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[excerpts]

Top Secret
SPECIAL FILE

RECORD OF CONVERSATION*

of L.I. Brezhnev with N.M. Taraki

20 March 1979

Also present: Comrades A.N. Kosygin, A.A. Gromyko, D.F. Ustinov and B.N. Ponomarev.

L.I. BREZHNEV. Dear Comrade Taraki, I am very glad that you have come to visit us. I will get right down to business. We, I will not hide it, over the last few days have been watching with alarm the development of events in Afghanistan. From what you said in conversation with our comrades, it seems the Afghan friends are gravely alarmed as well.

Now the main task, as we see it, is to undertake steps which would correct the situation that has developed and eliminate the threat to the new order in the DRA. And not only eliminate the threat, but also work to strengthen the gains of the April revolution.

As we see it, it is very important to widen the base which supports the leadership of the party and the country. First of all, of great importance here is the ^{unity} ~~oneness~~ of your party, mutual trust, and ideo-political solidarity throughout its ranks from top to bottom.

It is worth thinking about creating a single national front under the aegis of the People's democratic party of Afghanistan as the recognized leader of the people. Such a front could include already existing socio-political organizations and be supported by groups of workers, peasants, petty and middle bourgeoisie, the intelligentsia and students, youth, and progressive women. Its purpose would be to consolidate anti-imperialist and national patriotic forces against domestic and foreign reactionaries. It could also serve in the political

x) This record has not been seen by the participants

upbringing of the population.

In rural areas it would be expedient to organize poverty committees consisting of propertyless and poor peasants and sharecroppers to repel feudalists and capitalist landowners.

And, of course, everything must be done so that the army is staunchly on the side of the people's revolutionary government.

It is important that the commanding ranks in the army feel assured of the stability of their positions. One cannot expect much from an army when commanding cadres are frequently replaced. This is even more true if the cadre changes are accompanied by arrests. Many commanders, seeing their colleagues arrested and disappearing, begin to feel unsure of their own future.

All of this does not mean that repressive measures should not be taken with regard to those who have serious evidence of untrustworthiness to the revolutionary government. But this weapon is very sharp and must be used with the utmost caution.

As for the events in Herat, the normalization of the situation in this city would have a positive influence on the situation of the country as a whole and would have a chilling effect on circles ^{is} ill-disposed towards the revolutionary government.

It seems that the work carried out by the various types of enemies of the new order, including the reactionary clergy, to undermine the new order is much more active and on a greater scale than the political work of the government representatives in the area. This point is of exceptional importance not only in Herat, but in the rest of the country as well.

Fitting work must be done with the clergy in order to split their ranks; this could well be achieved by getting at least a part of the clergy, if not to actually support the government openly, then to at least not speak out against it. This could be best of all achieved by showing that the new government is not trying to persecute the leaders and representatives of the clergy, but only those who speak out against the revolutionary government.

And now for the question of the possibility of deploying soviet military forces in Afghanistan. We examined this question from every angle, weighed it carefully, and, I will tell you frankly: this should not be done. This would only play into the hands of the enemies - yours and ours. You already had a more detailed discussion of this question with

our comrades.

Obviously, to announce publicly - either for us or for you - that we are not intent on doing this is, for understandable reasons, not advisable. 11

We will give you all necessary political support. Already, we are addressing Pakistan and Iran with strong warnings not to interfere in the internal matters of Afghanistan.

It would be well if Soviet economic aid, especially things like the delivery of 100 thou. tons of wheat and the increase in the price of natural gas supplied [exported] by Afghanistan, were made known to the Afghan people in the necessary manner, using the means of mass information. This is of foremost importance in strengthening the position of the Afghan government.

The arms and military technology that we are additionally supplying you ⁵with will increase the strength of the Afghan army. However, this will only be true if the arms are placed in trustworthy hands and not in the hands of the enemy.

As you have asked, we have sent you numerous advisors and specialists both in military and other matters. You have working for you 500 generals and officers. If necessary, we can send an additional number of party workers, as well as 150-200 officers.

One more question: how do you explain the fact that, despite the complications in the situation and the deployment of a thousand armed people from Iran and Pakistan, your borders with these countries were, in effect, open, and it seems even now are not closed? This is an abnormal situation, and, in our opinion, it should be fixed.

Finally, I would like to emphasize once more that in the current situation the most important factor will be the ability to draw greater circles of the population to your side through political and economic means. It is important to also re-examine the arsenal of methods utilized and eliminate those that may cause legitimate alarm in people and give them a desire to protest.

N.M.TARAKI. With regard to creating a single national front in Afghanistan, I would like to say that it essentially exists in the shape of party, komsomol, trade union and other mass public organizations, which function under the leadership of the People's democratic party of Afghanistan. However, it cannot yet firmly establish itself in the socio-political life of Afghanistan because of its economic backwardness and as yet insufficient

level of political development in a certain part of the population.

However, under the current situation the leadership of the country cannot avoid the use of extreme measures when dealing with accomplices of international imperialism and reactionism. The repressive measures taken against ranks of representatives of the clergy, Maoists and other persons partaking in open combat against the new people's government are completely in accordance with the law and no one turns to persecution without lawfully establishing the guilt of the accused.

The Afghan people do not want war with Iran and Pakistan, but if war does break out, then it will not be to their advantage - the Pashtuns and Baluchis would be on the side of Afghanistan. I would like to point out that the present government of Pakistan, and not without the help of China, is trying to play an important role in the incitement of anti-Afghan elements, including Afghanis showing up in Pakistan. Our party and government are trying to react calmly to these aspirations on the part of Pakistan and not worsen the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The question of closing our borders with Iran and Pakistan is rather difficult. We are unable to do this because of the absence of the necessary means. Besides, the closing of the Afghan-Pakistan border would create discontent among Afghani and Pakistani Pashtuns and Baluchis who maintain close family ties, and in the final result would significantly damage the prestige of the current government in Afghanistan.

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