

Mohammad Ashraf

AFGHANISTAN:

A Difficult Path to Peace



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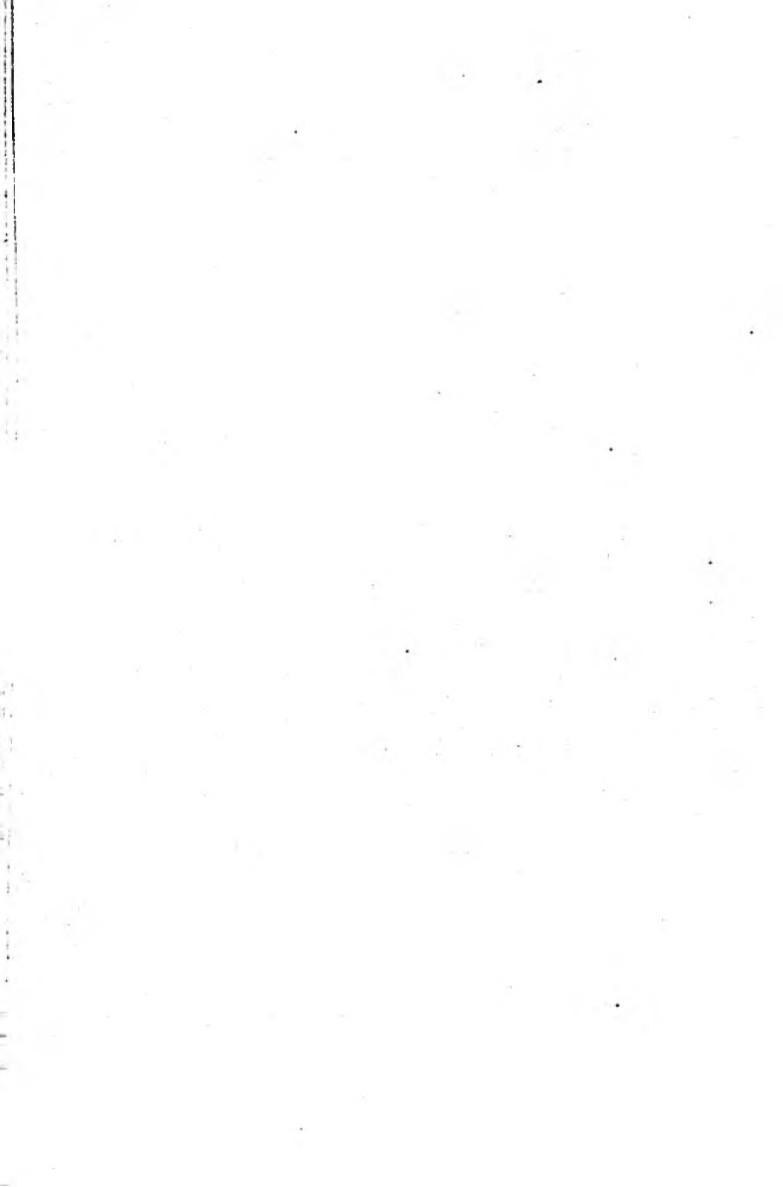
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HISTORY OF THE TRAGEDY

Afghanistan is a land with an ancient history and a unique geographic position at one of the "crossroads" of Asia. The phalanges of Alexander the Great, the hordes of Genghis Khan, the soldiers of Nadir Shah—they all made devastating raids through the valleys and canyons of Afghanistan. And even in the relatively recent past, right up until the present century, Britain's colonial forces tried for a hundred years to conquer independent Afghanistan bordering on Russia, China, Iran, and India. The country's history is full of countless internecine war and conflicts between feudal khans and the central government. In fact, there has never been a government in Afghanistan that fully controlled the country's entire territory. Relations between the central authorities and various tribes have been particularly tense: pretenders to the throne engaged in all sorts of intrigues around these tribes, while agents of colonial powers conducted subversive activities.

Shortly before the April 1978 national democratic revolution, which brought down Mohammad Daud's regime of capitalists and landlords, the level of our country's social and economic development was extremely low. Along with the patriarchal, tribal and clan relations of the nomads, there was virtual serfdom in the countryside. The country held one of the last places in the world in terms of per capita income—162 dollars a year. Industrial output accounted for 3.3 per cent of the gross national product. In agriculture, about a third of

all peasant families had no land of their own. Medical care was available only in the capital and in a number of provincial centres and, moreover, was available only to the propertied classes. The average life-span was 42 years. More than 90 per cent of the population could neither read nor write. Former US President Richard Nixon once jokingly suggested that Afghanistan be preserved as a "museum of the Middle Ages."

The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), which came to power in 1978, set the task of getting the country out of medieval stagnation, of making education and medical services available to the people at large, and of developing agriculture and the national economy as a whole.

People's democracy in Afghanistan is making its way forward under harsh conditions. The reactionary forces are putting up bitter resistance to the progressive social, agrarian and economic changes. There are approximately 100 various opposition organizations: Islamic, nationalist, separatist, Left- and Right-wing extremist, bourgeois, and monarchist. The leadership of most of them includes former feudal lords, landowners, high-ranking government officials and army officers, and clergymen.

The leaders of many groupings, including the "Islamic" ones, were fighting against the central government even before the revolution. Naturally, people's democracy as a state system was also not to their liking and they began fighting against the government of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan from the very outset. In 1979, when the Hafizullah Amin dictatorial clique was in power, the opposition expanded its ranks. As a result of the repressive measures meted out by Amin's extremist entourage, many peasants, nomads and small shopkeepers joined the opposition movements in those days. Many Afghans were drawn into the armed struggle by force, and by means of blackmail or deceit. The déclassés accustomed to living by plundering and robbing also went over to the opposition side.

The situation was tragically complicated after the im-

perialist forces launched their large-scale interference. The newspaper *The Washington Post* described US subversion against my country as the largest CIA operation since the Vietnam war. According to reports in the American press, the United States has spent more than 2,000 million dollars on the undeclared war against the DRA. And the allocations continue to grow. As the American magazine *CounterSpy* has pointed out, the US objective is to install a pro-American regime in Afghanistan, to draw the country into a CENTO-type military bloc, and to use Afghan territory for setting up military bases. Another American magazine, *New World Review*, noted that it is in the interests of the United States to prevent progressive changes in Afghanistan, to wreck its ties with the USSR, and to use the 1,000-mile border the DRA shares with the Soviet Union for the placement of intelligence-gathering equipment.

The realization of these neoglobalist objectives has come to mean death and suffering for the Afghans. The CIA has set up a network of bandit formations on Pakistani territory whose programme objective is to destroy the DRA as a state and to kill all Afghans supporting the national democratic revolution. For these purposes terrorist groups are being trained by American Pakistani and West European instructors at more than 120 camps in Pakistan. When sent into Afghanistan, terrorists kill or kidnap government and Party officials and servicemen. Counter-revolutionary bands set up economic blockades of entire regions, prevent state purchases of farm produce, and transport grain and cattle to Pakistan and Iran. The counter-revolutionaries take numerous subversive actions aimed at disrupting the normal operation of factories and cooperatives; they put power transmission lines out of order and mine peasant fields.

There has never been an Afghan government with larger or better equipped armed forces than those of the DRA government. But bandits avoid direct confrontation with the government forces and take shelter beyond

Afghanistan's borders in neighbouring Pakistan and Iran. The Afghan Armed Forces could step up their strikes at the enemy and continue the war until total victory. But continuation of the war would mean death and suffering for thousands of my fellow countrymen. That is why the People's Democratic Party at the head of Afghan society looked for ways to end the bloodshed. The PDPA Central Committee, at its plenary meetings, and the country's top leaders searched for ways to put an end to the fratricidal war. These efforts resulted in the concept of national reconciliation which was proclaimed at the emergency plenary meeting of the PDPA Central Committee on December 30, 1986. The plenary meeting endorsed national reconciliation as the Party's strategic policy.

WHAT IS "NATIONAL RECONCILIATION"

"The principles of reconciliation are simple and understandable to everybody," General Secretary Najib said, addressing the plenary meeting of the PDPA Central Committee. "They mean a cease-fire and renunciation of the armed struggle and bloodshed in settling issues pertaining to Afghanistan's present and future;

"— just representation in the political structure and national economy;

"— non-persecution for previous political activities and general amnesty;

"— the preservation and development of historical, national and cultural traditions, and respect for the holy religion of Islam."

As the Afghan leaders have pointed out, reconciliation is a strategic objective vital for the people as a whole and the Party as their political vanguard. At the same time, reconciliation also means tactics: a cease-fire, talks with the opposing side, cooperation on the basis of a coalition, acception and resettlement of refugees, restoration of the mosques, roads, bridges, hospitals, and schools destroyed in the war.

The main working bodies in carrying out this policy are the extraordinary commissions on national reconciliation. There were about 1,700 of them in April 1987. Most of them had been set up at the primary level, that is, in the villages. These commissions function on a voluntary basis. Their members include all those who cherish peace and are trusted by the common people. Today these members include elders, clergymen, Party and government officials, both those who support the DRA leadership and those who do not. In all, there are some 4,000 former mujaheddins working on the commissions of national reconciliation throughout Afghanistan. The activities of each commission are supposed to culminate in the convening of a jirgah, the traditional form of the tribal council, where the conflicting sides are to sign a protocol on reconciliation. Furthermore, the commissions also deal with problems linked with the resettlement of returning refugees, the distribution of relief supplies, and other urgent matters. The commissions have wide powers to enable them to achieve their objectives. They are authorized to hold talks with the opposition both inside and outside the country, to appeal for amnesty for prisoners, and to distribute funds coming from the government or from private individuals.

The initiator of the policy of national reconciliation was the PDPA leadership. It is this Party, which is now in power and which feels responsible for the country's destiny, that has invited the conflicting forces to take part in the running of the state. Is this move sincere and if so, is this not a sign of the weakness of both the Party and the present government? Answering this question, Dr. Najib has said that the issue here is not one of strength or weakness, but of the observation of the law-governed patterns of the national democratic stage of the revolution. "National reconciliation," Dr. Najib pointed out, "implies not the surrender of the opposing side but honest and lasting coexistence through cooperation and confidence. What kind of cooperation and confi-

dence can there be if we preserve our organizations and at the same time deny them the right to express their specific interests through their own organizations and parties? We have nothing to fear. Our Party ranks are steadily growing and there is no other political organization in Afghanistan that is equal to it in strength and operates on a nationwide scale. But let the other parties also function freely on the political scene." At its plenary meeting in June 1987, the Central Committee of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan adopted major decisions on the further democratization of our country. It was noted that Afghanistan already has the prerequisites needed for legalizing a number of parties and organizations which have existed for many years and which want to help the process of national reconciliation. "We do not insist that these parties go along with the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan on matters of theory, strategy or tactics", Najib said, "but each party must support the goal that is common to us all—the establishment of peace in Afghanistan..." It was stressed that there was a possibility of parties forming alliances which could involve the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan as well. And the basis for such alliances should be a commitment to peace.

The freedom of political activity will naturally lead to the fulfilment of yet another important condition for national reconciliation—the establishment of a coalition government. As was noted at the June plenary meeting, objective conditions exist in the country for setting up an efficient coalition involving all the democratic and patriotic forces, a coalition that would be capable of putting an end to the fratricidal war, of ensuring a normalization of the situation and of proceeding with the solution of urgent national problems.

An interesting proposal was made at the June plenary meeting on the future form of government in Afghanistan. A presidency would be the most acceptable form from the standpoint of national and historical tradition, but the President should not be someone vested with

just symbolic power; he must be a genuine leader of the country. The country's name could also be changed, say to "the Republic of Afghanistan." These matters could be discussed in the process of the drafting of a new Constitution.

The country's leadership realizes that the success of the reconciliation and, consequently, the forthcoming peace depend on more than just the acceptance by the opposing side of this policy. It is no less important that those who have defended the revolution with arms in hand, who have lost their comrades, and have experienced the terror of the counter-revolutionary forces should also realize the need to stop the bloodshed and forgive the insults and blood. It is to them that Dr. Najib addressed this statement: "We understand the feelings of relatives (of the dead—*Auth.*) and ask them, guided by the holy Islamic religion, to forgive former individual enemies so as not to increase their own sorrow and that of the people and not to increase the sacrifices of our fellow countrymen. Reconciliation does not mean that we must make peace with all the landowners, deputies and senators of former times, reconciliation means that we must make peace only with those of them who recognize the new reality and will return home not so as to restore the old order, but so as to work for the good of the people and the country; reconciliation means to make peace with those who have repented their crimes."

THE FIRST STEP TO PEACE

National reconciliation began in Afghanistan with a cease-fire. In early January the government forces received the following orders:

— at 00 hours January 15, 1987 all types of weapons are to cease fire, and all combat operations are to be halted throughout the country's territory, including in the air space;

— all units and formations of all the Armed Forces of the DRA shall return to their permanent stations and go over to peacetime activity;

— the DRA Armed Forces shall guard the DRA frontiers, as well as government and military facilities, and ensure the unimpeded passage of government convoys and private transport carrying goods and cargo vital for the country's civilian population.

At the same time the commissions on national reconciliation were given the right to appeal to the army for help in repulsing armed attacks by the bands rejecting the cease-fire.

It was announced that the truce would last until July 16, 1987, that is, six months.

In proposing a cease-fire the Afghan leadership proceeded from the consideration that this was the only way to create the conditions needed for constructive dialogue between the conflicting sides for the purposes of working out terms for a lasting peace on Afghan soil. The opposition, once it accepted the truce, would be guaranteed freedom of movement throughout the country. The PDPA Central Committee and the Revolutionary Council, the country's supreme legislative body, called on the opposition to establish direct contact with the DRA top leadership to receive explanations concerning the aims and tasks of the people's government and the policy of reconciliation.

About 500 members of armed detachments arrived in Kabul in late January to negotiate the terms of reconciliation with the government. The leaders and rank-and-file members of anti-government groups from the districts of Char-Asiab, Mirbachakot, Paghman, Karabagh, and Shakardarah in Kabul Province left their weapons at a checkpoint—which seemed to them a dangerous risk—and went into the capital. They were received by Dr. Najib. Explaining why the DRA government had taken such radical steps, he emphasized that the Americans and Israelis fanning the flames of war were not the ones suffering from it. Afghans are the ones getting killed.

"What are the roots of the contradictions dividing them?" Dr. Najib asked. "It is claimed that power in Kabul is in the hands of infidels. But you can see for yourselves that the government is protecting Islam. They say that Afghans have rebelled against Soviet forces... The limited contingent of Soviet troops did not come to Afghanistan immediately after the revolution, but only after the foreign interference had assumed most threatening forms. The withdrawal of Soviet soldiers is linked with the implementation of the programme of national reconciliation." Dr. Najib called for joint efforts that would create conditions for the return of Soviet troops to their country.

One of the mujaheddins who came to Kabul at that time, Abdul Aziz, who is from the village of Kokar and a member of the Hezb-e-Islami Party, told journalists: "We realize that the government has grounds to speak about foreign interference in Afghanistan's affairs. Many of us were trained by foreign instructors in Pakistan. Weapons have also been sent to us from abroad. I have an Egyptian submachine gun; my friends have American and Israeli weapons. It is obvious that such broad aid is, of course, not disinterested aid. But the confrontation should not continue endlessly; the time has come to put an end to the bloodshed, to stop Afghans from going on killing one another."

Many of those who came to Kabul at that time said that it was necessary to forget the mutual insults and end the fratricide. They understood that the revolutionary authorities were ready to accept the formation of a coalition government involving the opposition, and they appreciated this stand taken by the DRA leadership. The talks ended with 200 members of the armed opposition signing reconciliation protocols. One hundred and fifty of the oppositionists who had come to Kabul rejected the reconciliation, while the remaining members of the opposition decided to continue the negotiations.

Such was the beginning. At present the extraordinary

Commission on National Reconciliation functioning in the districts adjacent to Kabul includes six former leaders of anti-government detachments. Among them is Malek Jelani who until recently commanded a large armed unit of the Jamiat-e-Islami grouping. The commission in the Mirbachakot District is headed by Faruk Sarbaz and that in the Karabagh District by Abdul Latif. Both commanded groupings of the Hezb-e-Islami Party. As a result, 500 out of 700 villages in Kabul Province have been included in the "peace zone" where no combat operations whatsoever are being conducted. The government has started giving assistance to the population in these areas. Irrigation systems are being restored and roads and bridges are being repaired. As was decided at the June plenary meeting of the PDPA Central Committee, commissions on national reconciliation will form "peace zones" upon reaching consent with the opposing side. After a jirgah of peace, army troops will be withdrawn from the given territory, while people's militia units and local self-defence forces, which could possibly include former mujaheddins, will remain there.

Said Ahmad was known as the leader of one of the particularly large Jamiat-e-Islami armed formations in the western part of Afghanistan. His unit numbering 1,500 men controlled the Guzar District in Herat Province. But now this is all a part of the past. As of January 1987 Said Ahmad has been cooperating with the Afghan government rather than fighting against it. A large district in Herat Province is being protected from counter-revolutionary terror by a territorial regiment led by Said Ahmad. While in Kabul, Ahmad spoke with journalists; his statement follows below:

"In 1979 Afghanistan began swimming in blood because of the Amin regime. Our Alizai tribe also suffered. Several hundred of my fellow tribesmen were arrested and later shot. Among the executed was my father, the chieftain of our tribe. After that massacre we decided to take up arms. I became the commander of a unit which became a large armed formation rather quickly."

According to Said Ahmad, he was under the direction of the Jamiat-e-Islami headquarters in Peshawar. He obeyed the leadership since he received all sorts of weapons from Pakistan, including anti-aircraft guns and surface-to-surface missiles. Military instructors were also sent from there. Ahmad's unit was trained for a long time by an instructor from the Federal Republic of Germany known as Ali—he never disclosed his real name. He trained them to mine roads and to use missiles and remote-control mines.

"But in spite of everything we could not achieve our objective and at the same time the government consolidated its positions," Said Ahmad said. "Meanwhile, we saw that our top leaders from the 'Islamic parties' were getting 100,000 rupees from the West every month and were making huge amounts of money illegally by trading in arms and drugs and by plundering relief supplies for refugees. It was clear that they were concerned with the well-being of their pockets rather than that of the Afghan people. We also saw that the people in our province were tired of the war. We were also tired. And when an appeal to end the war came from Kabul, we held a jirgah and accepted the peace proposal."

By late April 1987 forty-two armed units numbering 1,100 men had concluded cease-fire agreements in Kabul Province. Three thousand members of anti-government bands had stopped fighting in Herat. Since the policy of national reconciliation was proclaimed, 21,000 members of armed groups countrywide have gone over to the side of the people's government. And 1,100 groups are in touch with local government bodies and reconciliation commissions. All together this accounts for more than half of the entire opposition.

THE RETURN

There can be no just peace in our country if all those forced to leave their homes by the undeclared war are

not given the opportunity to return to their country. The policy of national reconciliation is based on the understanding of this reality.

"Our Party and revolutionary government are worried about the fact that thousands of Afghans are still living in foreign lands and are actually in a state of deprivation there," the documents of the emergency plenary meeting of the PDPA Central Committee, which adopted the policy of reconciliation, point out. "Many of them have been deceived and intimidated and have become blind instruments in the hands of the enemies of the people for achieving selfish aims and for plundering and profiteering. We appeal to the refugees to return home and join in the building of a new life in their land."

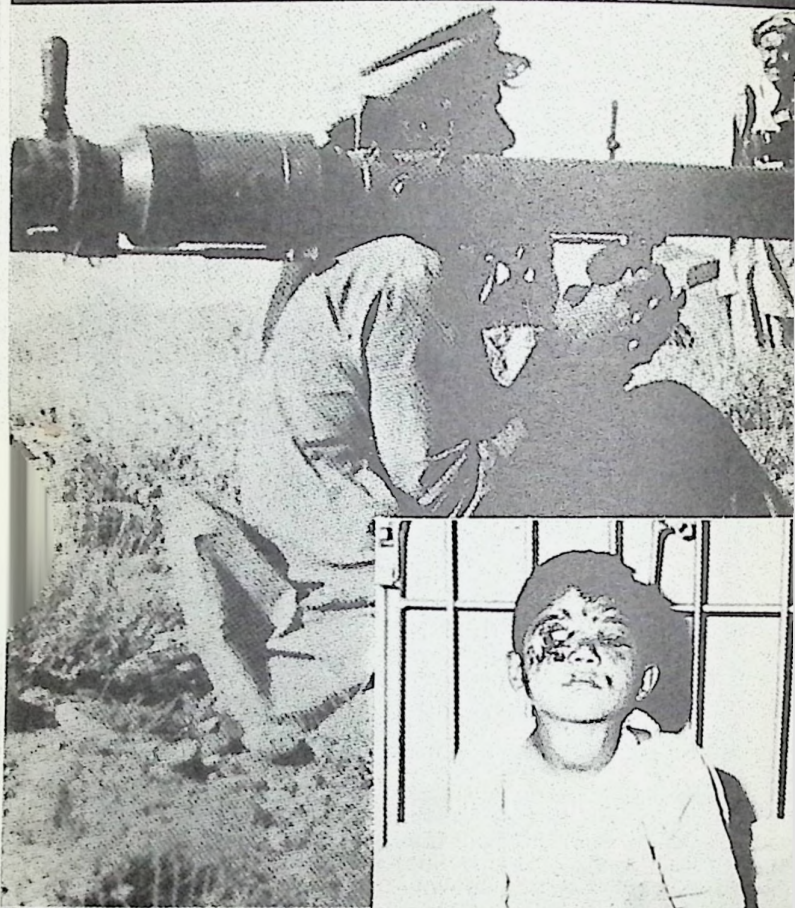
The appeal of the country's leadership was not an empty declaration. Active work is now under way in Afghanistan to create conditions for the return of refugees. And this work is being conducted with enthusiasm. The Afghans' excitement is easy to appreciate since many of them are waiting to be reunited with their wives and kin now in camps in Pakistan or Iran.

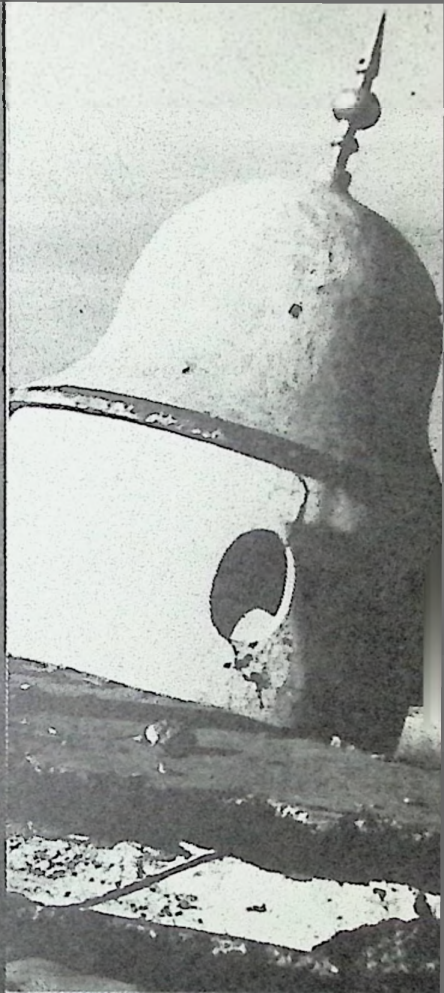
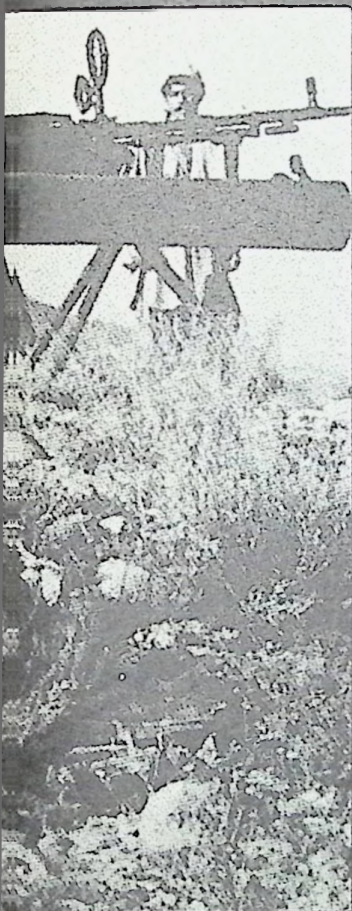
Government institutions are concentrating their efforts in the following spheres. A department for the affairs of returnees has been set up under the DRA Council of Ministers. It is headed by Hasan Shark, once first deputy head of state in the Daud government. The department has involved nearly all the ministries and other agencies of the country in the measures aimed at welcoming the refugees.

Reception centres which can accept up to five thousand people a day have been set up in the outlying areas of western and south-eastern Afghanistan. They have been supplied with clothing, food, drugs and medicines, farming implements, and building materials. Thus, the immediate, essential needs of the returnees have been taken care of. One problem is that many of the refugees who have returned to Afghanistan suffer from infectious diseases. And then at border checkpoints on Pakistani territory the last of their property is often taken



The policy of national reconciliation was initiated by the Afghan government. The photo shows the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the PDPA Najib (right) meeting with the leaders of armed formations who have arrived in Kabul for talks on national reconciliation.





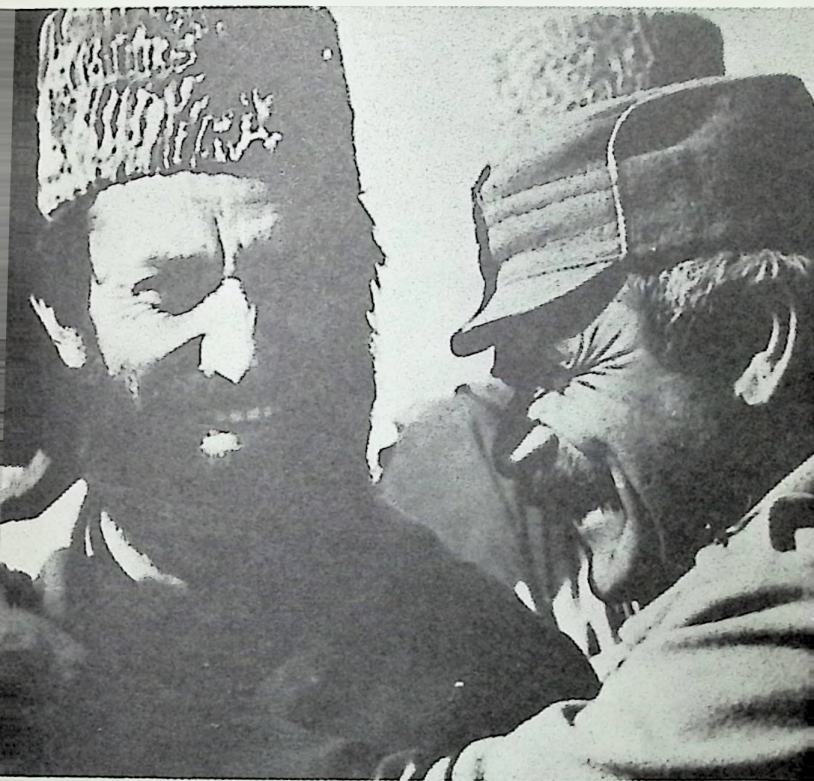
In adopting the policy of national reconciliation, the Afghan leadership first of all took into consideration the tremendous damage done to the country as a result of the fratricidal war. Destroyed mosques and mutilated children—such are the consequences of the bandits' operations.





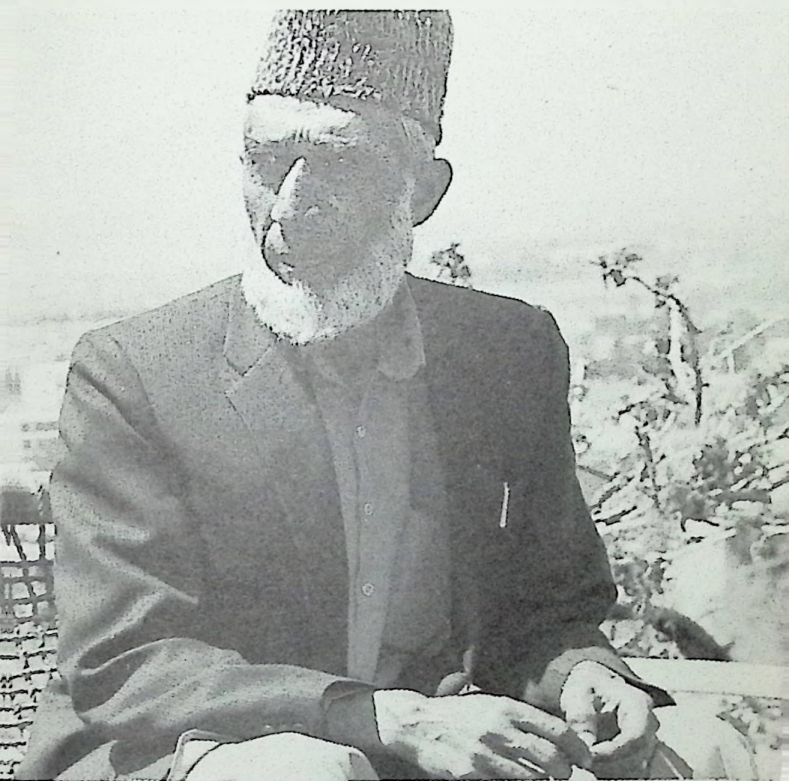
The session of the Revolutionary Council of the DRA in Kabul that discussed and endorsed the Declaration on National Reconciliation in Afghanistan (left). The question of national reconciliation was also discussed at the local level. A jirgah in Jalalabad debating the Pashtoon tribes' attitude towards the national reconciliation process (right).





The people's government has granted amnesty to those who fought against it for a number of years. A large group of prisoners leaving the central prison of Pul-i-Charhi (left). Those who have given up their armed struggle against Afghanistan return home.



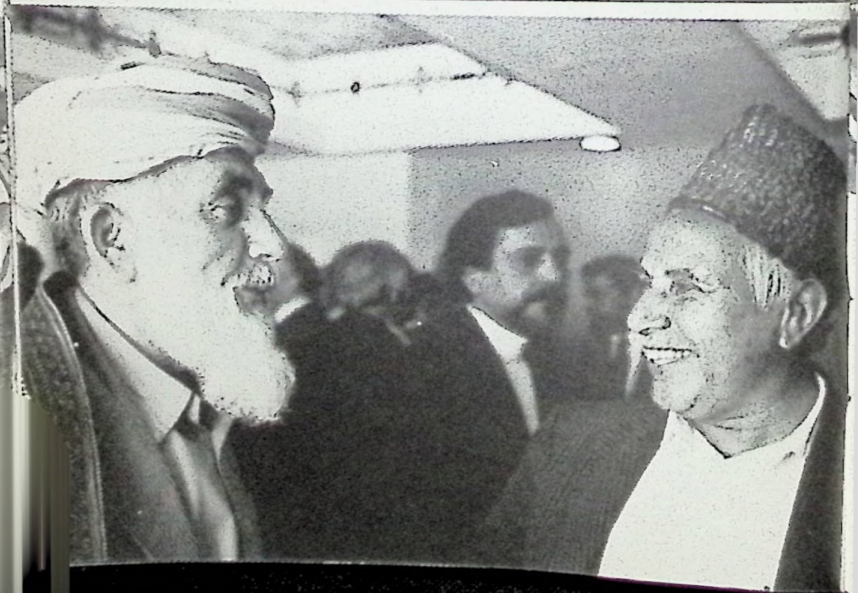
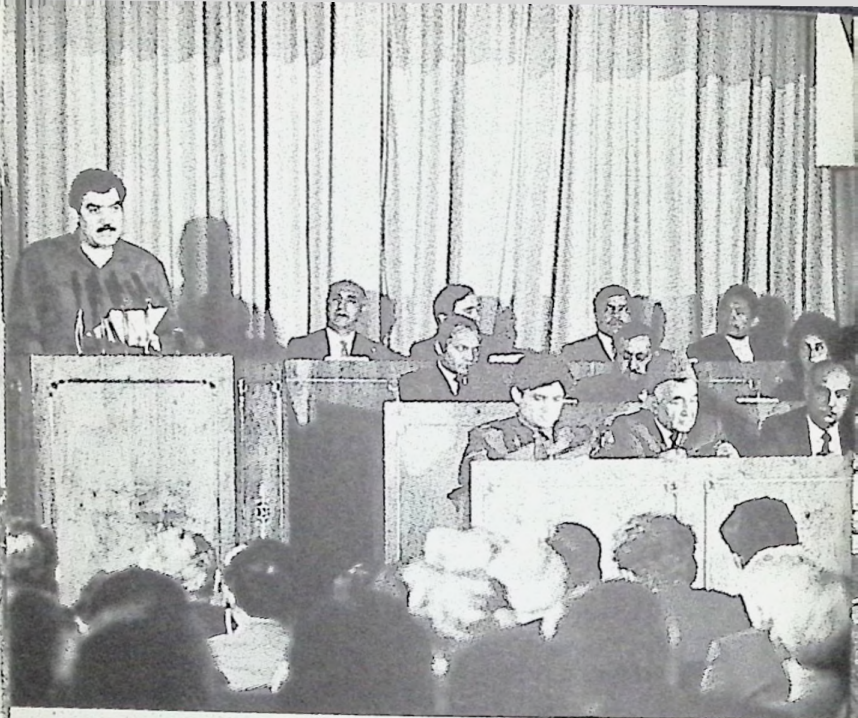


Ever more mujaheddins are laying down arms and going over to the side of the people's government. Among them are former leaders of large counter-revolutionary detachments, for instance Haji Sultan Mohammad (right).



The policy of national reconciliation has affected millions of Afghans. They are taking a lively interest in the changes now under way in the country. Many of them have received documents giving them the right to possess plots of land of their own, and are beginning to take an active part in peaceful labour.







The conference of private producers, at which Dr. Najib (top left) made a speech gave a new impetus to the development of the private sector. The photo below shows businessmen Najmudin and Fakhir Ahmad discussing the prospects for cooperation with the people's government at the conference.





Despite the active search for peace by the Afghan leadership, the attempts to frustrate reconciliation are continuing. The supply of arms to counter-revolutionaries is growing, including Stinger rockets (left photo) which the bandits use to bring down Afghan passenger planes.



The participants of a demonstration held in Kabul in early 1987 express the Afghan people's condemnation of the attempts to frustrate the process of national reconciliation.

away from them and on their return home they are often in dire need of even clothes.

After refugees have received the first essential aid at the reception centres, they are provided with transportation in order to go to their previous places of residence where commissions on national reconciliation take charge of them. Activists in these commissions, which include many high school and college students, help the returnees to readjust and conduct explanatory work among them. Since nearly all of the returnees are illiterate, they cannot read the documents which explain how they can obtain land, housing, jobs or enter school.

The state has adopted a series of legislative acts restoring refugees' civil rights. For instance, in keeping with Decree No. 32 of the DRA Revolutionary Council, the state pledges to return all refugees' property to them within two months after the filing of the appropriate petition. Other decrees cancel the debts of the returnees for unpaid real estate taxes and guarantee their employment. Factory and office workers are reinstated at their jobs and are paid no less than they received before leaving the DRA.

It is very important that returning Afghans receive a warm and friendly welcome in their country. Many of them had been forced to leave Afghanistan and suffered privations in foreign lands not of their own free will. But even those who made a conscious mistake deserve to be pardoned for their suffering and for their loyalty in their hearts to their homeland. Muhammad Omar, a returnee who managed to cross the border into Afghanistan with 20 other fellow countrymen, told a correspondent of the Bakhtar news agency the following:

"In Pakistan we were beggars without any rights. We needed special passes to leave the camp. Bandits from a nearby training centre did anything and everything they cared to with us. I was beaten up several times for having left the camp without permission in order to earn some money on the side. A mujaheddin asked my neighbour Haji Rahim to 'give him his daughter in marriage.' After

a while he kicked her out. We were tired of living in fear and humiliation. One night several families, including mine, escaped from the camp. People from the Momand frontier tribe helped us hide and later cross the border cordons. And now we are home, praise the Allah!"

The fate of those Afghans who ended up in Iran was no easier.

"My entire family, which had lived in Kabul, emigrated to Iran in 1979," said Mir Hasan, a returnee who came back to his hometown. "We were afraid of possible reprisals from the Amin regime. My family settled down in Teheran—the best an Afghan refugee in Iran can hope for. Most of them live like prisoners behind barbed wire in camps along the Afghan border. I got a job doing dirty work at a chemical plant. Although the work was strenuous and dangerous, the working hours were unlimited, the pay was meagre, and there were many bans imposed upon us, we did not starve. And this is already a great deal for an Afghan in Iran."

"The main thing that worried us," Mir Hasan went on to say, "was the fear of being sent to fight against Iraq. My brother was killed on the Iran-Iraq front, and this is what drove us out of Iran. The Iranian authorities mobilized many Afghans for army service by force. There are only two ways of getting away from the front—by going to the cemetery or joining the "Islamic" bands. So, when a policy of national reconciliation was proclaimed in Afghanistan, we decided to return. We knew that if we were caught we would meet with death at the hands of counter-revolutionaries or, should we fall into the hands of the Iranian authorities, we would land in jail."

Having reached Meshed on the pretext of visiting holy places, Mir Hasan's family began to prepare for the crossing of the border. "All the approaches to the border are controlled by the Iranian army and police, as well as by Afghan counter-revolutionary bands," he said. "We hired a smuggler as a guide." He led the refugees across the border near the region of Kyzyl-Islam, having taken all of their money and even belongings for payment. That

was how Mir Hasan's family ended up in Herat. From there, with the help of a reconciliation commission, they reached their native Kabul.

Far from all Afghans seeking to return home are so lucky. For instance, according to the Afghan Foreign Ministry, on January 24, 1987 Iranian security forces blocked the return to Afghanistan of 4,000 Afghan families living in the cities of Meshed, Tayebat, and Turbat-i-Jam. Seven young Afghan women committed suicide in Peshawar on January 27 after having made an unsuccessful attempt to return home. A group of 3,000 Afghans was stopped and turned back at the Pakistani-Afghan border on February 27. On March 2 the Iranian authorities issued a decree to move all persons of Afghan origin under the age of 25 from border areas to populated centres in the provinces of Isfahan and Kurdistan.

Why do the Iranian and Pakistani authorities take such inhuman actions that contradict their own declaration about concern for the refugees? A statement issued by the DRA Foreign Ministry on this subject says that in the first place refugees are being used by the authorities of those countries as an instrument of armed aggression against the DRA. Second, their presence serves as a pretext for asking for more foreign military and economic aid. And, third, the people who have been deprived of their homeland have become a means of expanding the anti-Afghan propaganda campaign both in neighbouring countries and in the West. That is why both Islamabad and Teheran are trying to prevent a mass return of refugees to Afghanistan.

And yet, with every passing day more and more Afghans are coming home, despite all the obstacles. Having waited for the snow to melt in the mountain passes, finding all sorts of pretexts to escape the watchful eye of the camp guards, and taking advantage of the help frontier tribes friendly to Afghanistan offer them, they have set out for the Afghan border at their own risk and peril. During the five months that the policy of

national reconciliation has been in effect, 59,000 Afghans have returned to their homes.

The Afghan leadership is making every effort to make it easier for the refugees to return and to break up the blockade. A message sent to the UN Secretary-General contains a request to facilitate the return of Afghans to their country and to arrange visits to the camps by delegations from the extraordinary Commission on National Reconciliation and public organizations of the DRA. The DRA government has requested the governments of Pakistan and Iran to allow charter flights to bring refugees home. This request also remains in force.

CREATION AGAINST DESTRUCTION

The war brought countless misfortunes to the Afghan people. Suffice it to say that the direct economic damage of the mujaheddin terror runs into more than a thousand million dollars. Hundreds of thousands of people have been torn away from peaceful labour and are not working to create material values. The infrastructure and traditional ties between economic areas have been disrupted.

Adopting the policy of national reconciliation, the Afghan leadership has stated that it believes successful economic growth to be the most important means of restoring peace in Afghanistan. The policy of reconciliation is setting creation against destruction. The people's government is creating jobs for the Afghans returning to a peaceful life and allocating funds for the development of the health services and education.

Over the past five years a quarter of all investments has been spent on social needs. Investments in the national economy during this period amount to 90,000 million afghanis, which is more than the allocations on all government development programmes prior to the 1978 revolution. Forty thousand new jobs are created in the

public sector every year. Over the past Afghan year, which ended on March 20, the gross national product increased by three per cent while national income climbed four per cent.

The land reform is aimed at raising the well-being of middle, small and landless peasants. The maximum size of private holdings has been increased as compared with the early 1980s. The government is extending more economic and technical assistance not only to cooperatives, but also to individual farmers, thus encouraging them to make better use of their land.

The objective behind the new approach to agrarian changes is to enable all sectors of the rural population without exception to be affected by the beneficial results of the policy of reconciliation and to take an active part in its implementation.

The private sector accounts for 52 per cent of the gross industrial output. It is clear that if private enterprise is not encouraged national economic development will be lopsided. Our government is expanding mutually beneficial cooperation with the private sector on terms of most favoured treatment. The state is laying down both the economic and legal foundations for long-term cooperation with the private sector.

In April 1987, shortly before the 9th anniversary of the revolution, the Revolutionary Council adopted a new law on private investments. In keeping with this law local and foreign businessmen planning to invest their capital in the Afghan economy are granted a number of benefits. The period of exemption from income and business taxes has been extended from two to six years, customs duties on imported raw materials have been lowered from 20 to 10 per cent, and loan terms have been made easier. Foreign businessmen are allowed to take up to 40 per cent of their annual earnings out of the country.

The law was the culmination of a series of measures aimed at revitalizing the private sector. The first results of this policy are already visible now. While 339 new

private firms have been set up over the nine years since the revolution, 115 such firms with capital totalling 1,600 million afghanis have been established over the last year alone.

About 400 people attended the first national conference of private producers held in Kabul in mid-April this year. They included traders and industrialists from every province, numerous foreign delegations, representatives of trading firms and associations from India, Japan, Hong Kong, Lebanon, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet Union. One of them, Mr. David Jeng of Hong Kong, said that he and his partners intended to start buying Afghan rugs and items made by folk craftsmen. Such items are in high demand in Hong Kong but at that point they were coming into the country in only small batches and, furthermore, through third countries. In turn, Afghanistan will be able to expand its purchases of equipment, tools, and household utensils.

The Soviet Union is also expanding its cooperation with the Afghan private sector. In April 1987 the USSR and the DRA signed an agreement in Kabul on economic and technological cooperation in building a number of projects in Afghanistan involving the Afghan private sector. In compliance with this accord, the USSR is to supply the Afghan side with credit on easy terms. Soviet organizations are to carry out the necessary designing and surveying work, to supply materials, machines, and spare parts, and to assist the Afghans in assembling equipment, adjusting it and putting it into operation. As the protocol to the agreement envisages, the first projects of this kind will be a bakery and a bicycle assembly factory in Kabul, a flour mill in Shibarghan, and a leather shoe factory in Mazar-i-Sharif.

...Rasul Barat is young, just a little over thirty. He was one of those businessmen who, unlike many of their colleagues, did not leave Afghanistan after the revolution. The Barat family invested a considerable part of their capital in the national economy, that is, they did precisely what the people's government expected all

patriotic members of the Afghan business community to do. Today he is a millionaire and owns three factories, one transit and two export-import companies.

"We have expected such a step from the government—the declaration of a policy of national reconciliation," Rasul Barat told journalists at the conference of private producers. "The private sector has suffered a great deal from the war. We are sustaining big losses and losing control over filling the market. Many of us have been blackmailed by agents of the so-called 'Islamic parties.' We stand for a speedy reconciliation. Our path is one that leads from national reconciliation to national concord."

ONE HAND IS NOT ENOUGH FOR A HANDSHAKE

This is an Afghan proverb. Although the initial successes have been achieved in the national reconciliation policy, the country's leadership frankly says that the policy has not yet produced the desired results. There has not yet been a radical change in the situation that has evolved over the past eight years. Dr. Najib contends that it would be naive to think that the undeclared war against Afghanistan could end right away.

Immediately after the 1978 revolution the US Administration still did not dare to speak of a "Soviet threat" in Afghanistan. Henry Kissinger admitted at the time that there were no Moscow fingerprints on the Afghan revolution. The war began under a veil of secrecy.

In June 1978, i.e. two months after the victory of the April revolution in Afghanistan, the NATO command held a symposium in the US city of Annapolis for the purposes of discussing the "events in Afghanistan" and "their consequences for the United States." It was decided there to render extensive support to Afghan counter-revolutionary formations. The Central Intelligence Agency was made responsible for the im-

plementation of this programme. The CIA's regional headquarters were transferred from Teheran to the Pakistani city of Peshawar. The coordination of all activities was entrusted to Robert Lessard, an "expert" on South-West Asia who was expelled from Afghanistan in 1974 for spying. A network of training camps supervised by Western instructors was established along the Afghan-Pakistani border. By the end of 1979 about 100,000 bandits had been trained in these camps and armed counter-revolutionary bands were operating in 18 out of the 26 Afghan provinces.

The counter-revolutionary activities were dangerous not only for the April revolution but also for the unity and integrity of Afghanistan. It became known that an operation of air-borne mercenary units that had been trained and armed in Pakistan was scheduled for the beginning of 1980 for the purposes of capturing all the major Afghan cities.

As a result of the large-scale armed interference of the United States and its allies in the internal affairs of the sovereign state, our country made repeated requests to the Soviet Union in 1979 for military assistance. Taking into consideration the real danger of the outside aggression leading to the loss by Afghanistan of its independence as well as the threat to the security of the Soviet southern borders, the USSR sent a limited contingent of its troops to Afghanistan. This step was taken on the basis of Article 4 of the 1978 Soviet-Afghan Treaty of Friendship, Goodneighbourliness and Cooperation which says that the USSR and Afghanistan shall hold consultations and "take the appropriate measures for ensuring the security, independence and territorial integrity of both countries." The actions of the Soviet Union and the DRA fully correspond to Article 51 of the UN Charter, which lays down the inalienable right of any state to collective self-defence.

The DRA and the USSR are in favour of a political settlement of the situation around Afghanistan and are for a withdrawal of Soviet troops on the basis of such a

settlement. Realistic ways of normalizing the situation around Afghanistan were outlined in the statements of the DRA's government of May 14, 1980 and of August 24, 1981. They say that the ultimate goal and main content of a political settlement should be a complete and guaranteed end to armed and other outside interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan and a situation where such interference is impossible. Several rounds of indirect Afghan-Pakistani negotiations have been held in Geneva on the basis of these initiatives and with the participation of a personal representative of the UN Secretary-General. As a result, the sides have achieved certain progress and have reached an agreement on important documents concerning the normalization of relations between the two countries, their non-interference in each other's internal affairs and the voluntary return home of refugees. Now all that must be done is to reach a final agreement on the document specifying the international guarantees of mutual non-interference. The outcome of the negotiations, as the General Secretary of the PDPA Central Committee Najib has stated more than once, depends on the Pakistani side. According to him, if Pakistan takes a constructive stand, then there will be a real possibility of achieving further progress.

The position of the USSR is absolutely clear. Speaking in Vladivostok on July 28, 1986, the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee Mikhail Gorbachev said: "...We are ready to recall Soviet troops stationed in Afghanistan at the request of its government." This stand has since then been repeatedly reaffirmed.

Having thoroughly analyzed the evolving situation and having held consultations with the DRA government, the Soviet leadership withdrew from Afghanistan six regiments with their hardware and other materiel in October 1986, in an attempt to speed up the achievement of a political settlement by giving the process a new impetus. In taking this step the Soviet Union also proceeded from the premise that those who organize and

carry out armed intervention against the DRA would understand and duly appreciate the Soviet measure. The appropriate response to this measure would be the curtailment of outside interference in the internal affairs of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. When the basic principles of the political settlement have been worked out in their entirety, the withdrawal of all Soviet troops from Afghanistan can be accelerated accordingly. The USSR has come to an agreement with the Afghan leadership about the schedule of the troops' pullout.

The policy of national reconciliation creates objective internal and external prerequisites for a political settlement and hence for a withdrawal of the Soviet troops. But this obviously does not suit the organizers of the undeclared war against our country.

Exactly one day after Kabul announced the course of national reconciliation, the White House press secretary denounced this policy as a "meaningless move." The CIA's regional headquarters was also quick to react to Afghanistan's initiative: all the "Islamic parties" controlled by the spy agency rejected the proposal for a cease-fire and negotiations out of hand. As Dr. Najib noted, the demand made by the more aggressive circles of counter-revolutionaries—that the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan not be given any seats in a coalition government—is consonant with the sentiments of the White House which is opposed to having the DRA chair the talks on a settlement. Since April 1987 the counter-revolutionaries have been working to form what they call the "national mujaheddin council," a body which, for the purposes of provocation, has given itself the title of a "transitional government."

The US financial backing of the undeclared war has reached unprecedented proportions. Some 670 million dollars will be spent on this war in 1987. The arsenals of the inveterate enemies of the April revolution are being replenished with ever greater quantities of such modern terrorist weapons as the Stinger rocket.

The Pakistani Administration has been put under pres-

sure. Using the time-tested carrot-and-stick policy, Washington threatened Zia-ul-Hak that it would cut off its 4,020 million-dollar military and economic aid. At the same time negotiations were started on leasing AWACS planes to the Pakistani Armed Forces.

As a result, in spite of the growing protest in Pakistan against the rendering of support to the Afghan counter-revolution, at a session of the Pakistani parliament President Zia-ul-Hak claimed that the undeclared war being waged by the United States and its allies against Afghanistan was a "Pakistani war."

Pakistan has gone even further down the path of shameful provocations. In a display of loyalty to the anti-Afghan schemes of the White House on March 30 the Pakistani military commanded F-16 fighter-bombers to bring down a passenger plane flying over Afghan territory. Judging from comments made by military experts, Pakistani generals were instrumental in the staging of a bandit provocation which involved the firing of rockets at Soviet territory. There is no doubt that all this is aimed at undermining the progress achieved at the Afghan-Pakistani negotiations in Geneva and at abandoning dialogue in order to return to military confrontation.

Hundreds of Stinger rockets have been distributed among counter-revolutionary bands on the territory of Pakistan. The very fact that they have been given to Afghan bandits, who have entrenched themselves on Pakistani territory, shows that the United States regards Pakistan as its military base rather than a sovereign state. Meanwhile, this weapon is getting farther and farther out of control. According to the US weekly *Spotlight*, some thirty Stingers were bought by Middle-Eastern terrorist organizations on the Pakistani black market in April 1987.

This is by far not the only factor that takes the Afghan war out of the framework of a "local conflict." The nations of the region watch in alarm as Pakistan, backed by the United States, comes in virtual possession of the atomic bomb and the means of its delivery. This has again aggravated the situation on the Indian-Pakistani border.

A SETTLEMENT IS STILL POSSIBLE

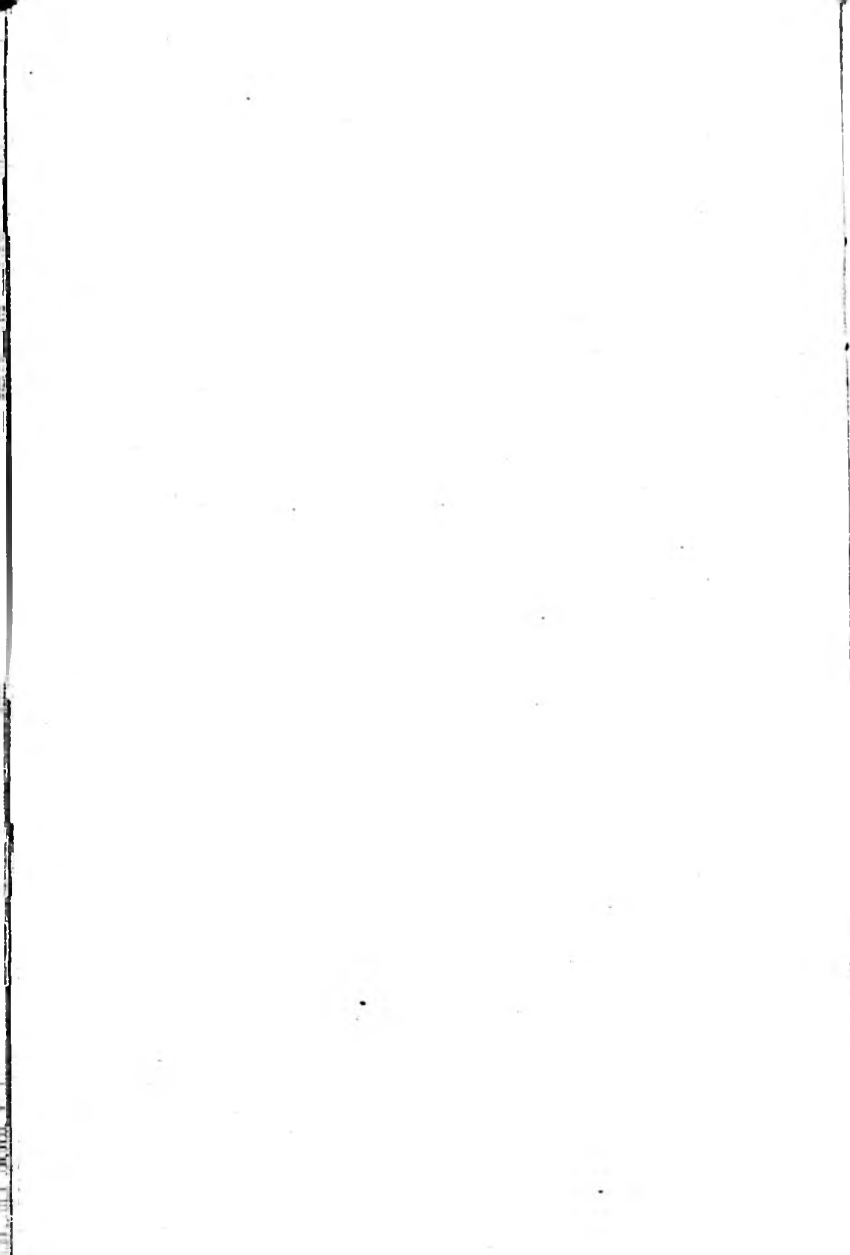
Despite the desparate attempts by the enemies of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan to frustrate the process of national reconciliation, our people have not lost hope for an early political settlement and an end to the war. Millions of people in Afghanistan now realize that there is no alternative to the policy of national reconciliation; it is the only way for the country to make progress. Time will pass—we won't even try to guess how much—and there will be peace in the country. Firm dates and deadlines cannot be fixed for this process ahead of time. What has been started must be continued. That is why Dr. Najib said in June 1987: "We are going to extend the freeze on military operations." July 16 will not be the day the road to peace was closed, or, for those who have not yet made their choice, the day the door to their home closed.

The chances for a settlement are also becoming greater due to the support of developing and progressive countries, as well as the non-aligned movement, for the national reconciliation policy being pursued by Afghanistan. This is not surprising, for the DRA's peace programme invites neighbouring countries to start direct and honest talks on all outstanding issues. The programme also calls on them to work out bilateral agreements on normalizing relations, which would lay down the principles of mutual respect for each other's sovereignty, goodneighbourliness and non-interference in each other's affairs. Another important aspect of the programme is the proposal that in the process of the political settlement the necessity be taken into consideration of turning South-West Asia into a zone of peace, of eliminating all the military bases there and of carrying out other measures to reduce military tensions in the region.

The DRA's political initiatives echo the spirit of the Bandung Declaration and the five Panch Sheel principles of peaceful coexistence. There is therefore every

reason to believe that the bold and constructive steps the Afghan leadership has taken towards national reconciliation can objectively serve as a reference point in the search for ways of solving conflict situations in the Asia-Pacific and other regions of the world.

A just settlement to the situation around Afghanistan and an immediate end to the imperialist interference in the DRA's internal affairs will prevent tensions from escalating dangerously. The search for peace in Afghanistan and the policy of national reconciliation help normalize the situation in Asia and improve the political climate in the world.



Мухаммад Ашраф
АФГАНИСТАН: ТРУДНЫЙ ПУТЬ К МИРУ
на английском языке
Цена 20 к.

The DRA's government is continuing to search for ways of ending the fratricidal war in Afghanistan. The policy of national reconciliation which was announced on its initiative on January 15, 1987 provides for

— A CEASE-FIRE AND RENUNCIATION OF THE ARMED STRUGGLE IN SETTLING ISSUES PERTAINING TO AFGHANISTAN'S PRESENT AND FUTURE;

— JUST REPRESENTATION IN THE POLITICAL STRUCTURE AND NATIONAL ECONOMY;

— NON-PERSECUTION FOR PREVIOUS POLITICAL ACTIVITIES AND GENERAL AMNESTY;

— THE PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF HISTORICAL, NATIONAL AND CULTURAL TRADITIONS, AND RESPECT FOR THE HOLY RELIGION OF ISLAM.

What are the first results of this policy? Who is against it? The reader will find the answers to these and other questions in the booklet

"AFGHANISTAN: A DIFFICULT PATH TO PEACE"



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