

Andropov personal hand-written memo to Brezhnev, early December 1979

Read aloud by Anatoly Dobrynin on September 18, 1995 at the Norwegian Nobel Institute conference in Lysebu, Norway, from his notes taken at the Kremlin Archive in preparation for the conference discussion of Afghanistan [Translation by Svetlana Savranskaya for the Nobel Institute from the tapes]*

“After the coup and the murder of Taraki in September of this year [the murder actually occurred on October 8], the developments in Afghanistan assumed a character unfavorable for us. The situation in the government, the army, and in the state apparatus is aggravated. They are practically disorganized as a result of mass repressions carried out by Amin. At the same time we have been receiving information about Amin’s behind-the-scenes activities which might mean his political reorientation to the West. He keeps his contacts with the American charge d’affaires secret from us. He promised tribal leaders to distance himself from the Soviet Union and to pursue a neutral policy. In closed meetings, he attacks Soviet policy and actions of our specialists. Our ambassador was practically expelled from Kabul. As a result of that, there are rumors about disagreements between Amin and Moscow, and about a possibility of his anti-Soviet steps in the diplomatic corps in Kabul. Those developments had created, on the one hand, a danger of losing the achievements of the April revolution [1978] inside the country; and on the other hand, a threat to our positions in Afghanistan. Now there is no guarantee that Amin, in order to secure his personal power, would not turn over to the West. An increase of anti-Soviet feeling among the Afghan population has been reported.

“Recently a group of Afghan communists, who are now residing abroad, contacted us. In the process of consultations with Babrak Karmal and Sarwari we found out – they informed us officially – that they had worked out a plan for moving against Amin and for forming new state and party organs. However, Amin began mass arrests of the politically unreliable. Five hundred people were arrested, and three hundred of them were killed. In these circumstances, Babrak Karmal and Sarwari, without changing their plans for an uprising, appealed to us for assistance, including military assistance if needed. We have two battalions stationed in Kabul, so we can provide certain assistance if there is a need. However, just for an emergency, for extreme circumstances, we need to have a group of forces stationed along the border. If such an operation is carried out, it would allow us to solve the question of defending the achievements of the April revolution, resurrecting the Leninist principles of state and party building in the Afghan leadership, and strengthening our positions in that country.”

* [A slightly different translation, by Daniel Rozas, based on Dobrynin’s handwritten notes rather than his oral reading of the document into the record, appears in the *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Issue 8-9 (Winter 1996/1997), p. 159. The sentence about meeting with Americans in this version reads: “Contacts with an American agent about issues which are kept secret from us.”]

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