

**MAKING
THE RUSSIANS
BLEED****Selig S. Harrison**

Moscow made its first serious attempt to find a way out of the Afghan quagmire during the fifteen-month tenure of Yuri Andropov, from November 1982 until his death in February 1984. Andropov no longer displayed the ambivalence that had marked his attitude toward the 1979 decision to intervene. In internal Communist party debates he became increasingly critical of the occupation as a serious blunder likely to entail growing economic, social, and diplomatic costs for the Soviet Union.

Many of his close associates cite persuasive evidence that Andropov was prepared to withdraw Soviet forces under the aegis of the United Nations despite opposition from the armed forces and from more orthodox Communist leaders. By all accounts, however, he envisaged a withdrawal on terms considerably more favorable to the Soviet Union than those that Mikhail Gorbachev accepted five years later. Precisely what type of settlement he was ready to accept was never tested because Pakistan and the United States were in no mood to bargain. With the Cold War at full tilt, the dominant power groups in Islamabad and Washington deeply distrusted Soviet motives in the U.N. negotiations and regarded it as desirable, in any case, to keep Soviet forces pinned down in a no-win commitment.

In April 1988 Gorbachev agreed to a withdrawal scenario that left the Kabul regime in place but gave no assurance of its survival and carefully sidestepped the issue of its legitimacy. Andropov, by contrast, insisted that Islamabad acknowledge the regime's legitimacy. But he offered to replace Karmal, detested by most Afghans as a Soviet puppet, with a less controversial personality who would share power with non-Communist elements.

For Andropov, the key to the preservation of the regime was to be a projected Pakistani commitment in the U.N. agreement to stop aiding the resistance, in return for the withdrawal and for a reciprocal commitment by Kabul not to aid antigovernment forces in Pakistan. At first, when the U.N. negotiations with Andropov began in April 1983, Islamabad appeared ready to make such a commitment in conjunction with an informal agreement on an acceptable successor to Karmal. As the negotiations proceeded, however, the military regime in Islamabad, prodded by the Reagan Administration, gradually reversed course. The serious prospect of a settlement following the April round of the U.N. Geneva talks forced a showdown in Islamabad. On one side were Yaqub and others who were prepared to compromise in order to secure a withdrawal; on the other side were military leaders, including Zia, who regarded the war as the key to their American support and were content to see it continue indefinitely.

Zia later told me in a conversation shortly before his death that his goals, from the beginning of the war, were to destroy the Communist infrastructure, install a client regime, and bring about a "strategic realignment" in South Asia. "We have earned the right to have a friendly regime there," he declared. "We took risks as a frontline state, and we won't permit it to be like it was before, with Indian and Soviet influence there and claims on our territory. It will be a real Islamic state, part of a pan-Islamic revival that will one day win over the Muslims in the Soviet Union, you will see."¹

"A Capacity for Realism"

Andropov continues to be a subject of controversy among historians both in the Soviet Union and abroad. Uncritical admirers depict him as a visionary and a reformer with Western tastes and liberal inclinations who would eventually have done more or less what Gorbachev did if he had not fallen victim to a fatal kidney disorder.² His critics, focusing on his record as KGB chief, argue that he was a Stalinist in disguise.³ In this view, he was a more skillful manipulator of Western public opinion than his predecessor but pursued substantially similar domestic and foreign policies that were designed to preserve the status quo.

The reality appears to lie somewhere between these two extremes. Andropov emerges on close analysis as a sophisticated realist who recognized that the country was deteriorating internally and was overextended abroad but was cautious in taking corrective measures. In domestic affairs, his goal was not to replace the Communist system but to create what he called a "civilized socialist order" through a process of carefully managed reform. He was preoccupied with enforcing worker discipline and with ridding the Communist Party of corruption. At the same time, he consciously set the stage for reform by sponsoring a younger generation of Communist leaders who shared his belief in the need for change.

In foreign affairs, he had often differed over the years with Andrei Gromyko and other hard-liners, favoring a more flexible, less doctrinaire approach on

numerous issues. Thus, when he came to power, it was not surprising that he was at the forefront of those in the leadership who were reassessing the costs and the benefits of the Soviet role in the Third World, above all in Afghanistan.

The first demonstrations of Andropov's independence on foreign policy issues came during his tenure as Director of the International Department of the Central Committee from 1957 to 1963. He strongly opposed Nikita Khrushchev's decision to recall all Soviet technicians from China in 1960 as a riposte to Beijing's persistent anti-Soviet propaganda. Sinologist Lev Deliusin, who was his principal adviser on China, recalled that "he felt we should not overreact in anger, merely to strike a pose. We had provided the advisers on certain agreed terms, and he felt we should keep our word, taking a long-term view."⁴ Similarly, as the war in Vietnam began to heat up, Andropov wanted the Soviet Union to press North Vietnam for a political and diplomatic approach to the problem. "Gromyko didn't understand the complexity of the problem," Deliusin told me, "and he didn't want to understand. He encouraged [North] Vietnam to seek a military solution. Andropov argued that the problem was essentially political and that a way should be found to deal with the Americans diplomatically."

When Andropov went to Hanoi on a special mission in 1964 after becoming a secretary of the Central Committee, Deliusin accompanied him. "He convinced our Vietnamese friends, with great difficulty, that they should make contact with America through Poland and France to find a way out," Deliusin stated. Gromyko, albeit skeptical, did not block Andropov, and the Paris peace talks on Vietnam eventually resulted.

Deliusin painted a picture of a "contradictory man with one foot in the old orthodoxy but a capacity for realism and a very open style. He was a man who liked to discuss problems very frankly and listen to a variety of views." Valentin Falin, who also worked closely with Andropov, depicts him in the same vein as a man who "knew how to listen and to think realistically, not dogmatically."⁵

Andropov became chief of the KGB in 1967 but did not begin to play a decisive foreign policy role until his rise to the second-ranking position in the Politburo following the death of Suslov in January 1982. According to Georgiy Kornienko, who was then First Deputy Foreign Minister, it was Andropov's strong support in the Politburo during early 1982 that opened the way for Soviet cooperation with a U.N. mediation role in Afghanistan.⁶ Andropov's attitude, said Falin, differed markedly from that of Gromyko, who had "hesitated initially about the idea of inviting the United Nations to help solve the problem." Following visits to Afghanistan in late 1981 and early 1982, Falin said, Andropov "began to say that we should be looking for a political rather than a military solution. He became rather disgusted with our Afghan friends, who were only too ready to give the honor of fighting to the Soviet troops while they themselves were too busy with factional quarrels, even the Afghan Army itself." Falin remembers several conversations in which Andropov expressed such views, especially one in October 1982 when "[Andropov] felt it was evident we had to do something to get out. But for him it was harder to do this than it was

for Gorbachev because Andropov undoubtedly took part in the decision to introduce our forces.”

Kornienko said that when Andropov visited Kabul in February 1982, he concluded that the Afghan government should be broadened to include non-Communists in prominent positions but that “he failed to get Babrak Karmal to agree.” This encounter with Karmal was to prove important in shaping Andropov’s favorable response to Pakistan’s demand for the replacement of the Afghan leader in the early stages of the 1983 round of U.N. negotiations. A KGB official who accompanied Andropov said that he caught chicken pox on this trip, touching off the chain reaction of medical problems that culminated in his death two years later.⁷

After Andropov became General Secretary of the Communist Party in November 1982, his initial signals on Afghanistan created the fleeting impression that big changes were in the making. Following Brezhnev’s funeral on November 12, Andropov made a point of meeting privately for forty minutes with Zia and his Foreign Minister, Yaqub Khan, prompting Zia to report “a new freshness and flexibility on the Soviet side.”⁸ Yaqub recalled that Andropov was “in a reflective mood and gave us the impression that there were divisions within the Politburo on Afghanistan, that he had been involved in an agonizing decision taken against what he thought right. He seemed earnest about the importance of finding a solution but under great strain.”⁹ Speaking in New York a week later, Zia declared that “there now exists on the Soviet side a recognition of the need for an early resolution of the crisis.”¹⁰

By December 16 *Pravda* had reaffirmed a tough line, referring to the “irrevocable” nature of the Afghan revolution,¹¹ and by December 31 Tass had declared Moscow’s intention to “fulfil up to the end its internationalist duty” toward what it described as “the legal government” in Kabul.¹² The reason for this volte face was that Andropov’s freedom of action in foreign affairs was constrained by a running power struggle with his defeated rival, Konstantin Chernenko, who was allied with Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov, chief of staff of the armed forces. Just ten days after his meeting with Zia, the limitations on his power were sharply underlined at meetings of the Central Committee and the Supreme Soviet on November 22 and 23. Faced with Chernenko’s opposition, Andropov was unable to win approval for his appointees as secretary in charge of two key Central Committee departments, and the posts were left vacant for six months. Both men wanted the presidency of the Supreme Soviet, a position that carried with it the chairmanship of the Defense Council. Andropov was strong enough to block Chernenko but was forced to keep these posts vacant until he could take them over himself in May 1983.

As Ivan Zemtsov has observed, “Andropov was the conductor but not the maestro,” presiding over a collective leadership in which varying degrees of his power were delegated to others, especially after he began dialysis for a kidney ailment in February 1983. Ogarkov controlled the armed forces; Andrei Gromyko, foreign policy; G. A. Aliev, the Azerbaijan party boss, the security services; N. A. Tikhonov, the domestic economy, and Chernenko, the party apparatus.¹³

Gromyko had supported Andropov as the successor to Brezhnev but had more orthodox views on many foreign policy issues. His power was enhanced when he became First Deputy Prime Minister in addition to Foreign Minister in March. In pushing his foreign policy initiatives, Andropov also had to deal with Chernenko directly as chairman of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Supreme Soviet.

Defense Minister Dmitri Ustinov, like Gromyko, had helped Andropov to win power and exacted, in return, considerable autonomy. But it was Marshal Ogarkov who dominated defense policy. On numerous issues, Ogarkov was pushing hard-line policies that brought him into a collision with Andropov, among them what to do in Afghanistan and whether to seek a diplomatic compromise with the Reagan Administration over its deployment of intermediate-range missiles in Europe. At several points during his brief tenure, Andropov attempted to engineer Ogarkov's replacement with Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev, who espoused more flexible positions and was later to become a key adviser to Gorbachev.

In his very first pronouncements after taking power, Andropov made clear that he wanted to move in new directions. He created a sensation in his inaugural address as the new General Secretary at the November 22 Central Committee plenum. Pointing to the need for decentralization and autonomy in the administration of state enterprises and collective farms, he suggested that it was "necessary to assess and take into consideration the experience of fraternal countries." This seemingly modest comment challenged sixty-five years of Soviet propaganda that had enshrined Moscow as the infallible trailblazer in socialism, offering the model that all others should emulate. Andropov followed up this bombshell with a variety of further criticisms of Soviet economic performance that set the stage for Gorbachev's subsequent reforms. Sergei Rogov of the U.S.A.-Canada Institute has emphasized that Andropov's readiness to take a realistic new look at Soviet domestic conditions led naturally to his recognition that the Afghan occupation was a mistake. "Once you depart from the idea of the Soviet Union as a fulfilled social dream," Rogov said, "once you concede you are not perfect, then you naturally begin to question a foreign policy that includes the export of your model and your mistakes to other places."¹⁴

One of the themes in Andropov's November 22 speech that recurred frequently in later months was that new economic and military commitments abroad should be restricted in order to permit greater attention to remedying economic ills at home. Andropov cited as scripture a statement by Lenin that "we are exercising our main influence on the world revolutionary process through our own economic policy."¹⁵ Two days later, Chernenko, writing in a party journal, countered by quoting another statement by Lenin that "Soviet power gave the world revolution priority over any national sacrifices, however hard they may be."¹⁶

Andropov confronted an unyielding anti-Soviet posture in Washington that made it increasingly difficult for him to justify new foreign policy initiatives in internal Soviet debates. Nevertheless, on December 21, in his keynote address at celebrations marking the sixtieth anniversary of the Soviet state, he offered

Washington major arms control concessions that went "far beyond the reductions called for in SALT II."¹⁷ In return, he asked for a halt to the projected U.S. missile deployments in Europe. This conciliatory approach contrasted markedly with the bitter condemnation of American arms control policies by Gromyko and by official party organs identified with the Foreign Minister. The ambivalent signals coming out of Moscow during this period were reflected in continuing tension between spokesmen for Gromyko and prominent commentators who had behind-the-scenes encouragement from Andropov.¹⁸

In a year-end interview with an American correspondent, Andropov suggested a summit meeting with President Reagan, and a week later, the Political Declaration issued by the Warsaw Pact summit gave unprecedented emphasis to accommodation with the West. Andropov attended this summit, his first and only trip abroad as General Secretary. Foreshadowing Gorbachev's "new thinking," the Declaration focused not on the class struggle but on the "global problems of a social, economic, demographic, and ecological character faced by mankind." It called for swift, informal U.S.-Soviet troop and arms cuts in Europe and endorsed the U.N. mediation effort on Afghanistan that had just been initiated.¹⁹

"Andropov wanted to make significant changes in our international policy," recalled Vadim Zagladin, "but he did not have enough time in office. Another very important thing was that he was not well much of the time and that gave Gromyko a free hand. Andropov was particularly interested in missiles in Europe, and Afghanistan, but there were also many personalities who were against him. In the case of Afghanistan, these were the same personalities who had insisted on the decision to go in."²⁰

Pakistan Reverses Course

In contrast to the rigid attitudes on the Afghan issue that were still widespread within the Soviet leadership, Soviet public opinion had become increasingly hostile to the war by the time that Andropov took power. "Whereas only a few people in the Soviet Union openly protested the sending of troops into Prague in 1968," former Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze has written, "after 1979 the majority condemned the Afghan adventure either directly or indirectly."²¹

Soviet specialists on Afghanistan in research institutes linked to the Central Committee, whose doubts about Soviet military intervention had been ignored during the Brezhnev years, found a more hospitable reception after Andropov took over. When Yuri Gankovsky prepared a forty-five-page report for the Foreign Ministry in January 1983 calling for a reappraisal of Afghan policy, Andropov's office asked for an abstract. Three days later, Gankovsky said, Andropov telephoned him. "He expressed his surprise and asked me whether the situation was really that bad. It was quite clear from several questions he raised that he was thinking in terms of some sort of settlement. But he was very preoccupied at that time with other things." In early February Andropov sent Gankovsky and sixteen other specialists to Kabul to assess the situation.

As the *Times* of London observed, Andropov made his first move to prepare the way for possible diplomatic moves on Afghanistan in late February by orchestrating “a spate of articles . . . publicly proclaiming what before was only whispered: that ‘our boys’ in Afghanistan are being slaughtered by rebels, and that the rebel forces are sufficiently powerful and skilled in mountain warfare to pin down both Soviet troops and armor.”²² In early March the *Washington Post* reported a consensus of diplomats in Moscow that Andropov was seeking “to hasten efforts toward a political resolution of the problem by opening it up to internal discussion and by creating a sense of crisis about Afghanistan.”²³

Minutes of a March 10 Politburo meeting show that Gromyko was sanguine about the prospects for sustaining the Communist regime in Kabul and was opposed to accepting a withdrawal timetable at the April round of Geneva negotiations then approaching. Seeking approval for a three-year, \$222 million Afghan aid program, he declared that “the situation is stabilizing. Right now, at this point, we should not give Pakistan a concrete time frame for the withdrawal of our troops. We have to do everything we can to find a mutually acceptable settlement, but one can tell this will be a long process.”

Andropov struck a more ambivalent note. Recalling the “difficult” decision to send troops to Afghanistan, he questioned such large aid outlays, calling for a “political” approach that would permit a “flexible” response to developments in Kabul and Geneva. “In solving the Afghan problem,” he said, “we must proceed from the existing realities. What do you expect? This is a feudal country, where the tribes have always been masters in their own territory. What matters is not Pakistan’s position. Our adversary is American imperialism, and that is why we cannot give up.”²⁴

On the eve of the April round of U.N. negotiations, Cordovez and Pérez de Cuéllar conferred with Andropov on March 28 in an historic hour-long encounter. The Soviet leader’s urgent emphasis on the need for an early settlement and his credible exposition of why he wanted one led the Secretary General to declare that he was “full of optimism concerning the possibility of settling this problem. My talks with the Soviet leaders were extremely interesting, and I found them supportive of my endeavor.”²⁵

What Andropov said to Pérez de Cuéllar and Cordovez on March 28 and what transpired in the hopeful April round and the abortive June round will be recounted in detail by Cordovez in Chapter 5. On the surface, the negotiations on the draft agreement focused on the language that would make clear Pakistani and American willingness to cut off aid; on the legal form of the commitment to withdraw Soviet forces; and on whether Pakistan would finalize the provisions covering the termination of aid before Moscow gave its withdrawal timetable. Yaqub did agree in April to finalize the aid cutoff clauses, but on the condition that they would take effect only as part of a package deal that included an acceptable withdrawal timetable. Equally important, Yaqub had shown flexibility on another critical issue that went beyond the text of the agreement itself: the future of the Kabul regime.

In Andropov’s eyes, this was the transcendent issue in the negotiations. He

was not prepared to see the replacement of the Communist regime. According to Kornienko and Gankovsky, he envisaged a settlement in which a modified, more broadly based version of the regime would continue in place following the Soviet withdrawal and the Army and the security services would remain intact under their existing leadership. However, he was prepared to consider the replacement of Karmal with a less controversial successor who would give a significant role to non-Communists, as he had unsuccessfully urged Karmal to do during his 1982 visit to the Afghan capital. Once this was done, he would expect Pakistan to negotiate directly with the new regime.

During the prelude to the April round, Yaqub had treated this approach as an acceptable one. On November 25, 1982, Yaqub had told me in New York that "we can turn the clock back to early 1979. We can restore something like the situation that obtained just before the Soviets came in—that is, a 'national Communist' setup. But we seriously doubt that we can turn the clock back before the Communists took over in 1978." He recalled that Pakistan had recognized the Communist regime prior to the Soviet occupation. The key to a settlement, he said, was the replacement of Karmal, who had become a symbol of the occupation. Then he pointedly reminded me of Zia's frequent statements that "he could not shake hands with the man who had come riding into Kabul on a Soviet tank."

I told him that Soviet diplomats had indicated a willingness to replace Karmal with Prime Minister Sultan Ali Keshtmand, a technocrat who had not played a prominent role in the ruling PDPA. Would this be acceptable? Pakistan would go ahead with a settlement that contained satisfactory withdrawal provisions, he replied, provided that "anyone but Karmal" became the leader of the Kabul regime. But he added a caveat: The settlement should take the form of a U.N. declaration rather than a bilateral treaty with Kabul that would signify Pakistani recognition of the Kabul regime.

Yaqub has acknowledged that the Keshtmand scenario was discussed "informally" with Cordovez during the April negotiations.²⁶ What Pakistan would have preferred, writes one of his top aides, was "a meaningful, broad-based government marked by political compromise, possibly involving Zahir Shah. . . . But it was felt that a cosmetic change, Keshtmand for Karmal, would make it difficult for Pakistan to refuse to conclude an agreement or to resist direct talks with the new Afghan government."²⁷

The optimism generated by the April round resulted primarily from the hope that a compromise between Moscow and Islamabad on the Kabul regime was in the offing. But this hope proved to be short-lived. As we shall see, by June 9, when Yaqub visited Moscow on the eve of the June round, a split had developed within the Pakistani leadership over what would constitute an acceptable settlement and how rapidly Islamabad could move toward an accord without alienating the United States, conservative Arab patrons, and Afghan resistance groups. This split explains why Yaqub, operating with a limited mandate, backed away from the position he had taken in April.

Precisely what happened during Yaqub's Moscow visit remains a subject of dispute. According to the Soviet version, instead of confirming that Pakistan

accepted the aid cutoff provisions and was prepared to implement them in conjunction with a satisfactory withdrawal timetable, Yaqub told Gromyko that the agreement was "wide open" and that Islamabad would give its final acceptance to the aid cutoff plan only when and if Moscow simultaneously put forward its timetable. Instead of suggesting a face-lifting and broadening of the Kabul regime, to be arranged by Moscow, he spoke of a process of "self-determination" that would lead to its replacement.

Yaqub acknowledged several months later that he had reversed course, blaming a statement by Cordovez in early May that "the draft text of the settlement was 95 percent completed." "This stirred up all the people in Islamabad and abroad who opposed the settlement," he told me during a New York dinner conversation. "It became necessary to slow down and to cool it, to placate the feelings of the Afghan refugees and of our allies that we were doing something behind their backs."²⁸ But in any case, Yaqub explained, Gromyko's concept of a package deal was not what Pakistan thought had been accepted in April. Islamabad wanted one integrated agreement to which all parties would subscribe. Gromyko insisted that the withdrawal timetable be covered only in a Moscow-Kabul agreement, with the aid cutoff to be contained in a separate Kabul-Islamabad agreement. Moreover, the Soviet leader was "uneasy," Yaqub said, about the very idea of a precise withdrawal timetable.

Vasily Safronchuk, who later became an Undersecretary General of the United Nations, directed Afghan policy in the Soviet Foreign Ministry in 1983 and was present at the meeting between Gromyko and the Pakistani leader. He said that the change in Yaqub's attitude between April and June was evident immediately, producing a corresponding stiffening in the Soviet position. "They kept harping on the timetable for the withdrawal," he observed, "but what was the point of talking about the timetable if they were not prepared to conclude an agreement with the other party in the negotiations?"²⁹

Andropov's dilemma was that the PDPA was widely viewed internationally as a Communist party even though Moscow had vacillated on the doctrinal issue of whether the party was "national democratic" or Communist in character. Whether or not the abandonment of the PDPA would have actually violated the Brezhnev Doctrine, it would have been perceived as doing so, he feared, thus potentially setting in motion forces that could have undermined Communist regimes in eastern Europe. Andropov was prepared to dilute the PDPA's power. Unlike Gorbachev, however, he was not ready to risk an uncertain political outcome that could lead to an anti-Soviet regime. In an interview with the West German news magazine *Der Spiegel*, he asked: "Would the United States not care what kind of government rules in Nicaragua? Nicaragua is an enormous distance from America. We have a common border with Afghanistan, and we are defending our national interests by helping Afghanistan."³⁰

Karmal continually criticized the U.N. mediation process, demanding that Pakistan agree to direct talks with Cordovez present. Safronchuk said that only continuing Soviet pressure had forced Karmal to accept mediation and to accede to the pivotal Cordovez formula under which Kabul would agree not to aid antigovernment forces in Pakistan in return for the projected commitment by

Islamabad to stop aiding the resistance. Kabul insisted that any concessions be made in direct talks. "We knew that Pakistan would not agree to that," Saffronchuk explained, "but we were not prepared for their refusal to have anything to do with Kabul at any stage. They made clear that they were not prepared to conclude an agreement either directly or indirectly with any PDPA regime. Their position has been quite consistent since 1983. They have always intended to install a regime of their choice in Kabul."

Gennadi Yevstafiev, then a special assistant to Pérez de Cuéllar, told me on several occasions during 1983 that Andropov had been prepared to offer an eight-month timetable in the June round until the Pakistani volte face.³¹ If Yaqub had been willing to sign a bilateral agreement with Kabul, the timetable could have been written directly into it. But in any case, he stated, the eight-month commitment would have been conveyed to the Secretary General and would have been spelled out formally in a Moscow-Kabul agreement. Pérez de Cuéllar could then have issued a declaration setting forth the agreement reached at Geneva. Moscow had not insisted that Islamabad conclude a bilateral agreement with Kabul giving the regime de jure recognition. All that would have been required was for Pakistan to accept de facto coexistence with a modified version of the regime.

Yevstafiev was widely regarded as the ranking KGB operative in the U.N. apparatus. Was his story disinformation? Kornienko gave a similar account but said that "no one knows what the precise timetable would have been."

According to Zagladin, after his June 9 encounter with Yaqub Gromyko persuaded Andropov that the United States wanted to keep Soviet forces pinned down in Afghanistan and that neither Islamabad nor Washington was ready for a settlement. If the United States had been actively supporting Cordovez, he believes, Andropov could have prevailed over his opponents, "though it might not have been easy."

The Andropov Legacy

The picture that emerges from discussions with his confidants is that the ailing Andropov had given broad instructions but was not closely monitoring or directing the Soviet role in the negotiations after April. Nevertheless, shortly before his hospitalization in August, he demonstrated his continuing preoccupation with the Afghan issue by summoning Karmal to Moscow for a secret meeting. "Andropov recognized that our presence in Afghanistan was a major impediment to improving relations with the West," Kornienko said. "He wanted to make absolutely clear to Karmal that he should not count on the indefinite or protracted stay of Soviet forces in Afghanistan and must prepare for our withdrawal by taking urgent steps to stabilize his regime." The minutes of his meeting with Karmal showed that Andropov was "very straightforward and blunt with him. He didn't give him a deadline, but he stressed several times that we would not be able to stay in Afghanistan much longer. But Babrak simply didn't believe him."

During the last months before he entered the hospital, Andropov made a significant attempt to ease tensions with the United States. President Reagan had made his "evil empire" speech in March, followed soon afterward by his announcement of the Strategic Defense Initiative. The resulting atmosphere of confrontation had "poisoned everything, including the Afghan negotiations," said Kornienko, and Andropov had gradually concluded that progress on Afghanistan would have to come as part of an overall improvement in relations. On June 15, his sixty-ninth birthday, he told a Central Committee plenum that "the threat of a nuclear war overhanging the world makes one appraise in a new way the basic meaning of the activities of the entire Communist movement."

Andropov made an overture to Reagan in a secret letter on July 4 that has still not been published in full. Martin Anderson, then one of Reagan's advisers, said that it was "a nice letter indicating a clear willingness to talk seriously about the subject most dear to Reagan's heart—the destruction of nuclear weapons."³² Reagan responded in a handwritten letter on July 11 that was considerably watered down by his advisers. "If it had been sent as Reagan originally wrote it," Don Oberdorfer observed, "it would have been a historic document that first established the goal of eliminating all nuclear weapons, a goal that the President, almost alone in his administration, ardently sought."³³ In his initial draft, the President suggested that if the two sides could agree on mutual, verifiable arms reductions in the Geneva talks then under way, "could this not be a first step toward the elimination of all such weapons?"³⁴ When Reagan's advisers saw the draft, however, they immediately objected, just as they did three years later at the Reykjavik summit with Gorbachev when Gorbachev proposed complete nuclear disarmament.

"The experts were horrified by the idea of eliminating nuclear weapons," Oberdorfer said, "considering this to be impractical and heedless of the nuclear deterrence that had kept the peace since 1945." At the insistence of his national security adviser, William Clark, Reagan confined himself to pleas for a more serious effort to reach agreement in the Geneva arms control talks. Significantly, he specifically mentioned South Asia as one of the other topics that should be explored through "private, candid" communication. Andropov replied on August 4 with a note once again emphasizing arms control, and Reagan sent a still unpublished reply on August 24. One week later, Korean Airlines flight 007 was shot down over Soviet territory, and Soviet-American relations went into the deep freeze. Nevertheless, Oberdorfer reports, Andropov sent still another secret note to Reagan on January 28, 1984, shortly before his death, signifying a renewed desire to reopen communications.³⁵

Although Andropov was unable to implement most of his foreign policy agenda, he set the stage for the changes later carried out by Gorbachev. In a formal sense, Gorbachev was not involved in foreign policy during 1983, given his role as Andropov's principal lieutenant on domestic issues. Nevertheless, though not a member of the Afghanistan Commission of the Politburo, he sat in on its meetings. Valentin Falin has stated that Gorbachev was the only one present who ever questioned Gromyko, albeit subtly.

Nikolai Shishlin, long one of Gorbachev's close advisers, said that Gor-

bachev's thinking on Afghanistan crystallized during 1983. Shishlin pointed to the strong opposition to the Afghan war expressed by the Soviet Ambassador to Canada, Aleksandr Yakovlev, when Gorbachev visited Canada to study agricultural problems in May 1983. "Andropov's attitude was clear," Shishlin recalled, "but Yakovlev had thought it all through much more thoroughly." In his role as a key foreign policy adviser to Gorbachev after his return from Canada, Yakovlev continued to lay the foundations for the Afghan withdrawal and for the broader innovations of *perestroika*. "It all began in 1983. The reason that Gorbachev was able to act so much more decisively in foreign affairs than in domestic policy was largely because of the reappraisal set in motion under Andropov."³⁶

Casey and the U.N. Negotiations

Was there a lost opportunity for a Soviet withdrawal in 1983? If the United States had actively supported Cordovez, would Andropov have prevailed over his opponents, as Vadim Zagladin believes?

This is likely to remain one of the important unresolved issues among the many "might have beens" in the history of the Cold War. But there can be no doubt about the fact that the United States strongly disliked the U.N. approach to a settlement during 1983 and that the American attitude tipped the scales in the debate within the Pakistani leadership between April and June. Ironically, during the very period when Andropov was groping for a way to disengage from Afghanistan, supporters of stepped-up American involvement were on the ascendant in the Reagan Administration.

The driving force behind the push for a greater American role was CIA Director William Casey. As his power within the Administration grew, so did his aggressiveness on the Afghan issue. President Reagan was grateful to Casey for his capable performance as Republican campaign chairman during the election campaign. Having turned down Casey's bid to be Secretary of State, Reagan acceded to his request for full cabinet rank. It was unprecedented for a CIA Director to have a seat at the cabinet table and a direct voice in policy making. Casey also upset precedent by obtaining an office in the Old Executive Office Building, immediately down the hall from the National Security Council staff and just across a private courtyard from the west wing of the White House. Martin Anderson, who observed Casey at work from his own vantage point as a member of the Reagan inner circle, wrote that he spent as much of his time in this strategically situated office as he did at the CIA's headquarters in Langley, Virginia. Anderson has recounted how Casey dominated a succession of the President's national security advisers, "solidifying his control over the entire domain of intelligence, including covert action."³⁷

Casey focused single-mindedly on building up weapons aid to the Afghan resistance and looked on the U.N. negotiations as a Soviet propaganda ploy. "His underlying assumption was that the Soviets would never leave," recalled Graham Fuller, who worked closely with him as National Intelligence Officer

for the Near East and South Asia beginning in 1982. "I shared that view at the time," Fuller said. "We felt there was little hope of getting them out, but that we should make them pay a very high price."³⁸ Charles Cogan, Director of Covert Operations in the Near East and South Asia in 1983, added that Casey "thought if we tied them down it would keep them from engaging in further adventures, especially against Pakistan."³⁹ Casey's Deputy Director, John McMahan, by contrast, argued that weapons aid and diplomacy could and should be combined to get the Soviets out. "I was one of the guys pushing the Afghan aid program from the start, contrary to some reports," McMahan told me. "My objection was that we didn't have a foreign policy to back it up. I made it clear at the highest levels throughout 1983 and afterward that I felt we had to have a political settlement. If a covert action is not based in foreign policy objectives, it's pure fun and games, it's no basis for achieving anything."⁴⁰ "McMahan thought that putting pressure on the Russians was a necessary accompaniment of a diplomatic strategy to get them out," said General Edward C. Meyer, then army Chief of Staff. "Casey would *say* that he wanted them out, but he actually wanted them to send more and more Russians down there and take casualties."⁴¹

It was during early 1983 that a group of Reagan political appointees in the Pentagon led by Assistant Secretary for Policy Richard Perle began to press for Pentagon control of an upgraded covert aid program in Afghanistan. Perle displayed the same ideological anti-Soviet zeal concerning Afghanistan that he showed on arms control and other issues. He recruited his own like-minded intelligence staff, with its own travel budget, to counter what he considered the "soft" assessments of Soviet intentions on the part of the State Department and the resulting inadequacy of the Afghan effort.

Perle's two key advisers on Afghanistan, Elie Krakowski and Harold Rhode, lobbied vigorously to build up conservative support both within the Administration and in Congress for a more activist Afghan policy. According to Krakowski, "it was increasingly obvious by early 1983 that what was being done was very insufficient and that if things continued unchanged, the resistance would be defeated. So we agitated for more help and a more coherent strategy."⁴² Perle and his staff "came in with a definite agenda relating to Afghanistan," recalled General Meyer. "They were anxious to increase the Pentagon's role in providing more and better equipment to the Afghans as well as people to assist with the transfer of the equipment. It was clearly unusual for them to have their own separate intelligence network by which they were gathering information on Soviet activities in that region."

Perle was unable to challenge Casey's control of the Afghan aid program. However, his efforts served to accelerate the pace of Casey's own plans for a bigger program and to stimulate congressional interest in the Afghan war that was initially spearheaded by conservatives but gradually embraced some liberals. In May 1983 Senator Paul Tsongas and ninety other Senators cosponsored a resolution that called for expanded aid and criticized the Administration for providing just enough aid so that Afghans "can fight and die, but not enough for them to win." The resolution soon became embroiled in controversy and was

not enacted until late 1984. But its introduction reflected a sharpening focus in Washington on winning the war militarily and indifference or outright hostility toward what was happening in the Geneva negotiations.

For all practical purposes, Casey was in control of American relations with Pakistan during the crucial months before and during the April and June rounds of negotiations. Both the White House and the State Department were "completely preoccupied" during this period with a diplomatic effort to get Israel to withdraw from Lebanon, Geoffrey Kemp said.⁴³ The Lebanon negotiations dragged on from December 1982 until the conclusion of a disengagement agreement on May 17, 1983, and its implementation in the weeks thereafter. "We were not particularly worried, in any case, about the Afghan negotiations," Kemp explained. "There was some concern, but we trusted Zia on the Afghan issue. The general mood was that the Afghan policy was working. As long as the Russians were bleeding and hurting, we were doing fine."

As Bob Woodward wrote, Casey had "the closest relationship with Zia of any member of the Reagan Administration. So when Zia wanted assistance from the United States or just needed someone to listen, his avenue was Casey."⁴⁴ The CIA's Office of Technical Services provided specialists who helped Zia to maintain his personal security, and its station in Islamabad became "one of the biggest in the world." Charles Cogan remembers "four or five" meetings between Casey and Zia in Washington and Islamabad during 1982 and 1983. One of these meetings occurred in late March 1983, according to Casey's biographer Joseph Persico.⁴⁵ When Casey visited Saudi Arabia in May, did he pay another visit to Islamabad? Former U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Ronald I. Spiers said that he cannot be certain of the precise dates of Casey's "frequent visits that year" but that he "might well have" visited during May.

Spiers does recall clearly that Foreign Minister Yaqub was not among those invited to the small dinners given by Zia for Casey. In addition to Spiers, those present were Cogan, who accompanied Casey; the Islamabad CIA Station Chief, Howard Hart, and ISI Director Akhtar Rahman Khan. Spiers did not find Yaqub's absence surprising, since there were "significant divisions" within the power structure over Afghan policy. Yaqub was "far more positive" about the U.N. negotiations than Zia and the Army high command, with Zia "very skeptical" and his chief of staff at the time, General K. M. Arif, "even more skeptical."⁴⁶

Did Casey tell Zia not to let Yaqub go too far and too fast in the U.N. negotiations? Spiers said that he never heard him do so, observing that he was not present during Casey's meetings with Zia. "It was no secret," Spiers added, "that he didn't believe the Russians had any intention of leaving and that any withdrawal agreement could be trusted." In a conversation on May 8, 1983, Cogan confidently asserted to me that Pakistan would not conclude the projected settlement in June "or ever." He went on to say that Zia "knows how we feel about it. He recognizes that this will be a long, long war, and he is committed all the way. He and General Rahman fully accept our view that Pakistan's security is best assured by keeping the Russians tied down there."

Whatever was going on through other channels, Spiers declared, the official

American policy that he conveyed to Yaqub was supportive of the U.N. effort. "Nothing I expressed or transmitted could have been interpreted otherwise." As for what State Department officials were saying in Washington, notably Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Lawrence Eagleburger, who was in charge of Afghan policy, "there was indifference and skepticism, but not hostility. Maybe some of his comments were interpreted as opposition. Maybe Howard Hart conveyed that attitude to Akhtar, I don't know."

During a conversation on March 8, 1983, Eagleburger was upset when I suggested that the settlement might crystallize at the impending second round of negotiations in April. He emphasized that the U.S. would welcome a "satisfactory" settlement that would bring about a Soviet withdrawal. Yaqub, he recalled, had asked him accusingly on a visit in November 1982 whether American policy was "to keep the Russians tied down in Afghanistan." "That is not our policy," Eagleburger told me, "but we can't go for a flaky settlement. We are disturbed by the absence of a political process, all of this uncertainty over the future of the regime and the resistance. We could find ourselves locked into something with damaging implications." But he added that it would be "awkward to go against Pakistan" and that the Administration would keep its options open. He noted with some irritation that the United States had not yet been given a text of the emerging U.N. draft agreement either by the U.N. or by Pakistan.

Hawks and Doves in Islamabad

The aftermath of the April round was marked by expressions of optimism from both Pakistani and U.N. sources that set off alarm bells in Washington and in conservative Arab capitals. Yaqub, at a press conference on April 26, treated the possibility of a withdrawal with the utmost seriousness. Pakistan, he said, believed that Andropov would "sincerely stick" to his "categorical" affirmations that "the Soviet Union seriously intends to withdraw its forces from Afghanistan." Asked if the pullout might start as soon as September, he responded only that it would be "indiscreet" to comment on the "very dicey" question of timing. When a reporter asked whether the withdrawal would be "gradual or in one go," he responded that "it is not likely to be in one stroke, but the question of whether it is gradual or from geographic areas is a matter of detail." Badgered by questions concerning the replacement of the Communist regime by an "Islamic" government, he answered sarcastically that "Afghanistan, which is 100 percent an Islamic country, could not possibly have a Buddhist government. As regards the Communist government, it is for the refugees themselves to decide what form of government they would support."⁴⁷

Up to this point, Moscow had never made a public commitment to the timetable concept. On May 19 Soviet Ambassador to Pakistan Vitaly Smirnoff publicly confirmed Kabul's "willingness to give a timetable for the withdrawal of the total Soviet contingent."⁴⁸ The form of this commitment was to remain the focus of protracted bargaining, but the fact that Moscow had gone on record

added to a mood of growing excitement over the possibilities for a breakthrough in June.

Pakistani public opinion was overwhelmingly favorable to the settlement, reflecting concern over the refugee influx and fears of Soviet border pressures. Yet the only political party then supporting the Zia regime, the Islamic fundamentalist Jamaat Islami, bitterly attacked him during May for supporting the U.N. effort.

General K. M. Arif, who was Zia's army Chief of Staff in 1983, said that "political input" from the Jamaat and, above all, from the resistance groups

had a tremendous impact on us. The *mujahideen* feelings may not have been known to Yaqub as much as they were to Zia. The *mujahideen* felt at that time that with all the aid they could force a military victory. So after [Cordovez's] "95 percent" statement, their attitude to the negotiations became more strident. Of course, the reality is they never had any staying power. They could not dislodge the Russians from their fixed positions. We knew that. While we worked on the Geneva negotiations, our thought process was that the Soviets would not leave.⁴⁹

Judging by the available evidence, it appears unlikely that Washington had to use heavy-handed pressure to restrain Islamabad. All it had to do was to suggest now and then in off-the-record press briefings that a settlement in Afghanistan "would mean that Pakistan would slip back in the queue for U.S. military and economic aid."⁵⁰ Faced with negative signals from American and Saudi officials and bitter opposition from Pakistani and Afghan fundamentalists, Zia and Arif pulled the reins on Yaqub themselves. As Yaqub put it in the conversation related earlier, he was forced to "slow down and to cool it" in order to placate domestic and foreign critics.

Zia convened a series of interagency meetings on Afghanistan in May that reviewed the concessions made by Yaqub in April and instructed him to back off from a key understanding relating to the Pakistani aid cutoff. The withdrawal scenario accepted in April centered around a formula known as "D-Day plus 30" under which the aid cutoff would be completed within thirty days after the conclusion of the settlement. Zia and Arif insisted that the cutoff take place only if Soviet military operations were concurrently terminated.⁵¹ At first glance, this appeared to be a reasonable demand, but it would have left resistance forces free to carry on operations against immobilized Soviet forces during the withdrawal process.

Zia sent Yaqub on a trip to Washington, London, Riyadh, and Beijing that underlined the opposition to the settlement on the part of Pakistan's foreign friends and patrons. When Yaqub arrived in Washington to discuss the June round, he was greeted with a barrage of press leaks announcing major increases in U.S. aid to the resistance. The sources of some of these leaks, I learned from the journalists involved, were officials in the CIA and the Pentagon who wanted to undercut the negotiations. Facing hostile questions at a press briefing on May 24 that I attended, Yaqub held out no hopes for an early breakthrough but said with a note of defiance that Pakistan had "no intention of being the suckers to bleed the Soviets white in Afghanistan."

Pakistan had passed on the twenty-page draft of the U.N. agreement to the United States after the April round, and Eagleburger had assigned a State Department lawyer to go over it with U.N. lawyers in mid-May. Yaqub and two advisers subsequently reviewed the text with Secretary of State George Shultz, Eagleburger, and three other concerned U.S. officials during a ninety-minute meeting on May 25, 1983. Except for saying that the United States would not stand in the way of an agreement acceptable to Pakistan, Shultz let Eagleburger do most of the talking. According to several of those present, Eagleburger emphasized that the United States considered the agreement unworkable in the absence of an explicit provision for the replacement of the Kabul regime.

The antagonism toward the settlement in Washington and the other capitals visited by Yaqub gave ammunition to his critics in Islamabad. When he returned, he was instructed to backpedal during his Moscow visit. "The basic issue that divided me and my colleagues during this period," Yaqub told me in 1991, "was whether the Russians were serious about leaving. I believed they were, even in 1983. Akhtar and the ISI, and Casey, felt strongly they were not. Akhtar regarded Geneva as a potential sellout because it didn't include the *mujahideen* as participants who would emerge in control of the follow-on government. He thought it was just a facade, while the 'struggle' was the reality." Zia, he said, "acted as a referee between us. He understood that Geneva made sense even if it did not succeed. Of course, he shared Akhtar's goal of a *mujahideen* government, but his attitude wasn't as extreme."

Yaqub clashed with Casey during one of his visits when he expressed the view that Moscow would withdraw its forces under a compromise "sensitive to its interests." Casey, Yaqub said, "brusquely" disagreed.

During an Islamabad dinner in honor of Shultz on July 3, 1983, Akhtar announced that "we believe the Soviets will never go." Howard Schaffer, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, who was accompanying Shultz, turned to Zia and said, "Mr. President, do you support that view?" Zia replied that "it would be a miracle if they depart." "Obviously," said Yaqub, who was present, "I didn't agree. After all, if that was our attitude, Geneva was only a sideshow, wasn't it?"⁵²