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THE CRIES OF AFGHAN FREEDOM FIGHTERS

To most Americans, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was an event which started on December 24, 1979, with the airlifting of 5,000 Soviet airborne troops and was substantially over by January 10, 1980, by which time the invasion force had mushroomed to an overpowering 85,000, supported by a thousand tanks and plenty of modern artillery. The iron curtain dropped on the poor Afghans because their arms consist principally of 19th century bolt-action, single-shot Enfield rifles.

But the invasion of Afghanistan did not end on January 10, 1980. Total control of Afghanistan is still eluding the Soviets. Even Pravda has admitted that savage fighting is still raging there.

Some observers believe that the Afghans control 50 percent of the country by day and 75 percent by night. Others claim that the Soviets control only 10 percent. Afghans are apparently the best guerrilla fighters the world has ever seen.

Religion, physical toughness, a nomadic lifestyle, and geography are all particular assets of the Afghan Freedom Fighters. The Moslem religion guarantees immortality in Heaven to any soldier who either kills or is killed by a Russian invader.

The Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan are now the largest in the world. Afghan sources believe there are a million and a half refugees in Pakistan and about a half million in Iran.

Until 1978, Afghanistan was essentially a neutral buffer state. In that year, a Russian-backed coup overthrew the neutral government and the country was thereafter run as a puppet of Moscow. Although terrorism and brutality were the rule and some 12,000 persons were killed, the American public heard nothing about violations of "human rights."

Of course, once the Soviet troops moved in, the ruthless killings began in earnest. Afghan refugees have reported hundreds of massacres, punitive mass murders of entire villages, and several particularly heinous killings of children and students.

The Afghan invasion was a decisive step in the Soviet push toward world domination. World opinion and Western protests? The Kremlin ignored them. The grain embargo and

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the Olympic Games boycott? The invasion demonstrated the Communist dialectic -- take one step back in order to take two steps forward.

The two steps forward were the improvement in the Soviet strategic position in regard to Middle East oil fields and the Indian Ocean. Although Afghanistan is a land-locked, arid, underdeveloped country, bounded by the U.S.S.R., China, Iran, and Pakistan, it is in a vital location between East and West, and it is the pathway to South Asia and the Indian Ocean.

By moving into Afghanistan, the Soviet Union improved its strategic position toward Middle East oil fields so much that it will soon be in a position to put the screws on Western Europe, which is much more dependent on Middle East oil than we are. As James Schlesinger, former Secretary of Defense and Secretary of Energy, predicted in 1979, "If that region goes under Russian control, Japan and Western Europe would hardly be able to do anything but strive for an arrangement, the result of which would be the end of the alliances that have been known to us for almost two generations."

According to a confidential report now circulating in Washington, a unit of 52 Soviet soldiers recently defected in Afghanistan and is now in a refugee camp in Pakistan. Kremlin memories are long enough to remember that Soviet troops defected in large numbers during their invasion of Hungary in 1956, and the total submission of that unhappy country was accomplished only by rushing in troops from Siberia.

The military problem of bringing Afghanistan to heel, and the psychological fear of future Soviet army defections, are probably the principal disincentives to any movement of Soviet troops into Poland. In that sense, the Afghan Freedom Fighters are the vanguard of Polish resistance.

The invasion of Afghanistan has also had a good effect on the United States. It burst the bubble of detente. Detente had always been hot air rather than reality, but it took Afghanistan for many Americans to realize it.

Egypt has pledged to send aid, and there are some reports that the Saudis have promised support. Whether the Freedom Fighters can survive without additional and immediate help from us in the form of modern weapons is doubtful. Will America heed their cries?

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