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SOVIET AFGHANISTAN

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The future is bleak for the Afghanistan that has through the centuries proudly fought to maintain its independence and its separate ways. At a cost in human lives that probably will never be counted, and at a cost in crushing individual freedoms that cannot be measured statistically, Afghanistan might in the future achieve faster material progress than it was set to attain on its own. That will, however, be a distant future, beyond the deaths and destruction of the present resistance to Soviet control. The Soviet military occupation in late December 1979 and early January 1980 have led to policies of a new colonialism in Afghanistan--but not so new for Russians who have practiced it before in other places.

The immediate situation that led to the beginning of Soviet colonialism in Afghanistan was a choice that faced the Kremlin leadership in the autumn of 1979. It could abandon its support for a regime that under Amin was intractable and unsuccessful, cut its losses to prevent the disgrace of going down with him and the possible loss of thousands of Soviet lives if the guerrillas overwhelmed Kabul. Or it could plunge deeper into the developing Afghan quagmire. It is doubtful that pulling out was ever any more of a real option than it was for the United States in Vietnam around 1964 or 1965. Except for Iranian Azerbaijan in 1946 and Chinese Sinkiang in 1943, the Soviets had never pulled out of a country under similar circumstances. In East Europe and Mongolia they had instead tightened up controls. The whole activist history of Soviet involvements abroad argued against quitting, against letting a Communist position once

seized be relinquished, letting the wheel of history turn back. There was an ideological and bureaucratic momentum for going in deeper. But momentum needs rationalizations. The Soviet leadership had a number of reasons for taking the decision to send the Red Army into Afghanistan. Afterward, while defending its action to the world, it explained some of them in a repetitious effort to justify itself. The explanations were separate from the tortured accounts of how events were supposed to have unfolded in the invasion period. The explanations were also probably separate from or only part of the actual thinking in the Soviet politburo. No inside, adequately informed account of that thinking had become available to the outside world well over a year after the invasion. The lack of any reliable version of the Soviet decision-making process on such older occasions as the Hungarian or Czechoslovak actions, or the involvements in Angola or Ethiopia, discourages hope that the Kremlin will eventually yield its secrets on the Afghanistan decision. Nonetheless, from analysis of Soviet words and actions, not only in the immediate period of that decision but also in a broader framework that encompasses more general Soviet world concerns, an attempt can be made to assess the factors in politburo minds.

The dominant theme in Soviet explanations became the need to defend the security interests of the Soviet Union. This is a credible reason for incurring the costs of the invasion. The first rule of Communist power in Russia has always been protecting that power by whatever means are necessary. Soviet military literature talks of the need in earlier years to eliminate weak

points in the nation's defenses by, for instance, taking over the Baltic states in 1940. The Kremlin had always tried to avoid or eliminate instability or weakness on Soviet borders, almost seeming to prefer the predictability of a bordering Western ally like Turkey after World War II to the uncertainty of chaotic states like some in Eastern Europe before that war. As the Soviet Union grew stronger in the 1960s and '70s, any uncertainty on its borders that caused military leaders concern over security requirements became less tolerable. There is more than a touch of paranoia in the shrill Soviet insistence after the invasion that the motherland was endangered by the resistance of ill-armed Afghan villagers to the imposition of Marxist control from Kabul or by men walking across the Durand Line carrying small arms acquired in Pakistan. But, because of their own conviction that they are engaged in a deadly struggle between Communism and capitalism, Soviet leaders have always tended to overreact to such things.

The first authoritative Soviet account of the situation after the invasion, which was also the first official acknowledgment that the Red Army was in Afghanistan, set the theme. Under the pseudonym of Alexei Petrov, which is signed to authoritative articles, Pravda conceded on December 31, 1979, that there was local resistance within Afghanistan. This, in Communist terminology, was "by internal reaction, by the forces that are losing power and privileges." But Petrov shifted the focus to what he said was an attempt of imperialism to take advantage of this. The fall of the shah had created cracks "in the notorious

'strategic arc' that Americans have been building for decades close to the southern borders of the Soviet Union," Petrov said in a harking back to the Dulles era. "In order to mend these cracks," the United States sought to bring Afghanistan under its control, but "our country made no secret that it will not allow Afghanistan's being turned into a bridgehead for preparation of imperialist aggression against the Soviet Union." Three days later Pravda elaborated that, "having lost their bases in Iran, the Pentagon and the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency were counting on stealthily approaching our territory more closely through Afghanistan."

Brezhnev's personal authority was given to this line in what was ostensibly an interview with him published two weeks later by Pravda. He said there had been a "real threat that Afghanistan would lose its independence and be turned into an imperialist military bridgehead on our southern border." Reporting six months after the invasion to the Soviet Communist Party's central committee, he claimed that plans "to create a threat to our country from the south have failed." Brezhnev added, "We had no choice but to send troops." The central committee naturally announced that it "fully approves the measures taken" to repulse the creation of "a pro-imperialist bridgehead of military aggression on the southern borders of the U.S.S.R." With variations, these phrases were repeated endlessly in Soviet media and by such leaders as Defense Minister Ustinov and Foreign Minister Gromyko. One variation was that, "as long as an unstable situation exists near the U.S.S.R.'s southern borders," pressures

could be brought to bear on them, and without the Soviet move "a state hostile to the Soviet Union would have existed" in Afghanistan.

The shrillness of this propaganda line about possible Western aggression from Afghanistan against the Soviet Union increased as Western and Third World revulsion to the invasion became more obvious. The line can, therefore, be seen as an attempt to turn the condemnation of Soviet aggression around with a claim that the Red Army was only acting to prevent aggression by others. This had little impact in the outside world, which found the unsubstantiated contention to be unbelievable. But as an indication of Soviet thinking the line remains significant. It overstates a real Soviet worry that dangers would be created by the replacement of a neutral if not friendly state on an ethnically and religiously sensitive part of the border by an antagonistic if not hostile state. The fact that the Soviet Union had itself undermined Afghan neutrality was irrelevant history. What concerned the aging, conservative Soviet leadership was a detrimental change. Kremlin planning had long accepted the existence of other antagonistic, even hostile regimes on the border, from Turkey to China, and had adjusted to the problems perceived to have been created by them. Adjusting to a hostile China in the 1960s had been difficult and, in terms of military movements, expensive. The Soviet leadership did not want to have to adjust again.

What was meant by "imperialist aggression" as a danger from a post-Communist Afghanistan? Soviet spokesmen never explained.

But they seemed to have in mind more than just a traditional military invasion--which would have been totally illogical in that rugged part of the world remote from any potentially important enemy's logistical base. Occasional, terse Soviet references to religious and ethnic problems in the Central Asian republics and a handful of reports from the region about continued hostility to Russian colonial rule--for instance, a 1978 Tajik riot against Russians in Dushanbe--suggest a kind of danger that made the Kremlin more apprehensive about the Afghan border than any remote possibility of armies' attacking across it. A factor in the decision to keep Afghanistan from falling under the control of militantly anti-Communist Islamic leaders with ethnic and linguistic ties to Uzbeks, Tajiks, and other groups within the Soviet Union was, therefore, the feared vulnerability of the border republics to infection from outside. The decision to invade Czechoslovakia had been strongly urged by the Communist Party boss for the bordering Soviet Ukraine, Pyotr E. Shelest, to quash reforms and concessions to ethnic minorities that threatened to cause unrest in his fiefdom by inspiring demands for similar reforms and concessions. It is not known whether the party bosses in Soviet Central Asia, none of whom was a full politburo member with the power that Shelest had, tried to bring such pressure on Moscow.

But that would not have been necessary. Russian sensitivity about the control of what are thought of as Moslem peoples was strong enough to keep the cross-border infection problem prominent in any considerations. Despite more than half a century of atheistic propaganda, Islam remained strong. Even party officials

had their sons religiously circumcised, paid brideprice money and were married by Islamic tradition, and had religious funerals. Moslem societies existed clandestinely. The Shi'ite Moslem upsurge in Iran associated with the fall of the shah had already caused great concern across the border in Turkmenistan, where a religious revival appeared to be developing, and Soviet leaders did not want to risk any further trouble from a successful upsurge in Afghanistan. The KGB chairman for Soviet Azerbaijan, Major General Ziya M. Yusif-Zade, warned of the problem while typically trying to blame the United States. "In view of the situation in Iran and Afghanistan, the U.S. special services are trying to exploit the Islamic religion--especially in areas where the Moslem population lives--as one factor influencing the political situation in our country," he said. Louis Dupree reported meeting two Uzbeks who indicated that they had entered Afghanistan from the Soviet Union to join the fight there against Communism. The preaching by Afghan guerrillas of jihad, a Moslem religious struggle that does not necessarily have the more common definition of "holy war," was bound to be heard across the Amu Darya. The basmachi fight had been well known and actively supported in Afghanistan, and it had provided folk heroes for Afghan Uzbeks and Tajiks. Despite Soviet efforts to isolate and insulate Central Asian peoples from outside information, the 1920 situation could hardly be expected not to recur in reverse. In 1980, a deputy premier of Soviet Kirgizia was prematurely retired after noting to foreigners the proximity of Afghanistan and pointedly recalling that the Soviet Union had helped fight a locust plague there "that could have spread to us."

Two other factors in the invasion decision might be distinguished as also being essentially Soviet internal reasons. One is ideological. Ideology can in the Soviet Union be both a rationalization of reality and a force to shape events.. Soviet media never made a significant effort to portray the Afghanistan action as being ideologically motivated, as protecting the advance of Communism. The official formulations of Afghanistan's being socialist oriented, rather than being routinely listed as a member of the socialist community, might have made this seem unnecessary. Yet the point was made in Moscow that ideological considerations were involved. "...Socialist internationalism obliged us to help the Afghan people defend the April revolution's gains," according to Viktor V. Grishin, a politburo member and the Moscow city party boss. Brezhnev's "interview" implied an ideological commitment by saying that failure to have acted "would have meant leaving Afghanistan a prey to imperialism, allowing the aggressive forces to repeat in that country what they had succeeded in doing, for instance, in Chile where the people's freedom was drowned in blood." This reference to the military coup d'etat that ousted the leftist and pro-Soviet Allende regime in 1973 was made much tougher in an April 15, 1980, speech that said the Soviet Union would not "permit the transformation of Afghanistan into a new Chile." The speech was made by the Soviet ambassador to Paris, Stepan V. Chervonenko. As ambassador in Prague in 1968, he had joined with hard-liners like Yepishev and Shelest to urge the crushing of Czechoslovak liberalism. Curiously, though, the available evidence suggests

that the man usually considered to be the guardian of Soviet ideological purity, Mikhail A. Suslov, was a moderate on how to handle the Czechoslovak problem, as before it the Hungarian uprising. While dedicated to the long-term advance of Communism, he seemed then to have been cautious about it, and he might also have been in 1979.

The other internal factor was the influence of the Soviet armed forces in the Kremlin policy-making process. There is debate among Western specialists on Soviet affairs about how strong this influence is. But Brezhnev's background as a World War II army commissar and later as a party supervisor of the army and of military production, his close personal association with men like Yepishev and Ustinov, and other factors insure that military viewpoints are influential. Without any evidence, it can be assumed that Soviet soldiers were both somewhat apprehensive about getting further involved in Afghanistan and reluctant to have to admit at least a partial failure there by withdrawing the advisers, commanders, and technicians already deeply involved. Perhaps the latter consideration was stronger. Soviet military writings suggest another consideration without directly linking it to Afghanistan. A 1972 Soviet military textbook says that in the West "particular importance is attached to such wars [as Vietnam] since they serve as unique [opportunities] for testing new models of combat equipment, for checking and improving upon the structure and organization of the armed forces, and, finally, for providing military personnel of NATO countries with combat experience.... This reserve of "[American] combat-

experienced personnel [from Vietnam] will endure for at least a decade." Similar references indicate a positive jealousy in the idle Soviet army over the American war. Afghanistan offered professional Soviet soldiers a chance to acquire some experience. Testing the new MI-24 helicopter gunship was the first obvious opportunity by April 1979 but soon others developed--many others.

An external factor is related to ideological considerations. It is the need to be seen as supporting Communist and pro-Soviet leftist governments in order to hold the loyalty and support of other such governments. Although the Kremlin relationship with East European countries would not be directly affected by the collapse of a Soviet-backed regime in Asia, the implications of Soviet weakness were not something that the conservative Soviet leadership was prepared to risk. And the more tenuous relationship with distant leftist regimes, such as Mozambique's, as well as relations with pragmatic or rightist but nonetheless cooperative regimes such as Libya's, were at least partially dependent on the maintenance of a Soviet reputation for providing needed support. The prestige element in this was probably more important in Soviet eyes than in the opinions of foreign countries, but that did not reduce it as a factor in Soviet thinking about the Afghanistan problem. The staunchness of Soviet support for the world Communist revolution was being tested, and the politburo was not going to be found wanting. Its members' very long lifetimes of repeating Marxist slogans were against it. So was the memory of Khrushchev's being criticized for failing adequately to support Cuba in the 1962 missile crisis, a memory that argued against exposing any similar future vulnerability.

More talked about in the West after the invasion was another external factor. That was the historic Russian drive to control warm water ports and its contemporary significance. The importance of the area between the Soviet Union and Indian Ocean had been accentuated by the existence there of the world's most productive oil fields. The 19th-century history of tsarist expansion into the Transcaucasian and Central Asian regions, and the grasping at Iran after World War II, made it easy to understand a motivation of moving into Afghanistan as a stepping-stone toward other objectives. Brezhnev was quick to deny it.

...Absolutely false are the allegations that the Soviet Union has some expansionist plans in respect of Pakistan, Iran or other countries of that area. The policy and psychology of colonialists are alien to us. We are not coveting the lands or wealth of others. It is the colonialists who are attracted by the smell of oil.

Yet the fact remained that the move into Afghanistan gave the Soviet air force a base 200 miles closer to the Straits of Hormuz, the entrance to the Persian Gulf through which sailed almost a third of U.S. oil supplies, two-thirds of Europe's, and three-quarters of Japan's. It put the Red Army at the Khyber Pass. This raised a point much discussed in the West: Was the move into Afghanistan primarily a defensive one to protect the Central Asian border and the Communist regime in Kabul, or was it an offensive one to advance the Soviet strategic position in the Middle East and South Asia? The slowness of the Soviet move, not surging across the Amu Darya as soon as the 1978 treaty provided a justification but waiting until Amin's regime was falling apart, argues strongly for a defensive

move. After examining the subject, the British House of Commons foreign affairs committee said it "heard no evidence that the invasion of Afghanistan was part of a Soviet grand strategy...." But it also noted "the opportunistic trend of Soviet tactics...." Before that committee and U.S. congressional committees, various specialists argued both the defensive and offensive cases. The arguments, especially when made by those with little or no knowledge of the Afghan situation, sometimes sounded more based on personal attitudes toward Soviet Communism than on the case at hand. Thus, a retired American diplomatic expert on the Soviet Union, George F. Kennan, said that "in the immediate circumstances their [the Soviet] objective was primarily defensive," while Richard E. Pipes, a historian and later a Reagan administration adviser on Soviet affairs, said the invasion was "clearly not designed as an end in itself...I see their entire design as offensive and not defensive." Interesting in this context, although somewhat warped in its comparison to the Afghan situation, was a remark to an American by an unidentified "Russian arms-control official": "If Mexico, on your southern border, were suddenly in danger of being taken over by Communist infiltrators from Cuba, wouldn't you react? Of course you would, and we would understand."

Other reasons for the Soviet leadership's feeling that it should send troops into Afghanistan can be adduced. These include such relatively minor ones as insuring against disruption the flow of Afghan natural gas on which Soviet Central Asia had come to depend. Disruption of gas supplies from Iran

because of the turmoil there had recently caused hardship in the Soviet Caucasus, so the problem was fresh in some Soviet officials' minds. But, beyond such positive incentives for action, there were important negative considerations. They were the costs that might be incurred by using Soviet troops--not proxies--outside the old established Soviet bloc. What would be the effect on relations with the United States? With other Western countries? With the third world, including Afghanistan's Moslem neighbors?

The possibility of a serious effect on U.S. relations was heavily discounted for two types of reasons. One, largely unstated in Soviet public discussion but probably the dominant one, was the record of U.S. reactions to previous Soviet uses of military power abroad. American anger over the invasion of Czechoslovakia had not lasted too long, and Washington was then prepared to resume business as usual. The Angolan and Ethiopian actions had shown that in its post-Vietnam mood the United States was reluctant to get involved abroad. Nor was it willing to exert itself very strenuously to reinvigorate its ability to project conventional military power into the third world. And the Carter administration had imposed upon itself limits that protected Moscow against the kinds of retaliation it had most reason to dislike, a halt to arms control negotiations that might mean pitting superior U.S. technology and economic strength against the Soviet Union in an uncontrolled arms race, and restrictions on grain sales to help bureaucratically and ideologically hobbled Soviet agriculture.

The other type of reasons was that, within those American self-limitations, relations with Washington were already poor, did not seem likely to be able to sink much lower in practical working terms regardless of action in Afghanistan, and were unlikely to improve soon even without such action. In its attempt to blame the United States for the worsened relations that came from a much sharper U.S. reaction than foreseen, Soviet media later argued that the Carter administration had set itself on a course of abandoning detente and increasing international tensions as early as the summer of 1977. They cited the decisions then to spend more on the U.S. armed forces, rather than less as Carter had promised in his 1976 election campaign, and to prepare for armed protection of Western interests in such vital areas as the Persian Gulf, which led after much delay and the jolt of the Soviet action in Afghanistan to the creation on paper of a U.S. "rapid deployment force." Soviet media also cited the American abandonment of the October 1, 1977, declaration on the two powers' working jointly for an Arab-Israeli settlement after Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's November 1977 visit to Jerusalem and the resulting Camp David agreement that shut Moscow out of Middle East peace efforts.

But these were largely retrospective accusations. The Soviets had been irritated by these and other things, including the application of Carter's human rights campaign to their suppression of dissidents. The point at which Soviet leaders and media had at the time begun to accuse the West of abandoning detente, however, was the May 31, 1978, adoption by NATO of a

15-year plan to increase defense spending by 3 percent a year in real terms in order to counter Soviet military improvements. A policy statement published simultaneously by all major Moscow newspapers on June 17, 1978, reacted to that and to the tougher parts of a balanced speech by Carter at Annapolis June 7, 1978, on Soviet-American relations. The statement accused the United States of taking a course "dangerous to the cause of peace." Brezhnev's personal spokesman later called the NATO decision "an aggressive act," and Gromyko said the United States seemed to be returning to, "if not a cold war, then something similar." From then on relations went downhill, past the January 1, 1979, establishment of normal U.S. relations with the Soviet Union's bete noire, China, with only a temporary upturn for the June 18, 1979, signing by Carter and Brezhnev of the SALT II treaty. A NATO decision to deploy in Western Europe 108 Pershing missile launchers and 464 ground-launched cruise missiles, both medium-range weapons capable of delivering nuclear warheads to Soviet territory as a counter to Soviet SS-20 missiles and Backfire bombers, was publicly argued by the Soviet Union to be a major step away from detente and toward worse relations. Not formally adopted until December 12, 1979, well after Soviet preparations for the invasion of Afghanistan were under way, this decision had been assumed earlier and attacked vehemently by Soviet media and leaders' speeches for several months. It had, therefore, already been taken into Kremlin account in judging what new Western reactions an invasion might produce. In general, then, Soviet leaders seemed to feel that relations were already sour enough, and the

West determined enough to try to begin matching the long Soviet military buildup, that there was little more to lose by any Western alarm at an Afghanistan takeover. Unlike the situation in August 1968, when the beginning of SALT negotiations was to have been announced the day after the Czechoslovak invasion and a world Communist conference was supposed to be held in November, nothing significant was pending in December 1979. The U.S. Senate was showing little sign of wanting to ratify the SALT II treaty. East-West relations were at an impasse. The Soviet politburo was willing to accept a setback in 1968 for the sake of what it had decided was a pre-emptive need to quash Czechoslovak deviation from the Leninist model, delaying SALT talks for what proved to be 15 months and the world conference seven months. No such price was visible this time.

Soviet relations with third-world countries were not so obviously troubled and therefore not already beyond seriously damaging by invading Afghanistan. Iran was absorbed in its internal affairs and its confrontation with the United States over the hostages. Pakistan was being accused of harboring guerrillas, and China and Egypt of helping them along with the United States. Cuba was the titular head of the nonaligned movement, an asset in avoiding any criticism in the name of the movement itself. Soviet and Cuban actions in Angola and Ethiopia had drawn little fire from the third world, and events in Aden had passed almost unnoticed. The Soviet calculation on Afghanistan, apparently, was that it too would pass. Anyway, in its new mood of exercising its military might abroad, the Soviet

leadership seemed confident that any loss of good will among weak third-world countries would be more than offset by respect for its power and willingness to use it. A number of third-world countries had been awed into timid silence by unauthorized overflights of them by the Soviet military airlift to Ethiopia in December 1977 and January 1978. The Kremlin was accustomed to letting force speak for it in the third world.

All these considerations had presumably been getting increasing thought in the Soviet Communist Party central committee's secretariat, in the foreign and defense ministries, in the KGB and the interior ministry during the autumn of 1979. There are conflicting reports whether the leadership went outside a small, tight group for advice, however. Reports credited by most Western officials say that the politburo did not repeat its practice before the Czechoslovakian invasion of circularizing Soviet specialists on the United States to get predictions of what the U.S. reaction would be. This would indicate an assumption that the worsening relations with Washington had caused the leadership not to worry about any further damage in that direction. If so, then this was a serious omission. The Soviet Union was in fact greatly surprised by the strength of the Carter administration's reaction--as were some Americans and West Europeans. Contrary reports said that some Soviet "Americanologists" were consulted in advance and as a result were in disgrace afterward for having failed to predict accurately. If any comprehensive effort was made to calculate reactions inside Afghanistan or in the third world, there is no evidence of it. A visitor a few

months later to the supposedly main repository of expertise on Afghanistan and a number of other third-world and Middle Eastern countries, the Soviet Academy of Science's Institute of Oriental Studies, found its Afghan specialists to be mainly historians and linguistics experts with little current knowledge of the country. A senior U.S. official involved in relations with Moscow observed later that Brezhnev had a conversational habit of gesturing as if to flick away some imaginary nuisance. The available evidence suggested to the official that Brezhnev and other key Soviet officials were so concerned with security and ideological interests in what they considered to be their backyard that they did not want to be bothered with taking into account foreign reactions. They simply flicked them away impatiently.

The key officials in this kind of matter probably numbered six. This was an inner group of the 14-man politburo that was believed usually to handle foreign and security questions, including military ones. Its members were Brezhnev, whose titles included Supreme Commander in Chief of the Soviet armed forces, KGB chairman Yuri V. Andropov, Gromyko, Kosygin, Suslov, and Ustinov. Ponomarev might also have participated because one of the Communist parties that he supervised was involved, but Kosygin might not have, because he had been ill and absent from public view since October 17. The central committee met November 27. In theory, it makes important decisions. But Brezhnev had reduced it to a sounding board for politburo decisions, and the announcement of the November 27 meeting listed only domestic economic and budgetary matters as having

been considered. The committee approved the annual development plan and governmental budget for the following year, which the Supreme Soviet then met from November 28 to 30 to enact formally. This was the usual late autumn ritual. The defense budget was ritually reduced from 17.23 billion rubles to 17.1 billion to show peaceful Soviet intentions. Brezhnev "delivered a big speech" to the central committee that, as reported by Soviet media, made no reference to foreign affairs or Afghanistan. But in retrospect it appeared that the crucial decision on Afghanistan had already been taken. The politburo's inner group apparently made it shortly before the full politburo met on the eve of the central committee session, that is, November 26.

This known way that such things are handled in the Kremlin--or in the central committee secretariat offices a few blocks away--is supported primarily by circumstantial evidence, although there was one report that seemed to confirm it while needing to be taken with caution. After an official of the Spanish Communist Party had visited Moscow to discuss the adverse repercussions among Western Communists of the Afghanistan invasion, the Spanish news agency EFE reported from Moscow that "reliable sources" there said the politburo decided November 26 "to reinforce the sending of troops" to Afghanistan. The report, which said Kosygin was in hospital and missed the meeting, added that the decision was made after the politburo listened to a report from Puzanov, who had returned from Kabul five days earlier. The point that the politburo reportedly decided at that time only to send more troops, not to take all the steps that occurred

a month later, is important and probably at least partially correct. The Red Army made preparations for the invasion of Czechoslovakia for some two months before the politburo actually decided to implement that option, and extensive preparations were made in the winter and spring of 1980-81 to invade Poland without such a decision's being taken then. The careful old men in the Kremlin believed in preparing for all possibilities while reserving final judgment as long as possible. In the Czechoslovak and Polish cases, Warsaw Pact allies were involved. That produced more secret consultations and public discussion of options within the Soviet bloc than was necessary with the singular Soviet decision on Afghanistan.

Thus, in late November 1979, the Soviet Union had decided that it could no longer tolerate the situation in Afghanistan. How was the basic decision reached? How were the various considerations weighed? The tight, self-perpetuating Soviet leadership has a record of keeping secrets. As noted earlier, little has ever been revealed about how and why the Czechoslovakian invasion decision was made, although at the time there was more diversity of opinion represented in the politburo than in 1979 after Brezhnev had eliminated a number of suspected rivals and brought in old friends and proteges. Before Khrushchev banished the "anti-party group" of rivals from the politburo (then called presidium) in 1957, he said that in politburo meetings Soviet leaders express "different points of view...If on some question unanimity cannot be reached, the problem is decided by a simple majority vote. That might not have changed much over the years, despite the fact

that by 1979 only Suslov remained from the 1957 membership and Brezhnev's personal authority was greater, but once a decision became controversial, unanimity had to be claimed. In poor health in November 1979, Brezhnev was generally regarded by outsiders as one who established a consensus more than one who tried to dictate policies to his key comrades. In his first pronouncement after the invasion, he said that "It was no simple decision for us to send Soviet military contingents to Afghanistan. But the party's central committee and the Soviet government acted in full awareness of their responsibility and took into account the entire total of circumstances." He did not elaborate. More than two months later, a Soviet broadcast in Dari to Afghanistan made a notable addition: "As Leonid Brezhnev declared, the decision to dispatch Soviet troops to Afghanistan was not an easy one for U.S.S.R. due to the great financial cost as well as the international repercussions." The question of cost was never officially elaborated, either.

Brezhnev's "no simple decision" statement can be interpreted as meaning that the leaders realized the complex implications of it. But it might also mean that there was considerable debate within the politburo, a division among key people about what to do. No evidence has become available to substantiate the latter interpretation, and some Western officials later assumed that there probably had been general agreement on the need to eliminate Amin and his disastrous policies. Brezhnev was reported to have told the French Communist Party secretary-general, Georges Marchais, as paraphrased by another member of the French party's politburo:

They had weighed the pros and cons in the Soviet leadership; they had questioned the matter at length; they had had some hesitations; the Soviet leadership knew that there would be repercussions and consequences. But they went ahead. They did so because they could not do otherwise...[American intervention from Pakistan] was such that the democratic experience in Afghanistan was threatened. The Soviet Union, heeding the call of the revolutionaries and progressives, had to intervene to prevent a collapse.

A member of the Soviet politburo for 16 years before his ouster in 1976, Dmitry S. Polyansky, as ambassador to Tokyo in early 1980 defending the invasion, said:

Decisions are made collectively, and in no case is a decision made individually. Questions are carefully discussed, but final decisions are made with unanimity. The decision on the dispatch of Soviet troops to Afghanistan was made in accordance with this practice...The debate on this question was not easy. But the final decision was adopted with unanimous approval.

But, despite this rallying around after the invasion had stirred up worldwide outrage, did all the key Soviet leaders in fact approve at the time the decision was taken? The question cannot be answered, but some elements likely to have been involved in reaching a decision can be examined. The Stalinist Soviet Union in which one man's personal decisions were decisive has been replaced, in many Western specialists' opinions, by a bureaucratic state in which politburo members represent different interest groups. By this method of analysis, which is controversial, the invasion decision can be seen as a result of convergent interests. The armed forces, represented by Ustinov as well as Brezhnev, and the KGB which is responsible for border security and controlling internal dissension in Soviet Central Asia as well as other areas, represented by Andropov, presumably would have had the security aspects of the situation uppermost in

their minds. They would have been most urgently concerned with eliminating instability on the border with the possibility of a hostile government in Afghanistan supported by foreign powers antagonistic to the Soviet Union. Suslov, and Ponomarev if he was involved in the decision, would have been worried about sustaining a Marxist regime because its fall would have been a setback to Communist efforts to win influence in other countries. There were reports later, on not a very authoritative basis and perhaps more speculations, that Gromyko's foreign ministry was reluctant because of problems that could be created in relations with truly neutral countries, but one diplomatic report said Gromyko personally favored proving to pro-Soviet neutrals that the Soviet Union honored its treaty commitments. Kosygin, a normally cautious man who reportedly tried to play a pacifying role in the heated 1968 discussions of Czechoslovakia, was probably not directly involved in the 1979 discussions but was consulted.

This kind of analysis produces a count of five or six key people in favor of action and none actually opposed. But the analysis has to be more complex. For one thing, studies of the way decisions are made in any large, bureaucratic organization suggests that none of the main players acts because of a single simple reason. There are usually cross-currents of considerations. What is for one person a dominant reason might for another be only a secondary reason that reinforces his inclination to take the same action for another, different dominant reason. What influences one interest group most strongly might be a detriment to another group. But in the politburo, competing interests

might not be too strong on an Afghanistan kind of problem compared with, for example, competition for scarce domestic investment resources. The system by which the Soviet politburo is renewed periodically--in Brezhnev's time only with old men replacing even older men, or replacing younger men who have been in effect purged--insures that its members share a community of interests. Gromyko might be no less sensitive to the need to prevent infection of Soviet Central Asia than Andropov, for instance, and Ustinov no less concerned than the foreign minister to maintain Soviet prestige in some distant leftist nation--where the Soviet ability to obtain naval or air facilities might be influenced by not abandoning the closer Marxists in Afghanistan. Another complexity is that factors which do not seem critical in taking a decision might help make it easier to take. It is difficult to argue that the Soviet Union went into Afghanistan primarily because it wanted to exercise its long-inactive armed forces. It is also difficult, although perhaps less so, to argue that the primary reason was to advance on warm water ports on the Arabian Sea, on the Persian Gulf and on the Indian subcontinent, despite the effort by some Westerners to make that argument. But it is not difficult to understand that these factors could have been seen as bonuses for a decision that had to be taken mainly for other reasons. The distinction between defensive and offensive action blurs. Add to all this the sheer momentum of the Soviet military buildup of advisers and equipment in Afghanistan, the confidence acquired from the tested ability

to project the newly expanded Soviet armed forces into the Third World, the growing economic and administrative responsibility for keeping Afghanistan going and the vested interests that this generated, and the sense of moral commitment and prestige invested in backing a PDPA regime in Kabul. Subtract the negative factors and little is lost, because of the Kremlin view of the U.S. lack of international vitality and unwillingness to conform to policies that the Soviet Union was advocating. Then the decision becomes understandable. It also comes to seem safe for those who made it. They included men who had used as one basis for toppling Khrushchev the charge of "adventurism" for sending missiles into Cuba in 1962 without adequate calculation of the risks. These were calculating men.

In the early months of 1980 under Babrak Karmal's leadership, there were peculiar signs that even the Soviets were uncertain about dealing with him and might have been thinking of replacing him. In placing Karmal in power, Kremlin leaders presumably thought he was capable of rallying some support on the basis of his Parchami ties and his background as a relatively moderate Communist. The overwhelming popular rejection of him as a stooge of the Russians, shown for the first time in full force by the February 21-22 riots in Kabul, apparently caused doubts in Moscow about keeping him. And Karmal seemed to have severe self-doubts. He looked shaky on his few public appearances, held official meetings at night rather than during normal working hours, was reportedly rejected by his own father--Daoud's old general--because he was "surrounded by Russians," and in June 1980

diplomatic reports said he was prevented from committing suicide by his chief Russian aide--a report he later denied. A routine message of greetings from Brezhnev and Kosygin on the second anniversary of the Saur Revolution was noticeably cool toward Karmal personally, almost as cool as the last similar greeting to Amin. The Soviet Union seemed to be considering replacing Karmal with someone else who might make a fresh start at winning popular support. Qadir made trips around the country for speeches that could have been a testing of him as an alternative leader, but he too was compromised by working for the Soviets--probably anyone would have been--and in one case was driven from a speaking platform by rotten fruit.

Eventually Safronchuk and other Soviet officials in Kabul seem to have advised Moscow that no improvement on Karmal could be found, no other leader who could combine loyalty to the Soviet Union with an acceptable appeal to the Afghan people because the two were irreconcilable. The Kremlin therefore decided to stick with Karmal. There is a parallel with Janos Kadar. He had served immediate Soviet purposes in the crushing of the Hungarian freedom fighters. For some time afterward, however, Moscow acted as if there were uncertainty about his suitability for long-term leadership. Finally he became acceptable to both his sponsors and his subjects--to last more than a quarter-century in power. The sign that Moscow had decided to stick with and accept Karmal, without his having been accepted by the Afghan people, was his being invited to pay an official visit to the Soviet Union in October 1980. Most of the top Soviet leaders concerned with the

Afghanistan problem--Brezhnev, Andropov, Gromyko, Tikhonov filling in for the sick Kosygin, Ponomarev, Ustinov's deputy Marshal Nikolai V. Ogarkov, Soviet Ambassador Tabeyev--met with Karmal and his main deputies in the Kremlin. The Soviet leaders seemed to have given him a sharp lecture on the need to do better, if not a severe tongue-lashing for the shortcomings of his regime. This was indicated by the stiff criticisms Karmal gave his own officials on return home, described below. It was also indicated by the characterization in the official statement on his visit of talks' having been held "in an atmosphere of cordiality, comradely frankness and full mutual understanding." In his admissions of mistakes in speeches while in Moscow, and in his abject manner in praising Brezhnev, Karmal seemed intent on proving that he had learned his lesson and would loyally do better in the future.

In the Kremlin Karmal said he was proud that "we enjoy firm support and immense internationalist aid" from the Soviet Union and its Communist party. One particular kind of aid he described on return to Kabul. "At our request, the U.S.S.R. has sent experts and advisers for nearly all areas of government and for the ministries and administration of Afghanistan," he said. Maximum advantage should be made of them, so that Afghans learned technical expertise and methods of organization and work, Karmal added, but some Afghans simply wanted to leave everything up to the Soviets. This was an understandable tendency because of reports that Soviet advisers so dominated affairs that little was left to the few trained and capable Afghans. In his February 4,

1980, speech, Ponomarev had tried to pretend otherwise to a Soviet audience.

The Soviet Union is not interfering in Afghanistan's internal affairs in the slightest...Its government itself determines its own national policy. Exclusively Afghan citizens work in the whole structure of state and administrative power organs that is operating in a completely sovereign fashion from top to bottom.

This was so patently untrue that the otherwise full account of Ponomarev's speech broadcast to Afghanistan in Dari omitted that last sentence. From Safronchuk, who worked in the foreign ministry next to Dost and who along with eight Russian colleagues either wrote or cleared all outgoing cables, throughout the other civilian ministries and the armed forces, Soviet citizens were in charge and usually did the work rather than directing Afghans to do it. Usually they were Russians, with Central Asians used for their linguistic abilities but rarely in senior positions. Karmal was reportedly protected by Soviet bodyguards, and his doctor, cook, and chauffeur were Russians, while his Afghan guards carried empty weapons. The number of Soviets involved in running Afghanistan was not known to the outside world, but in mid-1980 British estimates were that it "may now run into tens of thousands." Sections of Kabul became Soviet colonies, with Afghans employed as servants. Outside the capital, Soviet advisers seemed to fill the role that traditionally was filled by colonial officers. A blond, crewcut adviser to the governor of Konarha province was reported by a Western journalist who encountered him there to be empowered to intervene in political, administrative, logistic, and military affairs.

With the effective takeover of Soviet advisers, an effort was begun to Russify the country. English was dropped from the position as a compulsory foreign language in schools that it had attained when the United States was the main provider of educational aid and English was seen as the opening to the outside world. Russian became compulsory. The adaptation of Soviet textbooks for Afghan use that had begun under Taraki was intensified. The number of Afghans being educated in the Soviet Union jumped from 4,000 at the end of 1979 to 7,000 in early 1981, in addition to numerous others going there for specialized training courses. This was the beginning of a long-term effort to develop new Afghan leaders who would reliably run a Soviet satellite country.

Finding reliable Afghans to back up Karmal was difficult. One reason was the widespread antipathy toward his Soviet sponsors. Another was the old distrust and hatred of the Khalqis who had dominated the government under Taraki and Amin for the Parchamis who became dominant under Karmal. When he returned from the Soviet Union in November 1980--he had spent 19 days there, first on the official visit, then "for a brief rest and a course of treatment"--Karmal began passing along to PDPA members the lectures he had received there. He told party activists that more sincere efforts were needed for party unity because of the difficult tasks facing them and also because of "the great trust and all-round assistance" of the Soviets.

....Henceforth the assessment of party membership and the appraisal of the activities of party and government cadres will not depend on previous service or relationships...[nor

on] an instance of heroism or other service...[It will depend on] their active struggle for the realization of the objectives of the Saur Revolution and the struggle against the counterrevolution...on the successful fulfillment of the duties which the party puts forward in the political, economic, and social fields. The pursuance of eternal friendship and solidarity with the Leninist Communist Party of the U.S.S.R. and friendship between our countries and our peoples are the basic measures and yardsticks for the appraisal of the work of every member of the party from top to bottom, and of party and government officials from top to bottom.

In other words, Afghans would be judged primarily on being good Soviets. Karmal went on that some Afghans in "high and responsible posts" had been guilty of "factionalism, bribery, repression, suffocation, law breaking, threats and oppression, promises and other unsuitable activities outside their authority." This will not be tolerated, he declared.

He, and presumably also Soviet officials in Kabul, had in fact been complaining for some months. In April 1980 Karmal said it was necessary to eliminate "lawlessness, disobedience, embezzlement, bureaucracy, pilferage of public property, chauvinism, and so forth," and in July he said that "until now the PDPA has not succeeded in changing the decadent old, strangulating and repressive government...The administrative machinery of our government is anti-people." Karmal was speaking to a young, inexperienced party. Most of its members were less than 30 years old. As noted earlier, brighter and more talented Afghans had tended to go into business, the professions, and government service under the monarchy or Daoud, while the Marxist factions attracted youths who had less hope of succeeding in those fields. In public statements, Karmal tried to rally all PDPA elements, Khalqi as well as Parchami. Taraki and Amin had emphasized that

theirs were Khalqi regimes; Karmal dropped those labels and talked only of the PDPA as a whole. But the internecine conflict would not go away.

The inclusion of both Khalqis and Parchamis in Karmal's leadership group when he was put in power, presumably done by Safronchuk and other Soviet advisers, created a tense situation. Part of the apparent Soviet coolness toward Karmal in the initial months might be attributable to his inability to serve as a conciliator within the party, aside from his failure in this role for the country as a whole. The agreement that legalized the presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan caused in April the first reported outburst of a long-tense situation, with Khalqis even more opposed than Parchamis to an arrangement that they knew might keep Karmal in power, aside from their nationalistic opposition to Russian control. By mid-summer, many of the assassinations of government officials were being attributed to PDPA factional rivalry rather than to the mujahideen, and there were unconfirmed reports of Khalqis covertly helping the guerrillas or deserting the regime to join them. A curious case in June of poisonous, but not lethal, gases being used in Kabul schools and public institutions, and the poisoning of water supplies, was initially blamed on guerrillas but later said to have somehow resulted from Khalqi-Parchami infighting. A young PDPA member told a Hungarian journalist of attending party meetings with a member of the other faction who had torn out his fingernails during Amin's persecution of Parchamis. Qadir was reported to have been shot by a Khalqi on June 14 and had to be flown to the Soviet Union for medical treatment.

In an apparent effort to crack down and establish control, the government announced on June 8 and 14 the execution of a number of former Khalqi officials. They included Asadullah Amin, Hafizullah Amin's nephew who had been brought back from hospitalization in the Soviet Union for the wounds received in the December 17, 1979, shooting at the House of the People; a brother of the late president, Abdullah Amin; those already mentioned as being involved in Taraki's murder; and former ministers of communications, border affairs, and planning. A number of other Khalqis were reported to be among the estimated 3,000 to 9,000 political prisoners being held in Pul-i-Charki prison in late 1980, where guards included Soviet troops and Soviet advisers were present during interrogations under torture. These actions against the Khalq faction seem to have worsened rather than improved the situation. They further weakened the regime.

On July 19, 1980, wearing his prime minister's hat, Karmal presided over a cabinet meeting that approved a July 15 PDPA central committee decision to restructure the government so as to increase his own administrative power--or that of the Russians around him. This gave his Parchami comrades better control of personnel matters, and it stripped the interior ministry headed by Khalqi official Gulabzoi of most of its power. Gulabzoi had been the last Khalqi leader left in a major position, except for the more quiet and noncontroversial Ziray, who along with the Parchami Keshtmand became one of Karmal's two top deputies. The other major, and controversial, Khalqi had been Sarwari, the torturer of Keshtmand and many others. He left for Moscow in

June as the factional showdown began, ostensibly for medical treatment but according to some accounts because Karmal demanded that the Soviets remove him. Without returning to Kabul, he arrived on August 15 in Ulan Bator to become Afghan ambassador to Mongolia--the place to which Khrushchev had banished Molotov when he defeated the "anti-party group" in 1957. The assignment stirred speculation in Kabul as well as abroad that Sarwari, who had always been presumed to be a Soviet favorite, perhaps inaccurately, and who was the nominal leader of the Khalqi faction after the demise of Taraki and Amin, was being kept available by Kremlin planners for some future contingency in which Karmal might have to be replaced. Despite the changes, however, or because of them, the bulk of Khalqis remained disaffected. The U.S. State Department said it heard credible reports of major military coup plots by Khalqi officers in June, July, and October 1980, and again in early February 1981. All were quelled by arrests, probably indicating more an efficient Soviet intelligence network than any competence of the again-renamed Afghan intelligence organization, which under Karmal had become the Government Intelligence Service, or Khad.

Bringing the administration under control, so that Russian rule could operate from behind a screen of unified and cooperative Afghan officials, was one of Karmal's tasks after he was installed in power. Another was revising the policies of Taraki and Amin that had alienated so many of the Afghan people. The fact that the main reason for alienation from the government in Kabul had changed from being its own policies to being its Soviet sponsorship

was something Karmal could not affect, but he and his Soviet advisers set out to try to reduce or remove the domestic policy causes of opposition to the regime. An early, obvious necessity was placating Moslem religious leaders and trying to overcome Moslem hostility to the PDPA. Karmal's brother Mahmud Barialay, who became an important official of the party, said that in "the first phase of the revolution" the regime had been "impatient and often used force against religious leaders, whom it regarded without exception as opponents of progress." But in the second phase, he said, we realize "that the thinking of the predominately illiterate population is still being formed mainly by the mullahs." The use of force had included the persecution and torture of Islamic leaders, the new government said as part of its condemnation of Amin, and he "massacred them in an unprecedented savage manner so that mosques...were emptied of noble scholars and spiritual leaders, [which] led to nationwide mourning over the tragedy that befell the clerical community." That was only a slight exaggeration for polemical purposes. Part of the Afghan Marxist creed since the early 1960s had been the charge that conservative mullahs helped the British to overthrow Amnallah and stood against modernization. One of the most prominent and honored clerics, Hazrat Shor Bazar Mojaddidi, and some 120 of his followers were killed by a government raid on his compound in Kabul in February 1979 as the PDPA tried to break religious opposition, and there were numerous similar cases. Partially as a result, but also spontaneously because of the permeating cultural and social influence of Islam separate from any clerical

role, religion was at the heart of the resistance. "It was under the banner of Islam that the counterrevolution developed" in Afghanistan, observed a leading Soviet specialist on the religion and spokesman on the country, Yevgeniy M. Primakov.

Karmal sought to reassure Moslem feelings in his initial messages to the Afghan people. He later told them that "the date of 27 December represents the intervention of God Almighty. That the U.S.S.R. is helping us is also an act of God." In suppressing the February demonstrations, which had been proclaimed by handwritten leaflets circulated from mosques calling for "jihad against the unbelievers," the regime reportedly imprisoned a number of religious leaders, but publicly it took steps to avoid antagonizing Islamic feelings. Party "theses" issued by the PDPA for the second anniversary of the 1978 coup promised "full freedom and rights of Moslems, the clergy, and noble and patriotic ulemas... Their religious activities in the social, economic and cultural spheres will be supported...." At the same time, the government issued its "basic principles," which filled the gap until a new constitution was written, that promised "resolutely following the sacred religion of Islam." The principles included a new national flag with the old colors of the royal flag, black, red, and Islamic green, and religious symbolism in the state emblem on it. Over Khalqi protests, this replaced the all-red flag adopted by Taraki that had inflamed traditionalist passions, but that flag was retained as the PDPA banner. Other symbolism included an avoidance of communist terminology, which Pravda noted had been "incomprehensible to simple people...[and] not only undermined

the masses' enthusiasm but also their trust in the leadership." Karmal denied calling himself a Marxist after he took power. The regime talked of "the social development of society" as its goal rather than Communism or socialism. At repeated meetings with leaders of Afghanistan's estimated 320,000 mullahs, Karmal insisted upon the benign intentions of his government and sought their support. A religious conference that Karmal addressed July 1, 1980, at the House of the People turned hostile, however, with a number of the 800 theologians and clerics who attended denouncing the Soviet occupation. A mullah who supported the regime was booed down. Nonetheless, the conference was announced by the official media as having adopted a resolution approving the government's actions and calling on all Moslems to cease resistance to it. The conference also reportedly approved a government proposal to establish a "chief board on Islamic questions" attached to the revolutionary council plus a "supreme council of the ulemas and clergy of Afghanistan." This was the beginning of an attempt to bring a religion that lacks a clerical hierarchy--none for Sunni Moslems, only an informal one for the Shi'ite minority of Afghans--under some bureaucratic control. It imitated the Soviet pattern of trying to channel and control Moslem activities.

The development of new Moslem institutions as a way of trying to manipulate one type of interest group, religious leaders, was part of a broader pattern of seeking to win favor or influence with the various constituent elements of Afghan society, many of them overlapping. In some areas this entailed the simple expedient of buying support. The most notable example was in dealing with

Pushtun tribes. The tradition of a ruler in Kabul paying for tribal support was well established. Using what could only have been Soviet-supplied money, Karmal's minister for frontier and tribal affairs, Faiz Mohammed, set out to divide up the various tribal and clan elements in eastern Afghanistan, buying loyalty where possible. In September 1980 he was killed by tribesmen whom he had gone to bribe. The word coming out of the hills later was that the pushtunwali injunction of melmastia--the tribal code's provision of hospitality--did not apply to stooges of Russian infidels.

Karmal's promise in his initial policy statement as president to create "a broad front...of all the national and democratic forces" under PDPA leadership was followed by the inclusion of three ministers in his first cabinet who were not PDPA members. This was widely publicized. So was the appointment in succeeding months of deputy ministers and other officials from outside the party. Their numbers were small, however, and their power weak, not only because the PDPA was clearly designated to make policy and control the government but also because of the omnipresent Soviet advisers. In a few cases, prominent figures from pre-Communist governments were lured from retirement, but some of them did not long remain in Karmal's regime, and some former leading officials went into exile rather than being pressed into serving a system they detested as a veil for Russian colonialism. Talking to a Bulgarian journalist less than a month after coming to power, Karmal compared his proposed front with the Fatherland Front in Bulgaria at the end of World War II. It was both an

inaccurate and a revealing comparison. In Bulgaria, and Hungary and Romania as well, the destruction of Nazi German influence by the Soviet Red Army was followed at Moscow's instigation by genuine coalition governments. The communist parties were in minority positions, and they cooperated with democratic parties on short-term programs under conditions of free speech and political activity. That did not last long. What became known as "salami tactics" were applied. Internal Communist and external Soviet pressures reduced non-Communist parties to inferior positions. In some cases their true leaders were banished and Communist stooges installed instead. After a period of bogus coalition, the fronts became monolithic organizations under Communist direction with non-Communists only for window dressing. It was the result of use of a front to create the appearance but not the substance of a broad-based, popular government that Karmal wanted. For that, the example of Mao's China would have been more appropriate. A political front was created there after power had been captured militarily and non-Communist parties were brought in without any pretense of their having real authority.

Before a full-scale national front could be established in Afghanistan, constituent elements had to be created. In his October 16 Kremlin speech, Karmal explained that party and state leaders were busy organizing meetings of various social, economic, ethnic, tribal, and religious groupings. This was, he said, "one of the stages along the road to forming a new structure for organizing the masses." He added that it was "important at this stage of the national-democratic revolution to expand the national

fatherland front to support the party and government in carrying out the socioeconomic transformations." No question, then, of giving non-Communists a real voice in policy. It was, instead, a matter of trying to co-opt a wide range of people into what had already been decided by the PDPA under Soviet guidance. "...It is the law of the revolution that the party of the working class and all toilers of the country have the historic mission of leading the broad national fatherland front," Karmal told a Kabul meeting of teachers, doctors, writers, journalists, and other "groups of intellectuals." By the summer of 1980 efforts were under way to build the kind of loyally supportive trade union movement that the Soviet Union had long used to control its own workers--not the kind that developed in Poland in 1980 with the founding of Solidarity. The PDPA politburo said on August 16 that the first task of unions was "the explanation of party and government policy to the workers, [and] the organization of workers...for the defense of...the revolution," with only the final task being "the defense of workers' interests and rights." By March 7, 1981, when the first congress of Afghan trade unions opened, unions had 160,000 members "under the political leadership" of the PDPA, Karmal said in opening the congress. In September 1980 more than 600 delegates held the first meeting of the Democratic Organization of the Youth of Afghanistan, which was modeled after the Soviet Young Communist League, or Komsomol. All of its members were required to belong to "public order teams" that were supposed to back up military and militia units in guarding against guerrillas and urban unrest. Camps for children

were established on the model of the Soviet Pioneer camps, which are indoctrination centers as much as vacation spots. Also in September organizational meetings were held for a union of artists and for a journalists' union. Both groups were told that it was their duty to "propagate the lofty aims of the revolution" and show its irreversibility as well as to expand cooperation with the Soviet Union. In October a union of writers was created; in November the Democratic Women's Organization of Afghanistan held its first conference; and in December a central council of agricultural cooperatives, claiming to represent 190,000-farmers, met with the purpose of "insuring [that] peasants take active part" in the front. Delegations from equivalent organizations in the Soviet Union and other Soviet bloc countries attended these meetings, and media accounts of PDPA messages to them and of proceedings were indistinguishable from the kind of publicity that accompanied such organizations' conferences in Moscow.

Finally, after "the entire structure of public organizations [had] in effect been created from scratch," as Pravda noted, a conference of "Afghan national and patriotic forces" was held on the first anniversary of the Soviet invasion, December 27, 1980, at the revolutionary council's headquarters in Kabul, Salem Khanah Palace. Without discussion, the conference accepted a list read by Nur of 44 PDPA leaders and some nonpolitical figures as members of a commission to prepare a founding congress of the National Fatherland Front, decide which tribal representatives, social and economic organizations, religious leaders and others to admit to the front, and draft a charter. "The PDPA, as a political vanguard

force, is included in the front," Karmal told the 2,000 delegates. "...Our party, which legally possesses the power of the state and government, regards...[the] NFF as the best form of the organization of the masses of the people..." The delegates dutifully adopted a declaration saying the purpose of establishing the NFF "is to mobilize, in pursuance of PDPA policy,...all noble people of Afghanistan to take active and conscious part" in achieving official goals. The founding congress, originally supposed to be held by the spring of 1981, was publicized as a new form of loya jirgah, thus trying to give a traditional legitimacy of popular expression to a structure so controlled from the top by Karmal and his Soviet advisers that no free speech was possible. Karmal promised that, after the NFF's founding, national elections would be held, but he said that "those so-called parties which are operating from outside Afghanistan" would not be recognized.

Thus, during 1980 a start was made toward rectifying mistakes of the Taraki and Amin periods and building a new base under the PDPA regime installed by Soviet tanks. "...A very severe process is taking place," Primakov said on the first anniversary of the invasion. "It is quite difficult, but it is a process of stabilizing the situation." How stable it was becoming was doubtful, however, or how successful the regime in convincing the people that hated policies were being revised. The mujahideen resistance continued, the exodus of refugees accelerated. There was no sign of popular trust in the professions of Karmal and his officials that Islam would be respected and that the regime would honor individual rights. There was too much evidence otherwise. The

new facade of the NFF appeared to foreign observers to be an empty shell. If filled by anything, it was by the Red Army, the only real authority in the country. But by creating it, the Karmal government and its Soviet backers were better able to make the pretense that Afghanistan was returning to normal under a domestically supported political structure. So long as censorship and denial of foreigners' access to most of the country made reports of true conditions mainly secondhand, and the loudest denials of normality came from Peshawar guerrilla groups or Afghan exiles abroad, whose statements were often discounted as exaggerations, the pretense could be loudly proclaimed by Communist media to be the reality.

Four factors in the present situation point to a Soviet determination to retain, consolidate, and solidify control of Afghanistan. One is the country's geographic position. Afghanistan's location on the frontier of 19th-century Russian and of later Soviet power was the reason for more than a century of interest by St. Petersburg and Moscow. It caused concern about any instability or hostility just across a politically sensitive border. Partly but not uniquely because of geography, there was a gradual growth of involvement of Soviet material and prestige in Afghanistan. This became another factor in the developing situation. A strengthening and increasingly assertive Soviet Union began to play a larger and larger role in Afghanistan during the quarter-century before the military occupation. Soviet cultivation of a communist movement in Afghanistan, while aiding non-Communist and sometimes anti-Communist governments in Kabul,

had produced a possibly unexpected or even unwanted seizure of power by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan. The unrealistically ideological approach of the PDPA toward governing started a process that by its own momentum and logic culminated in the invasion. A third factor is the policies adopted after the installation of an Afghan president willing--because his puppet position gave him no choice--to heed Soviet advice in a way that the two previous PDPA leaders had not done. These were policies with an internal contradiction. They were intended to de-emphasize but not actually deny the Communist nature of the regime. But they were also intended to achieve peace and stability in Afghanistan by pressing it into the mold of Soviet-style Communism that had eventually brought those achievements in initially resistant parts of the Soviet Union. The fourth factor is the development of strong ties between the Soviet Communist Party and the PDPA. The Afghan party was rebuilt in the Soviet image. This meant the intensification of a Soviet ideological commitment to the survival of a communist regime. Although not stressed immediately after the invasion, presumably to avoid unnecessarily antagonizing Moslem and third-world countries, it also meant the gradual absorption of Afghanistan into the Soviet bloc. It might be argued that there is another, fifth, factor. That would be the well-demonstrated reluctance of the Soviet leadership, and especially of the aged group of men who made the decision to seize military control of Afghanistan, to admit having made mistakes and to reverse policies.

Because of these factors, the world can take at face value two basic Soviet statements about Afghanistan after the invasion. Made in the special language that defines terms sometimes to suit Marxist ideology, sometimes to suit the Soviet nation's foreign policy, they have clear meanings. They have been often repeated in various ways, but Brezhnev summarized them clearly in his Kremlin dinner speech welcoming Karmal on the October 1980 trip that annointed him as the man on whom the Soviet Union had decided to depend for the long-term effort to dominate Afghanistan through local agents.

"The revolutionary process in Afghanistan is irreversible," Brezhnev declared, and the Soviet Union and its supporting Communist and leftist allies will back "the Afghan people and its government...." He went on, "We will firmly stand guard of the security interests of both our states and will do our internationalist duty to the Afghan people and to its government headed by Comrade Babrak Karmal...." By "revolutionary process" Brezhnev meant the establishment of a Leninist system of rigidly centralized control by a small group of Afghan leaders willing to accept Soviet tutelage. Any attempt to challenge that small group, no matter how broad the support for a challenge or how much of a majority it represented, would be "counter-revolutionary" and therefore unacceptable. It would be resisted by the political, economic, military, and security police resources of the Soviet Union. Although the public justification for the Red Army's being in Afghanistan was to protect the country against external aggression, it was not a challenge from outside that worried the Soviet

leadership. It was the resistance by the Afghan people to changes pressed upon them without the approval of public opinion in a primitive land where opinion tended to be expressed not by polls but by guns. It was later also resistance to foreign rule through local front men.

The attitudes expressed by Brezhnev meant that the Red Army would go home only when an Afghan communist regime subservient to Moscow was secure from rejection by its own subjects. Such security might eventually develop in a crushed country, but it was not in sight in the early 1980s. Nor could it readily be assumed possible to achieve for a long time after that. Even if mujahideen resistance were reduced to occasional knifings of Soviet soldiers in Afghan bazaars or ambushes on isolated roads away from any villagers whom the Soviets might be expected to kill in retaliation, even if ordinary people were cowed by policies of retaliation so massive as to amount to preventative terrorism, it was unlikely to be possible for a PDPA government to do without the ultimate guarantee of a Soviet military presence.