

Afghanistan

Opportunity for Peace

The Geneva accords have pulled the carpet out from under the Reagan Administration's «low-intensity warfare» as practiced against Afghanistan and the Soviet Union. For the first time since the 1978 revolution, the Afghani government and people have obtained international guarantees that they should be able to continue their effort towards peace and progress without the threat of imperialist-reactionary interference.

On April 14th, the foreign ministers of Afghanistan, Pakistan, the US and the Soviet Union signed a set of accords which Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze characterized as a «political settlement of the situation around Afghanistan» (*International Herald Tribune*, April 15th). Signing the first accord, Pakistan and Afghanistan pledged non-interference in each other's internal affairs, to «refrain from the promotion, encouragement or support, direct or indirect, of rebellious or secessionist activities.» This was the lynchpin of the accords, for it rules out the Pakistani-US military aid to the Afghani contras.

In the second accord, the Soviet Union and the US pledged to serve as international guarantors of the agreement. The third accord, signed by Afghanistan and Pakistan, provides for the resettlement of Afghani refugees currently in Pakistan and Iran, in their own country. The fourth accord connects the first three and ties them to a timetable for the Soviet troop withdrawal which began May 15th and will be completed within nine months.

IMPERIALISM'S SOUR GRAPES

The US media in particular reacted to these accords by predicting chaos in Afghanistan, comparing the Soviet withdrawal with the US defeat in Vietnam, and speculating about supposed rifts between the Afghani and Soviet leaderships. These imperialist apologists are actually just reflecting the Reagan Administration's frustration. Costing over \$2 billion over eight years, the CIA's operation against Afghanistan is its biggest since Vietnam and one of its biggest ever. The Reagan Administration was counting it as a

great policy success. By aiding the Afghani counterrevolutionaries, the US could practice «low-intensity warfare» to sap the energies of the progressive government in Afghanistan and the Soviet Union, without committing US forces. In contrast to supporting the contras against Nicaragua, the US's covert war on Afghanistan met with almost no domestic opposition.

Nonetheless, the US was forced by a combination of factors beyond its own borders and control, to sign an international accord which makes its support to the Afghani contras illegal. The real background for the accords is to be found in three main factors:

1. The consolidation of the Afghani revolution, especially with the success of the national reconciliation policy initiated in 1987, by Comrade Najibullah, General Secretary of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA).
2. The Soviet determination to resolve regional conflicts as part of its global peace offensive.
3. The Afghani counterrevolutionary forces' chronic corruption, disunity and unpopularity, even among Afghani refugees in Pakistan; and the problems this has created for the Pakistani regime, despite its great desire to sabotage the Afghani revolution.

There is also a form of thinly veiled racism in the many predictions that the Afghani regime will not be able to manage in the absence of Soviet troops. In this light, the comments of UN Undersecretary-General Diego Cordovez, who devoted six years to mediating this accord, are interesting: «We are being besieged by news analyses that advance the notion that the Afghani people will be unable to agree among themselves and conse-

quently will be plunged into renewed civil war... I believe that those predictions underestimate the Afghans, as pundits so often have underestimated other peoples of the Third World» (*International Herald Tribune*, May 9th).

CAUSE FOR HOPE

Based on the experience of the past year and a half, there are many reasons to believe that the Afghani government can preside over a peaceful, democratic resolution of the situation if foreign intervention really ceases. In an interview with *The New Worker*, April 29th, Ahmad Sarwar, Charge d'Affaires at the Afghani Embassy in London, recounted the steps achieved in national reconciliation so far: «Since we announced the policy, over 200,000 people have come back from abroad. Thousands have laid down their arms and come over to the government side. More than 6,000 of our opponents have joined the commissions for national reconciliation, and are actively participating in the creation of peace in Afghanistan. Recently... two groups who backed the rebels returned from India and joined the government. Thirteen of the thirty provinces have been declared zones of peace and all troops withdrawn from them.»

To meet the challenge of the new situation, the government has proposed negotiations to create a broad-based coalition government, including the rebel groups and the former shah (king); 28 ministerial posts have been offered to the opposition. In accordance with the new constitution ratified last year, parliamentary elections have been held throughout the country - a first in Afghanistan's history - and posts were kept open for the opposition which has so far refused to participate.

Friends of the Afghani revolution may legitimately ask themselves whether these new moves might not be seized upon by those who want to retard Afghanistan's advance towards socialism. However, such questions must be evaluated on the background of objective conditions. In this connection, Ahmad Sarwar's assessment provides a yardstick for evaluating government policy: «We are at the stage of feudalism and pre-feudalism in Afghanistan. The party is not a communist party, but a revolutionary party, and its aim was to democratise all social and economic life in the country. It is too soon for the party to be a