

The year of 'regional settlements'

The Afghan accord, which has revealed itself to be a pig in a poke, was the strategic blinder for appeasers in the West. Linda de Hoyos reports.

On April 15, 1988 the Soviet Union and Pakistan signed the Geneva accords on Afghanistan. The accord signaled a milestone in a three-year process of negotiations over regional settlements involving the superpowers and their proxies in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. The Afghan accord called for the full withdrawal of all Soviet troops from Afghanistan by Feb. 15, 1989, in exchange for withdrawal of support for the Afghan mujahideen by Pakistan. Lacking of course was any political settlement for a government in Kabul. This ensured that the Afghan accord would not only *not* bring peace, but would assure an escalation in the Afghan war.

Nevertheless, with that "success" in their pockets, the Soviets moved full steam ahead to negotiate deals for the other areas of superpower conflict. "After the positive achievement over Afghanistan at the Geneva talks, we have a dynamic for working toward the political settlement of the South African question, both in Namibia as well as Angola," stated Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister with responsibility for Africa, Anatolii Adamishin, on April 29. And from Bangkok, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister with responsibility for Asia, Igor Rogachev, declared that the planned withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan would "help in finding solutions to other regional conflicts—we hope it relates to the Kampuchea situation."

As explained by one pro-Russian source in Paris in mid-May, the Soviet policy on forging regional settlements is projected to produce conditions under which "both superpowers get out" of the arenas of conflict. Explaining the allure of this prospect for the West, he said, "This is very much in line with U.S. policy, dictated by budgetary restraints. But it is also Soviet policy. They want to deal with all this regional crisis nonsense through the United Nations, to strengthen the United Nations, and to manage crises with the Americans, but also with the other powers, Britain, China, France, etc."

The April 1988 edition of Moscow's multi-language *New Times* elaborated Soviet plans for a worldwide condominium of the superpowers. *New Times* praised Canadian magnate Maurice Strong, who had just been elected president of the World Federation of United Nations Associations. Moscow hailed Strong's proposals for the creation of a "global security system" that would "function most effectively on the basis of

the U.N. Charter and within the U.N. framework." As *New Times* explains: "He [Strong] proposes that a commission on global security and multilateral cooperation be set up under the aegis of the World Federation of the U.N. Associations" to be composed of "outstanding representatives of different countries with vast experience in politics, economics, public relations, science and military and other fields." Strong's plan is "welcomed in Moscow," said *New Times*.

This is the ostensible rationale behind Moscow's drive for negotiating "zones of peace" particularly in the developing sector. This is also the public rationale for such Moscow proposals as the Asian Collective Security Pact, which is to guarantee peace in this volatile region, and which is to include the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, and the United States.

However, as the unfolding events in Afghanistan showed, the Soviets might be willing to give up the positioning of their troops, but not give up their control, or their military proximity. More to the point, the Afghan accord functioned as the strategic blinder for the appeasement faction in the West.

The environment for the 1988 round of negotiations had been set with the visit to Geneva at the end of March by Assistant Secretary of State for Political Affairs Michael Armacost to meet with Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Yuli Vorontsov, a scion of an old Russian princely family and point man for the Afghan accords. Within a week, the accords were signed after high-powered armtwisting of Pakistan from Washington.

At the end of April, Moscow's Rogachev met in Paris with Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Gaston Sigur, as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Chester Crocker was meeting in London with his counterpart Adamishin. Simultaneous with the Crocker-Adamishin meeting, the British Foreign Office announced that talks on Angola would be held in a secret location in London May 3-4, involving the United States, Cuba, South Africa, and the Angolan government.

Then again from Aug. 31 to Sept. 2, Armacost held a round of meetings with Soviet officials in Moscow. The Crocker-Adamishin and Sigur-Rogachev teams met again in

November, in the case of the latter two for 10 hours in Paris. In the middle of all this, for one week, beginning June 21, Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister Tian Jiangpei met for a full week in Moscow with Rogachev.

What have these rounds of negotiations, with many intermittent informal discussions in Moscow, Washington, and other capitals produced?

Southern Africa

On July 22, Cuba, Angola, and South Africa announced that they had accepted a 14-point peace plan which had been worked out at the United Nations with Crocker. According to the plan, the Cubans are to withdraw their 65,000 troops from Angola. In exchange, South Africa is to withdraw its troops from both Angola and Namibia, as a prelude to granting independence to Namibia. The Soviet-Cuba side of the deal had been cleared when Soviet General Staff Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev traveled directly to Cuba for five days of talks July 13-17.

In December, the agreement was made official in the signing of the accord by South Africa, Angola, and Cuba, in Brazzaville, Congo, on Dec. 13. On Dec. 22, a formal signing ceremony was to take place at the U.N. According to Crocker, the agreement "has been a case study of superpower efforts to support the resolution of regional conflicts."

Slated for destruction in the accord is Jonas Savimbi, whose UNITA organization controls one-third of Angola. Under the accord, Cuban troops are given 27 months to leave Angola, and Savimbi forces are concerned that their avowed withdrawal will become the pretext for a cut-off in aid to Savimbi. Savimbi's calls for an election in Angola to resolve the internal conflict have been ignored by the MPLA government in Luanda, which has been given a \$1 billion worth of high-powered arms by Moscow. The implication of the agreement, as stated explicitly by Crocker, is that the United States will recognize the Luanda regime, which in any case never discontinued the operations of U.S. oil companies in Angola.

Afghanistan

The celebratory signing of the Afghan accords in April was turned full-circle by November, when the Soviets announced that Soviet troop withdrawals were being "suspended for the time being." In the past eight months, the Soviets have made clear that they are not prepared to give up control of either the capital city of Kabul or other cities, or the northern area of Afghanistan.

This policy was further exposed by General Secretary Gorbachov's speech to the U.N. on Dec. 7, calling for a ceasefire to be followed by negotiations for a reconciliation government. The Afghan mujahideen and Benazir Bhutto's new Pakistani government rejected Gorbachov's "offer," noting that Moscow is putting conditions on its previously agreed unconditional withdrawal.

Meanwhile, starting in early November, the Soviets have begun pouring in offensive weaponry into Afghanistan, including 30 Soviet MiG-30 Flogger D offensive fighter planes, and SS-1 Scud missiles which according to the State Department have "a range which puts the western frontier of Pakistan and much of Afghanistan itself within striking distance." The Soviets have also moved Su-24 bombers near their own border with Afghanistan. In late December, the Soviets moved to retake the southern city of Kandahar from the mujahideen.

At best, the Afghan accords will result in the partitioning of Afghanistan, with the Soviets holding the north. Behind the negotiating subterfuge the reality of the Soviet policy rang out loud and clear from Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandr Bessmertnykh Nov. 4: "More powerful means of destruction are now being additionally supplied by the Soviet Union to the armed forces of Afghanistan."

Indochina and Far East

In the case of Indochina, the Soviet Union is bent on winning a settlement over the Kampuchea conflict, given that it is named as one of the "obstacles" by Beijing standing in the way of a full normalization of Beijing-Moscow relations. The biggest stumbling block is Beijing's refusal to decrease its full military and political support for the genocidal Khmer Rouge resistance movement to the Vietnamese-backed Phnom Penh government.

China demands that the Vietnamese must withdraw from Cambodia before any negotiations for a political settlement begin—a demand that would likely lead to the Khmer Rouge takeover of the country. The Soviet answer to this problem, as implied by their endorsement of Maurice Strong's "collective security pact" ideas, is to bring in a U.N. peacekeeping force into Kampuchea. In April, Rogachev pleaded that the Soviet Union could not "impose any demands on Hanoi. Remember that Vietnam is a sovereign state." But by the end of 1988, it is clear that Moscow is pressuring Vietnam for a full unconditional withdrawal from Kampuchea.

The United States has already nearly been driven out of the picture in Indochina, as Gaston Sigur has argued for a policy of "simultaneous action" in "a very delicate situation." The U.S. do-nothing position is to press for an aid cut-off to the Khmer Rouge if and when there is clear-cut progress toward Vietnamese withdrawal. The U.S. has already been reduced to a spectator in the Sino-Soviet cat-and-mouse game.

Nevertheless, the Soviets have their apparent willingness to negotiate on Indochina to good use in courting the non-communist countries of Southeast Asia. This year saw major tours of the ASEAN countries by Rogachev and Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze. For the Soviet Union, the poverty-stricken communist countries of Vietnam, Laos, and Kampuchea are expendable tools in their pursuit of hegemony over ASEAN, and diplomatic accommodation with the Republic of Korea and Japan, nations whose thriving economies can better serve the Ogarkov warplan.