat there are 20 thousand civilians who have taken part in the rebellion. As far as negotiations with Taraki are concerned, we must get on with it. But I think it is best for Comrade Kosygin to speak with Taraki.

ALL. Agreed. It is better for Comrade Kosygin to speak with him.

ANDROPOV. We must finalize the political statement, bearing in mind that we will be labeled as an aggressor, but that in spite of that, under no circumstances can we lose Afghanistan.

PONOMAREV. Unfortunately, there is much that we do not know about Afghanistan. It seems to me that, in the discussion with Taraki, all these questions must be raised, and in particular, let him explain the state of affairs with the army and in the country generally. After all, they have a 100,000-man army and with the assistance of our advisors, there is much that the army can do. Otherwise, 20 thousand insurgents are going to achieve a victory. Above all, it will be necessary to accomplish everything that is necessary with the forces of the Afghan army, and only later, if and when the necessity truly arises, to deploy our own forces.

KOSYGIN. In my view it is necessary to send arms, but only if we are convinced that they will not fall into the hands of the insurgents. If their army collapses, then it follows that those arms will be claimed by the insurgents. Then the question will arise as to how we will respond in the view of world public opinion. All this will have to be justified, that is, if we are really going to deploy our forces, then we must marshall all of the appropriate arguments and explain everything in detail. Perhaps one of our responsible comrades should travel to Afghanistan in order to understand the local conditions in greater detail. Perhaps Comrade Ustinov or Comrade Ogarkov.

USTINOV. The situation in Afghanistan is worsening. We ought to speak now, it seems to me, about political measures that we have not yet undertaken. And, on the other hand, we must fully exploit the capability of the Afghan army. It seems to me there is no point in me going to Afghanistan; I have doubts about that. Perhaps some member of the government should go.

KOSYGIN. You must go there nonetheless, Dmitri Fedorovich. The point is that we are sending into Afghanistan a large volume of armaments, and it is necessary that they remain in the hands of the revolutionary masses. We have about 550 advisors in Afghanistan, and they must be apprised of the state of affairs in the military.

USTINOV. Even if one of us goes to Afghanistan, still nobody is going to learn anything in just a couple of days.

GROMYKO. I think that negotiations with Taraki should be undertaken by A. N. Kosygin or D. F. Ustinov, and more likely, in the end, by Comrade Kosygin.

KOSYGIN. Before speaking with Taraki, it will be necessary for me to get approval from Leonid Ilych. I will speak with Leonid Ilych tomorrow and then talk to Taraki.

ANDROPOV. And the essence of our decisions here today must be communicated to Leonid Ilych in detail.

GROMYKO. We have to discuss what we will do if the situation gets worse. Today, the situation in Afghanistan for now is unclear to many of us. Only one thing is clear - we cannot surrender Afghanistan to the enemy. We have to think how to achieve this. Maybe we won't have to introduce troops.

KOSYGIN. All of us agree - we must not surrender Afghanistan. From this point, we have to work out first of all a political document, to use all political means in order to help the Afghan leadership to strengthen itself, to provide the support which we've already planned, and to leave as a last resort the use of force.

GROMYKO. I want to emphasize again the main thing, which we must consider thoroughly, and that is to come up with an answer as to how we will react in the event of a critical situation. Taraki is already speaking of alarm, whereas Amin to date has expressed an optimistic attitude. In a word, as you can see, the Afghan leadership, in my view, has incorrectly assessed the state of affairs in the army and in the country generally.

PONOMAREV. The Afghan army achieved a revolutionary coup d'état, and I would think that under skillful leadership from the government, it could hold to its own position in defense of the country.

KIRILENKO. The problem is that many of the commanders in the army have been imprisoned and executed. This has resulted in a major negative impact on the army.

GROMYKO. One of our principal tasks is to strengthen the army; that is the main link. Our entire orientation must focus on the political leadership of the country and the army. And all the same, we have to acknowledge that the Afghan leadership is concealing a great deal from us. For some reason they do not want to be open with us. This is very unfortunate.

ANDROPOV. It seems to me that we ought to inform the socialist countries of these measures.

KIRILENKO. We have spoken at length, Comrades, and our opinions are clear; let us come to a conclusion.

1. Comrade Kosygin shall be authorized to clarify the document which has been presented to us, to add to it the supply of 100 tons of bread, an increase in the price of gas from 15 to 25 rubles, and to remove the language about a percentage, and hard currency, etc.

2. Comrade Kosygin shall be authorized to communicate with Comrade Taraki, to ascertain how they evaluate the situation in Afghanistan and what is necessary from us. In this discussion with Taraki, Comrade Kosygin shall be guided by the exchange of opinion that has taken place here in the Politburo.

3. The third point that we have discussed here consists of authorizing Comrades Gromyko, Andropov, Ustinov and Ponomarev to prepare a political document dealing with an exchange of opinions regarding our policy in connection with Afghanistan.

4. We must appeal to Pakistan, through our channels in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that the Pakistani government not allow any interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan.

5. I think that we should accede to the proposal of Comrade Ustinov in connection with assistance to the Afghan army in overcoming the difficulties that it has encountered by means of the forces of our military units.

6. To send into Afghanistan our best military specialists, through our channels with the Ministry of Defense, as well as through the KGB, for a detailed explication of the circumstances prevailing in the Afghan army and in Afghanistan generally.

7. Our draft of the decision must contain a provision for the preparation of materials that expose the interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan on the part of Pakistan, Iran, the U.S.A., and China, and for publication of those materials through third countries.

8. Comrades Ponomarev and Zamyatin shall be authorized to prepare materials relating to the intervention of Pakistan, the U.S.A, Iran, China and other countries in Afghanistan and to dispatch such material to the press as it becomes available.

9. We must think carefully about how we will respond to the accusations that will be leveled against the U.S.S.R. by other countries, when we are charged with aggression and so forth.

10. The Ministry of Defense shall be permitted to deploy two divisions on the border between the U.S.S.R. and Afghanistan.

And finally, as has been suggested here, it will be necessary for us to inform the socialist countries of those measures which we have adopted.

Are there any other proposals, Comrades?

ALL. It's all been covered.

KIRILENKO. I will now attempt to make contact with Comrade Chernenko and communicate our proposals to him.

ALL. Agreed. [Recess.]

KIRILENKO. I have just spoken with Comrade Chernenko. He believes that the proposals set forth here are correct, and he will attempt to inform Leonid Ilych about them.

Let us adjourn this session for today. [Session adjourned.]

March 18

When is
finished?

KIRILENKO. Yesterday we agreed that Comrade A. N. Kosygin should communicate with Comrade Taraki. Let us listen to Comrade A. N. Kosygin.

KOSYGIN. As we agreed, yesterday I made contact with Comrade Taraki twice by telephone. He informed me that on the streets of Herat, the insurgent soldiers were fraternizing with those who support the government. The situation in that town is very complex. If, in the words of Comrade Taraki, the Soviet Union does not lend its assistance at this time, we will not hold out.

Further, Comrade Taraki said that Iran and Pakistan are supplying arms to the insurgents, and that, at the time, Afghans were returning from Iran, but it turned out that they were not Afghans but rather soldiers of the Iranian army dressed in Afghan clothing. And they stirred up agitation and insubordination. Consequently, in a number of provinces of Afghanistan, and especially in the town of Herat, events have unfolded that bring with them a most serious danger. Comrade Taraki said further that the issue could be resolved in a single day. If Herat falls, then it is considered that the matter is finished.

I then put the question to him: in Afghanistan there is a 100 thousand man army, not all of which is situated in Herat; there is only the one 17th division there. Could it really be impossible to form several divisions and deploy them to Herat in order to assist the supporters of the government? Comrade Taraki responded that several divisions were being formed, but that until they were formed, there would be no garrisons loyal to the government in Herat.

In that connection they would like to receive reinforcements in the form of tanks and armored cars for the infantry. I then asked him, will you be able to muster enough tank crews to place the tanks into action? He responded that they have no tank crews, and therefore he requested that we dispatch Tadzhiks to serve as crews for tanks and armored cars, dressed in Afghan uniforms, and send them here. I then stated again, Comrade Taraki, there is no way you

will conceal the fact that our military personnel are taking part in battle operations; this fact will be immediately uncovered, and press correspondents will broadcast to the whole world that Soviet tanks are engaged in a military conflict in Afghanistan.

I also asked Comrade Taraki what was the population of Kabul. In response he told me that the population was 1 million 200 thousand. I then asked him, would it really be impossible for you to form part of a division from the population of Kabul to assist the various provinces, to equip them and, in like fashion, to arm them? To that he responded that there was nobody to train them. I then said to him, how is it possible, given how many people were trained in the military academic academies in the Soviet Union, given how many of the old military cadres have come out on the side of the government, that there is now nobody to do the training? How then, I asked him, can we support you? Almost without realizing it, Comrade Taraki responded that almost nobody does support the government. In Kabul we have no workers, only craftsmen. And the conversation again turned to Herat, and he said that if Herat falls, then the revolution is doomed. And on the contrary, if it holds out, then survival of the revolution is assured. In his opinion, the army is reliable, and they are depending on it. However, uprisings have emerged throughout the entire country, and the army is too small to be able to pacify the insurgents everywhere. Your assistance is required, Comrade Taraki again declared.

As far as Kabul is concerned, there, it is obvious from the telegrams we received today, the situation is basically the same as in Iran: manifestos are circulating, and crowds of people are massing. Large numbers of persons are flowing into Afghanistan from Pakistan and Iran, equipped with Iranian and Chinese armaments.

KIRILENKO. In Herat the 17th division numbers 9 thousand men. Can it really be that they are all in a state of inaction or have gone over to the side of the government's opponents?

KOSYGIN. According to our data, the artillery and one infantry regiment have gone over, although not entirely, and the rest continue to support the government.

USTINOV. As far as the Tadzhiks are concerned, we don't have separate [deleted]

KOSYGIN. An anti-aircraft battalion located in Herat has also gone over to the side of the rebels.

USTINOV. Amin, when I talked to him, also requested the deployment of forces to Herat to quell the insurgents.

KOSYGIN. Comrade Taraki reports that half of the division located in Herat has gone over to the side of the rebels. The remaining portion, he thinks, also will not support the government.

USTINOV. The Afghan revolution has encountered major difficulties along its way, Amin said in his conversation with me, and its survival now depends totally on the Soviet Union.

What is the problem? Why is this happening? The problem is that the leadership of Afghanistan did not sufficiently appreciate the role of Islamic fundamentalists. It is under the banner of Islam that the soldiers are turning against the government, and an absolute majority, perhaps only with rare exceptions, are believers. There is your reason why they are asking us to help drive back the attacks of the insurgents in Herat. Amin said, albeit somewhat uncertainly, that there is support for the army. And again, like Comrade Taraki, he appealed for assistance.

KIRILENKO. It follows that they have no guarantee in respect to their own army. They are depending on only one outcome, namely, on our tanks and armored cars.

KOSYGIN. We must, obviously, in adopting such a determination in respect to assistance, seriously think through the consequences that will flow from this. The matter is really very serious.

ANDROPOV. Comrades, I have considered all these issues in depth and arrived at the conclusion that we must consider very, very seriously, the question of whose cause we will be supporting if we deploy forces into Afghanistan. It's completely clear to us that Afghanistan is not ready at this time to resolve all of the issues it faces through socialism. The economy is backward, the Islamic religion predominates, and nearly all of the rural population is illiterate. We know Lenin's teaching about a revolutionary situation. Whatever situation we are talking about in Afghanistan, it is not that type of situation. Therefore, I believe that we can suppress a revolution in Afghanistan only with the aid of our bayonets, and that is for us entirely inadmissible. We cannot take such a risk. // *

KOSYGIN. Maybe we ought to instruct our ambassador, Comrade Vinogradov, to go to Prime Minister of Iran Bazargan and inform him that interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan cannot be tolerated.

GROMYKO. I completely support Comrade Andropov's proposal to rule out such a measure as the deployment of our troops into Afghanistan. The army there is unreliable. Thus our army, when it arrives in Afghanistan, will be the aggressor. Against whom will it fight? Against the Afghan people first of all, and it will have to shoot at them. Comrade Andropov correctly noted that indeed the situation in Afghanistan is not ripe for a revolution. And all that we have done in recent years with such effort in terms of détente, arms reduction, and much more - all that would be thrown back. China, of course, would be given a nice present. All the nonaligned countries will be against us. In a word, serious consequences are to be expected from such an action. There will no longer be any question of a meeting of Leonid Ilych with Carter, and the visit of Giscard d'Estang at the end of March will be placed in question. One must ask, and what would we gain? Afghanistan with its present government, with a backward economy, *

with inconsequential weight in international affairs. On the other side, we must keep in mind that from a legal point of view too we would not be justified in sending troops. According to the UN Charter a country can appeal for assistance, and we could send troops, in case it is subject to external aggression. Afghanistan has not been subject to any aggression. This is its internal affair, a revolutionary internal conflict, a battle of one group of the population against another. Incidentally, the Afghans haven't officially addressed us on bringing in troops.

In a word, we now find ourselves in a situation where the leadership of the country, as a result of the serious mistakes it has allowed to occur, has ended up not on the high ground, not in command of the necessary support from the people.

KIRILENKO. Yesterday in Afghanistan the situation was different, and we were inclined toward the conclusion that we ought, perhaps, to deploy some number of military detachments. Today the situation is different, and the discussion here quite correctly has already taken a somewhat different course, namely, we are all adhering to the position that there is no basis whatsoever for the deployment of forces.

ANDROPOV. Yesterday, when we discussed this issue, the Afghans were not talking about the deployment of troops; today the situation there has changed. In Herat, not just one regiment has gone over to the side of the rebellion but the whole division. As we can see from yesterday's discussion with Amin, the people do not support the government of Taraki. Would our troops really help them here? In such a situation, tanks and armored cars can't save anything. I think that we should say to Taraki bluntly that we support all their actions and will render the kind of support that we agreed upon yesterday and today, but that in no case will we go forward with a deployment of troops into Afghanistan.

KOSYGIN. Maybe we should invite him here and tell him that we will increase our assistance to you, but we cannot deploy troops, since they would be fighting not against the army, which in essence has gone over to the adversary or is just sitting and waiting it out, but against the people. There would be huge minuses for us. A whole contingent of countries would quickly come out against us. And there are no pluses for us at all.

ANDROPOV. We should state directly to Comrade Taraki that we will support you with all measures and means except for the deployment of troops.

KOSYGIN. We should invite him here and tell him that we will support you with all means and measures but we will not deploy troops.

KIRILENKO. The government of Afghanistan itself has done nothing to secure the situation. And it has a 100 thousand man army at that. What has it done? What good has it accomplished? Essentially nothing. And after all, Comrades, we gave very, very good support to Afghanistan.

(X)
What about
US, PRC,
Pak., Iran?

Agrees w/
Gromyko's
view
yesterday

No discussion
of alternative
leaders?

ALL. Agreed.

KIRILENKO. We gave it everything. And what has come of it? It has come to nothing of any value. After all, it was they who executed innocent people for no reason and even spoke to us of their own justification, as though we also executed people during the time of Lenin. So you see what kind of Marxists we have found.

← outside
consumption
(cc, future)

The situation has changed since yesterday. Yesterday, as I already said, we were unanimous as to the rendering of military aid, but we carefully discussed the matter, considered various options, searched for different ways, other than the deployment of troops. I believe that we should present our point of view of Leonid Ilych, invite Comrade Taraki to Moscow and tell him about everything that we have agreed on.

Maybe it is true we should send special declarations to Khomeini and Bazargan in Iran and Pakistan?

ANDROPOV. We should invite Comrade Taraki here.

KOSYGIN. I think we should consult with Leonid Ilych and send a plane to Kabul today.

KIRILENKO. Comrade Kosygin needs to speak with Comrade Taraki. If he wants to come to Moscow and not remain in Tashkent, then perhaps Leonid Ilych will see him.

GROMYKO. I think it would be better for us to prepare a political document after the discussion with Comrade Taraki.

ANDROPOV. We have to begin publishing articles about Pakistan and its support for the insurgents.

USTINOV. I assume we will continue with the aid measures that we agreed on yesterday.

ALL. Agreed.

USTINOV. The only thing is that we must rule out the possibility of deploying troops.

KOSYGIN. In short, we are not changing anything in connection with aid to Afghanistan except the deployment of troops. They themselves will relate more responsibly to the determination of questions concerning the government's management of affairs. And if we do

everything for them, defend their revolution, then what remains for them? Nothing. We have 24 advisors in Herat. We should pull them out.

ZAMYATIN. As far as the supply of propaganda is concerned in connection with this undertaking, we have articles prepared about Afghanistan. We also have articles prepared about Pakistan and the assistance rendered to the Afghan insurgents by China. We must get these articles to press today.

ALL. Agreed.

CHERNENKO. Comrades, we must decide who will invite Comrade Taraki.

KIRILENKO. This should be done by Comrade A. N. Kosygin. Let him make the call and invite him to come to Moscow or Tashkent, whichever he prefers.

[With this the session of March 18 was adjourned.]

March 19
BREZHNEV. Comrades, since the beginning of the events that have unfolded in Afghanistan, I have been informed about them. I have been informed about the discussions of Comrade A. A. Gromyko with Amin, of Comrade D. F. Ustinov also with Amin, about the latest events that have taken place there in the course of yesterday, and in that connection about the discussion of Comrade A. N. Kosygin with Comrade Taraki.

I have signed documents authorizing the delivery of additional supplies of special materials, including military property and armaments, and also dealing with the issue of a number of measures having a political and organizational character, and authorizing Comrade A. N. Kosygin to communicate with Comrade Taraki, and to brief our press and other media outlets in connection with the events in Afghanistan. In a word, all of the measures that were set forth in the draft decision of the Central Committee of the CPSS submitted on Saturday, all of the measures that have been adopted in the course of Saturday and Sunday, in my view, are entirely correct.

The question was raised as to the immediate participation of our troops in the conflict that has arisen in Afghanistan. In my view the Politburo has correctly determined that the time is not right for us to become entangled in that war.

We must explain to Comrade Taraki and our other Afghan comrades, that we can help them with everything that is necessary for the conduct of all activities in the country. But the involvement of our forces in Afghanistan would harm not only us, but first of all them. Accordingly, it would appear that we ought now to hear the report of Comrades A. A. Gromyko, D. F. Ustinov, Y. V. Andropov and A. N. Kosygin, and with that conclude this phase of the

adoption of measures which were necessary to implement in connection with the conflict in Afghanistan.

GROMYKO. We must discuss today the very acute question concerning the situation in Afghanistan. We have closely followed the developing events in that country and have given instructions to our embassy personnel, advisors and so forth. We have systematically, I would say, very regularly, in the course of the day, received comprehensive information from our representatives in Afghanistan.

What do we have as of today? In an array of provinces in Afghanistan, first and foremost in Herat, there has been an uprising of insurgents. Where did they come from? They were dispatched from the territory of Iran and Pakistan. These are all elements hostile to the government of Comrade Taraki. In order to conceal ⁱⁿ their deployment into Afghanistan, they were dressed in Afghan uniforms, and in numbers amounting to several tens of thousands they appeared in Herat, instigated this insurrection, and we unexpectedly began to receive reports about the events in Herat. There is one government division located there, which was supposed to maintain public order. But as a result of the fact that part of the government forces went over to the side of the insurgents, shooting broke out and there were many casualties; more than a thousand were killed.

I discussed all aspects of the situation in Afghanistan with the Deputy Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs Amin. But I must say candidly that his assessment was somehow rather relaxed. We were under the impression conveyed by his assessment, and then suddenly the mood of Amin changed for the worse, and he himself began to speak about the fact that the entire division located in Herat had gone over to the side of the insurgents. At the height of the events in Herat, Dmitri Fedorovich spoke with Amin, who bluntly expressed the view that the U.S.S.R. should deploy troops in Herat. It begins to look like a detective novel, how superciliously the Afghan leadership posits such serious questions.

After that, Comrade A. N. Kosygin spoke with Comrade Taraki, who told him that the situation in Afghanistan was bad, and he also requested a deployment of troops to Herat. The border of Afghanistan, both with Iran and Pakistan, is open. Our advisors promptly articulated a series of proposals, but they didn't listen to them.

Today we have received reports indicating that the situation in Herat is not all that bad: two regiments remain loyal to the government after all. Where lies the truth, I can't say, but these are the reports we have gotten.

We may assume with full justification that all these events, not only in Afghanistan but in the neighboring governments, including those in China, are being directed by the hand of the U.S.A. China, Pakistan, and Iran are playing a role here that is not at all far behind.

why?
pub. con-
simplification
see p. 14.

There are several heartening notes in the fact that in Kabul, yesterday, a massive demonstration took place in support of the government. But all the same the government position in Afghanistan is not in control as it ought to be.

Naturally, we cannot avoid the need to confront the questions relating to the situation in Afghanistan. But I believe that we will have to adhere to our line, our policy, and follow our course with a view to all of the peculiarities. If, for example, we take upon ourselves the risk of deploying troops, we will obtain not as many pluses as minuses. To this time we still don't know how the Afghan army will behave. And if it does not support our measures or remains neutral, then it will turn out that we have used our forces to occupy Afghanistan. In doing this we will create for ourselves an incredibly difficult complication in our foreign policy. We would be largely throwing away everything we achieved with such difficulty, particularly détente, the SALT-II negotiations would fly by the wayside, there would be no signing of an agreement (and however you look at it that is for us the greatest political priority), there would be no meeting of Leonid Ilych with Carter, and it is very doubtful that Giscard d'Estang would come to visit us, and our relations with Western countries, particularly the FRG, would be spoiled.

|| And so, despite the difficult situation in Afghanistan, we cannot embark on such an act as the deployment of troops.

Parenthetically, it is entirely incomprehensible to us why Afghanistan has been so indulgent with Pakistan, which is obviously engaged in intervention against Afghanistan. Yesterday the government of Afghanistan published a proclamation, but it was not sufficiently strident.

We are rendering major aid to Afghanistan. How the government of Afghanistan will conduct itself henceforth is difficult to predict; fixing the situation there is also problematic. However, there is no basis whatsoever to conclude that all is lost there. I believe that if the Afghan government can find in itself the strength to coordinate its actions properly, then matters might turn out there for the best.

KOSYGIN. I had the opportunity to speak with Comrade Taraki yesterday on two occasions. He says that everything there is falling apart and that we must send troops, that the situation is the same in all of Afghanistan as it is in Herat. He says that if we lose Herat, then everything will fall. Pakistan, in his opinion, is sending a large number of men, dressed in Afghan uniforms. According to his data, 4,000 such persons have been dispatched. There are 500 men situated on the airfield in Herat at this time. I asked him, who in Herat is on your side? Comrade Taraki responded that in essence the entire population there has fallen under the influence of the religious fundamentalists. He said that there are 200-250 persons there who are organizing the entire thing. I asked him, are there any workers there? He said, that there are about two thousand workers. I asked him what, in your opinion, are the prospects for Herat? He said to me bluntly that Herat will fall tomorrow, but that it is holding on for the time being.

They are talking about forming new units and sending them to Herat. In the opinion of Comrade Taraki, all who have gathered from the ranks of those dissatisfied with the new regime will then unite and set out for Kabul, and that will be the end of his government. Again he requested assistance from our troops. I said that I could not answer his request at this time. I said that we were intensively studying the question, and that we would deliberate and then respond.

As you can see, the discussion with Comrade Taraki yielded no constructive results whatsoever. He spoke of the fall of Herat and requested a deployment of our troops. I asked him what was required from our side in order to combine political measures with those of a military character. Taraki then said to me, you should place Afghan insignias on your planes and tanks, and let them move on Herat from across the border. I then said that this would be direct aggression on the part of the U.S.S.R. against Afghanistan.

I asked him, can you muster soldiers and special drivers for tanks and armored cars from the ranks of the Afghans? He said that this could be done, but only a very few.

I told him of our decision to render comprehensive assistance to Afghanistan, to send an additional number of advisors and specialists.

Naturally, we must preserve Afghanistan as an allied government. In addition, it would appear that we must appeal to Pakistan with a warning that intervention against Afghanistan is intolerable. The same measure must be taken in respect to Iran. The message must be directed to Khomeini and to Bazargan. We must also come out with a similar document in respect to Iran.

It would be good if the borders with Pakistan and Iran could be closed.

It seems to me that it would make sense to take the further step of sending a good ambassador to Afghanistan. From the discussion with Comrade Taraki I learned that he doesn't even know to whom the government should turn. A great political task is necessary there, and only in that event can we save Afghanistan as an ally.

BREZHNEV. Letters to Pakistan and Iran must be sent today.

USTINOV. Amin spoke with me yesterday morning. Having consulted beforehand with Leonid Ilych, I told him about the massive aid that we are turning out and will continue to render. Amin said that the Soviet Union is our closest and principal friend. He then started to lament about the fact that Pakistan and Iran are sending large numbers of saboteurs that are being trained on the territory of Pakistan by Chinese advisors, being equipped with Chinese arms, and are then being sent across the border into Afghanistan.

There is strong opposition in Afghanistan on the part of the feudal lords.

He then turned the discussion to Herat and, just like Taraki, asked us to send tanks. I told him about the aid that we had determined to give Afghanistan in the form of a supply of armaments. He said that such aid was helpful, but what they really need is for us to send tanks.

BREZHNEV. Their army is falling apart, and we are supposed to wage the war for them.

USTINOV. We have a large number of advisors in the Afghan army, as well as interpreters. I told Amin that we can send an additional number of interpreters.

Getting to the heart of the matter, in Afghanistan there is basically no information, no ties between Kabul and Herat. There is a single small electric power station there, and consequently the insurgent elements, having deserted the government, are heading into the mountains.

The situation in Herat today is somewhat better. It is calm in the city. Technical assistance, of course, will be necessary for us to send. We will send a great deal of it. We are forming two divisions in the Turkestan military district, and one division in the Central Asian military district. We have three regiments that could arrive in Afghanistan in literally three hours. But I am saying this, of course, only to emphasize our state of readiness. Like the rest of my Comrades, I do not support the idea of deploying troops to Afghanistan. I would request permission that we conduct tactical exercises on the border with Afghanistan and to form regiments and divisions.

I must say that the Afghan leadership is poorly handling very many matters, and that working under such conditions is very difficult for our advisors.

ANDROPOV. The first question that must be decided concerns the difficulty of the situation. In addition to that the situation is increasingly unreliable. Just what exactly is going on in Afghanistan? It has to do with the leadership. The leadership does not recognize the forces which support it, and on which it could depend. Today, for example, a rather substantial demonstration took place in Kabul and Herat, but the leadership did not exploit these massive measures to the necessary extent. Educational efforts have been poorly managed not only in the army but among the population generally. They execute their political opponents. Nobody listens to the radio because transmissions are very weak. It will be necessary for us to assist them with mobile telecommunications facilities.

Amin has essentially had all of the power in his hands, but only yesterday did they ratify a new director of government security and a chief of state. This is the way to achieve some broadening of the political base among the leadership.

On our part, we have advisors there under the direction of the chief advisor for party policy Comrade Veselov. In my opinion he is not up to the task and is coping badly with the situation. It might be better if we were to send there some comrade from the Central Committee apparatus. There are many advisors there. There are advisors in KGB channels, also in large numbers.

I think that as far as the deployment of troops is concerned, it would not behoove us to make such a determination. To deploy our troops would mean to wage war against the people, to crush the people, to shoot at the people. We will look like aggressors, and we cannot permit that to occur.

PONOMAREV. We have 460 Afghan military personnel in the Soviet Union. These are all prepared officer cadres; they could be sent into Afghanistan.

OGARKOV. The Afghans have appealed to us with a request to speed up the training of 160 officers.

USTINOV. We have to speak with Comrade Taraki about getting those people sent there and using them as officer cadres.

KAPITONOV. As far as our chief advisor on party policy Comrade Veselov is concerned, he is a good man. He served as the Central Committee inspector with us, and more recently worked as the second secretary to the Bashkirskii general party committee. He is a young and energetic comrade.

USTINOV. Our party advisors are not sufficiently qualified and there are very few of them, in all, it seems to me, five men, but the work has to be done very quickly.

KAPITONOV. That's right, we really do have only five men there under the direction of Comrade Veselov. But we are right now selecting a number of additional comrades and will send them there.

BREZHNEV. I think that we should approve the measures that have been worked out in the course of these few days.

ALL. Agreed.

BREZHNEV. It follows that the appropriate comrades should be authorized to carry them out aggressively and if new questions arise in connection with Afghanistan, to submit them to the Politburo.

ALL. Agreed.

BREZHNEV. Accordingly, we are adopting the decision:

To bring Comrade Taraki here tomorrow, March 20.

Discussions will be conducted by Comrades A. N. Kosygin, A. A. Gromyko, and D. F. Ustinov, and then I will see him.

ALL. Very well.

With this the session was adjourned.

[Source: Storage Center for Contemporary Documentation (TsKhSD), Moscow; Fond 89, Perechen 25, Dokument 1, Listy 1, 12-25.]