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Z. MICHAEL SZAZ

Afghanis get rhetoric instead of action

The other night television showed how our government is sending Redeye and Stinger missiles to the armed forces in Chad in order to shoot down attacking Libyan airplanes and helicopters.

While not begrudging the weapons to the Chad soldiers fighting Libyan aggression, I felt angry and frustrated because I knew how much these weapons are needed by the Afghan freedom fighters and that we are not making any delivery to them.

Vice President Bush traveled recently in Pakistan, went to the border area of the Northwestern Province and assured Afghan rebel leaders on Pakistani soil that we support them wholeheartedly. The rhetoric was excellent, but the facts of life in Afghanistan as to our material support are very difficult.

The few supplies we have provided the Afghan freedom fighters come via Egypt out of outdated Soviet stocks that the Egyptian military bought before 1972. To quote a well-informed congressman on the aid: "It is garbage."

The most important arms the freedom fighters have been seeking since the beginning are Redeye missiles. These can be fired by individual soldiers holding them against their shoulders and they have homing equipment to hit helicopters and low-flying planes. They are not too expensive or sophisticated (it is really an anti-aircraft bazooka) and could be used by the freedom fighters very successfully, as could Stinger missiles directed primarily against aircraft.

To the best of my knowledge, these arms never have been provided to the Afghan freedom fighters.

It is true that the freedom fighters still inflict casualties on the Soviet occupation force of

105,000 and that they capture Soviet ordnance. It is also true, however, that these losses are pinpricks to the Soviet forces which, in the meantime, gain valuable battle experience against insurgencies. We have no equivalent to the Ho Chi Minh Trail to supply the freedom fighters and lack of supplies renders them unable to resist the occupation troops in several provinces of Afghanistan.

In the meantime, the Soviet atrocities multiply. Even our media reported the killing of all young men of one village who had taken refuge in an underground ditch and were set afire by the Soviet forces.

No longer is the Soviet High Command in Afghanistan inter-

ested in winning over some of the tribes; terror and extermination is now the aim against those still resisting the Soviets. Thus, there is a hardening in the Soviet method of conducting the campaign, while there is considerable weakening on the part of the Western Powers, including the United States.

We never have decided what to do with our unsolicited, but valuable Afghan allies. Sure, the Reagan administration is in favor of their cause and wants to use them to tie down Soviet troops which could otherwise conquer the Pakistani province of Baluchistan and reach the Indian Ocean, thereby threatening the Persian Gulf. But a comprehensive policy was never

worked out; no real pressure has been exerted to form a united front of the various freedom-fighter groups, or to devise ways and means to ensure adequate supplies.

The CIA armed 10,000 Nicaraguan freedom fighters in less than a year, but is still unable (or unwilling) to supply the needed anti-aircraft weapons and other ordnance to the Afghan freedom fighters after three years of fighting. Something is radically wrong.

The Afghan freedom fighters are on the front lines of our struggle against communism. They do not ask us to fight their war for them. With unprecedented heroism, they are enduring the bomb-

ings and shellings of the armed forces of the greatest land power of the earth. They only ask us to provide the means for defense against the Red Army. How can we fail to answer their plea?

Of course, the lackadaisical attitude of the administration, led by the State Department, which does not want to interfere with the U.N. mediation efforts, is only a result of the complete lack of attention by the media to the struggle of the Afghanis.

Could you imagine such an attitude if the Afghanis were Sandinistas or other enemies of the United States? We hear the Nicaraguan officials constantly blasting the United States on our national televi-

sion networks, but lately absolutely nothing on Afghanistan. And even before that, the coverage was minimal.

Yet worse is to come if we do not wake up in time. Ahmad Shah Masoud, the hero of the struggle south of Kabul, has made a truce with the Soviet forces, if only temporarily. He will either become neutral and lost to the cause, or he will be the next target of a renewed Soviet offensive. Right now, he is aggravating the situation of the other fighters in Afghanistan.

How long can freedom fighters hold out successfully against the overwhelming power of the Red Army if not supplied with the proper weapons? How long can human sacrifice and heroism balance the scale against the sophisticated weapons of the Soviet Union?

We might not have to wait that long, however, to see a Soviet victory. The mission of the United Nations mediator, Diego Cordovas, might accomplish the Soviet aim in Afghanistan, while insisting upon a phased withdrawal of Soviet forces. The best the U.N. mediation would offer is such a withdrawal while keeping the Soviet-backed Babrak regime in power. With all supplies to the Afghani freedom fighters shut off, they would either wither away or be killed by the communists. Were resistance to continue successfully, there is no question that the Soviets would cry foul and return in force.

In these negotiations the people of Afghanistan are not represented, only the outside powers and the puppet Babrak regime. Are we greasing the skids for the Afghani freedom fighters?

Some months ago, I requested the administration to conduct a comprehensive policy review; supply the Redeye missiles to the freedom fighters, plus exert pressure in favor of a united government of the freedom forces in Afghanistan which could request outside mili-

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tary aid. I also favored a clear definition of our aims in Afghanistan. Looks like nothing has happened and the ardent efforts of Rep. Don Ritter in Congress, and Karen McKay at the Committee to Free Afghanistan are not finding the response either in the State Department or the media which they so richly deserve. However, those in the government and media who are negligent in helping the Afghan freedom fighters will have to pay manifold after they are defeated and the Soviets march south.

Z. Michael Szaz is a specialist on Eastern Europe.