

Democratic Republic of Afghanistan

In the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA), 1987 was ushered in with a bold, new peace initiative. Comrade Najib, General Secretary of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), announced detailed steps for national reconciliation. He proposed a ceasefire starting January 15th and initially lasting six months, wherein the DRA armed forces would halt offensive actions and return to their regular barracks. Along with this was an offer of amnesty for detained counterrevolutionaries and those who return to the country and agree to stop fighting. There would be guaranteed safe conduct and no persecution for former political activities.

Confirming that «the revolutionary process is irreversible,» Comrade Najib expressed the DRA's readiness to enter into negotiations with the opposition that responded to the call to lay down arms, aimed at the formation of a broad, coalition-type government of national unity on the principle of «just representation for all in the political structure and economic life.»

Clearly the DRA's proposals are in the interests of the Afghani revolution and people as a whole, and this was confirmed by the popular response. A Reuters dispatch from the capital, Kabul, on January 17th, told of «dancing in the houses of ordinary people at the prospect of an end to the fighting.» It also quoted a western diplomat as saying, «I think even rebel supporters have been advising them (the rebel leaders) to take the government at its word.»

Within a week about 5,000 people had laid down arms. Negotiations began with 500 groups, representing about 40,000 people in border provinces, who have left the counterrevolution and are now defending the revolution. Some of them have been promoted to officers in the army. Moreover, 500 people convened for the first meeting of the National Reconciliation Commission on January 3rd. This commission has been given great responsibilities by the government in dispensing aid to the population, solving local problems, etc. Adoption of a new constitution has been delayed to

Fighting for Peace

allow oppositional groups to express their views. If the ceasefire works, all these efforts will culminate in elections for the National Assembly, in which the opposition is welcomed to participate (excerpts from the account of Comrade M.H. Mokammil, Charge d'Affairs at the DRA embassy in London, upon his return from Kabul, as printed in *The New Worker* newspaper, January 30th).

Nonetheless, the brotherly hand extended by Comrade Najib was rejected without consideration by most of the Pakistan-based counterrevolutionary groups who branded anyone who accepts the ceasefire as a «Soviet or Kabul agent» infiltrated into their ranks. Their lack of concern for their own people was reconfirmed at a rally in Peshawar, Pakistan, on January 17th. In the first display of unity ever mustered by the counterrevolutionaries, leaders of seven major groups vowed to continue the war. Though it was the first time these seven had appeared together in public, they claimed to have agreed on principles for an interim government *after* the defeat of the Soviet and Afghani government forces. However, with all political and military realities indicating that their goal has become an impossibility, this rejection may not be the last word on the subject.

There are other wild cards in the deck. In particular, the position of Pakistan, host of the counterrevolution, is not so clear-cut as in the past, mainly due to domestic opposition. An equally if not more decisive factor is the US administration which, as the major financier of the counterrevolutionaries and the Pakistani regime, can in the last analysis impose its position by blackmail. The Reagan Administration has no qualms about keeping the Afghani people divided and war-ridden as long as this serves its purpose of trying to undermine the DRA and sap Soviet strength. While the US has tried to appear as though it is coordinating its response with Pakistan, Defense Secretary Weinberger's arrogant de-

mand that the Soviets must withdraw in six months, indicates the Reagan Administration's obstructionist stance towards the DRA's peace drive.

OBJECTIVE BACKGROUND FOR PEACE

Although the Pakistan-based chieftans ordered an escalation of attacks, Comrade Najib reaffirmed the DRA's national reconciliation policy the day after the infamous Peshawar rally, pointing out that many of the refugees in the camps in Pakistan oppose these chieftans. The ceasefire had in fact gone into effect as scheduled, but unilaterally.

The DRA's peace initiative will most probably dominate events in and around Afghanistan this year, because it is based on a set of interrelated political and military realities. Among these is the PDPA's sincere desire to end the war which drains resources that could better be used for advancing the national democratic revolution and raising the people's standard of living. The party is in a good position to enact national reconciliation because of its augmented maturity, strength and unity, as was demonstrated by a number of events this past year. Comrade Najib's replacing Comrade Babrak Karmal as PDPA General Secretary in May, occurred in a smooth and democratic manner. Comrade Najib has dynamically continued the DRA's designated course for extending democracy through elections on all levels. He has put great emphasis on upgrading the party's activities and ties with the masses, especially work among the youth, peasants and tribes. At the same time, he has sharply criticized corruption, favoritism and bureaucratism, and called for greater collective accountability for implementing decisions, all aiming to increase the party's efficiency and broaden its mass base even further.

It has always been the policy of the DRA to try and end the war which was imposed on the new revolutionary government by imperialist interference and support to counterrevolutionary forces. The Soviet troops entered Afghanistan at the request of the DRA, ►