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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Between cde. M. S. Gorbachev and General Secretary of the CC NDPA, Chairman of the Revolutionary Council of DRA B. Karmal.

Kremlin, 14 March 1985

Cde. A. A. Gromyko took part in the conversation.

M. S. GORBACHEV. First of all, I would like to thank you and, through you, all the Afghan leadership wholeheartedly for the respect you have shown to K. U. Chernenko's memory. While K. U. Chernenko was CC CPSU General Secretary and Chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet, he constantly monitored the issues related to the Afghan revolution closely. I would like to affirm that in the future the Afghan comrades can count fully on our support and solidarity.

B. KARMAL. Thank you very much.

M. S. GORBACHEV. Today we do not have much time for conversation, but as I understand, we have an agreement in principle to meet in the nearest future for more detailed conversations. Let me focus on the following moments points today.

We can see that the DRA (Democratic Republic of Afghanistan) leadership is studying the situation more deeply, gaining more experience in leading the country, building the revolutionary-democratic Afghanistan. The positive processes unfolding in Afghanistan are evident. And all this is taking place notwithstanding the difficult situation, where the PDPA [People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan] and the Afghan people have to repel the attacks of the counterrevolution.

However, while speaking about the positive shifts in the DRA, at the same time we have to note, from the standpoint of Marxist-Leninist analysis and from the standpoint of realism, that your party still has to do a lot of work to solve its main task—to ensure the genuinely irreversible character of the revolutionary process in Afghanistan. To a considerable extent, it has to do with being able to defend revolutionary gains. Of course you remember Lenin's thought that one criterion of survival for any revolution is its ability to defend itself. You, comrade Karmal, naturally, understand, as other members of the Afghan leadership obviously do, that Soviet troops cannot stay in Afghanistan forever.

In terms of assessment, I would like to make an observation of a general character, of which you are aware, that the revolution in Afghanistan at its present stage, judging by its content and the moving forces, represents a national-democratic [revolution], and that its socialist stage is the course of the future. If you and I accept this statement as correct, then concrete political and practical conclusions follow from it. It is necessary to achieve in practice a situation where the social and class basis of the new regime would be expanded, so that you could ensure the union of the party with various societal forces at the stage of the national-democratic revolution. It would allow you to stabilize the situation, consolidate the revolutionary gains, and begin to resolve more difficult tasks. Only the party is capable of resolving the task of uniting all the progressive forces -- the party, which is capable of developing a realistic policy, a cohesive and disciplined party, drawn together by the unity of its goals and tasks. Being the organizing center of all progressive forces, the party should not cloister itself within the framework of its own primary organizations. It is necessary that it develop broad and solid ties with the masses.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the USSR will continue to help revolutionary Afghanistan, but the Afghan leadership must understand that with all our assistance the main responsibility rests upon them, upon the entire PDPA.

B. KARMAL. Please allow me, esteemed Mikhail Sergeevich, on behalf of the CC PDPA, the Revolutionary Council of the DRA, and all the Afghan people to congratulate you wholeheartedly on your election to the position of CC CPSU General Secretary. We received it [learned of this??] with great satisfaction.

I would like to share with you a number of considerations, in a sincere fashion, as a communist with a communist.

First of all, allow me to express the deepest appreciation of the PDPA and of all the progressive Afghan people for the great, multifaceted, and selfless assistance that the Soviet Union has been providing to Afghanistan consistently since the October Revolution, and especially following the April revolution in Afghanistan. We feel every day how much the Soviet comrades are doing for us, starting with every single Soviet soldier, who is carrying out his internationalist duty on Afghan soil, and up to the leader of the CC CPSU Politburo Commission on Afghanistan, esteemed comrade A. A. Gromyko, who is present here today, and other Soviet leaders.

Dear Mikhail Sergeevich, I would like to emphasize that Afghan-Soviet friendship is in our view a friendship of a special kind, a friendship examples of which one cannot find in the history of mankind. The timely assistance of the Soviet Union has not only helped to save our revolution, but also helped us to preserve our independence. If not for that assistance, Afghanistan would not be an independent, non-aligned state [today]. We understand this well, and future generations of Afghans will understand it well too. Whenever we succeed in achieving some positive steps in our work, it is to a great extent the result of cooperation with our Soviet friends.

We are coming face to face with many difficult problems indeed. Yet I can assure you that the revolutionary process in Afghanistan has an irreversible character, and that we can defend our revolution. We see our main task as standing more solidly on our own feet, strengthening the revolutionary regime with all it takes. In our work within the country, we rely on the fundamental premises of Marxist-Leninist theory and on Leninist methods of work.

I would like to draw your attention to the following issue. After the victory of the April revolution in Afghanistan, one can say that 95% percent of the population supported it. As a whole, the people accepted and supported the objectives and tasks announced by the PDPA. However, on the eve of the beginning of the new stage in our revolution, in December 1979, the overwhelming majority of our people were against the party, and against friendship with the Soviet Union. One can say that against this negative background, we can see well the positive changes we have achieved in the last five years. Today, a significant part of the population supports us. As far as the attitude toward the Soviet Union is concerned, it has also changed substantially—in various regions of the country, Afghans seek help not only from the local authorities, but also directly from the Soviet comrades, including seeking help to protect themselves from bandits. The Afghan people are uniting gradually around the PDPA, the DRA party and state leadership.

The problems that we are currently facing are a to considerable extent growing pains, connected with the development of our party and society at the present stage of the revolution. I fully agree with the thoughts that you expressed earlier regarding what we should focus on. It is true, only a united, cohesive party, functioning with iron discipline, can save the revolution, defend and expand its gains.

One of the main shortcomings in our work is the still weak connection between the party and the people. We intend, as Lenin taught us, to do everything in our power to strengthen the connection with the masses, to win their confidence. We are also mobilizing opportunities to move forward on other issues that are most important: strengthening the armed forces, working with the tribes, defending the border with Pakistan and Iran. If we could ensure reliable protection of the borders, that would be a most powerful blow against the plans of the American imperialists, the Chinese hegemonists, the Pakistani reactionaries, and other forces hostile to us.

A. A. GROMYKO. That is right. Defense of the borders is one of the most important tasks indeed.

M. S. GORBACHEV. It would be nice, comrade Karmal, if by the time of our next meeting, the Afghan friends could achieve new progress and success in their work, about which we could talk then.

We invite a DRA delegation to take part in celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Soviet people's victory in the Great Patriotic War.

B. KARMAL. I appreciate it deeply. It is a great honor for us. As always, we count on the assistance and comradely recommendations of our Soviet friends. I thank you for this conversation with all my heart.

A. M. Alexandrov was present at the conversation.

Third Secretary of the Middle East Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
cde. M. M. Pashkov translated and recorded the conversation.

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