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ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 10TIME
14 January 1980

"My Opinion of the Russians Has Changed Most Drastically . . ."



It was as though a time warp had plunged the world back into an earlier and more dangerous era. Soviet divisions had swarmed across the border of a neighboring country and turned it into a new satellite. Moscow and Washington were exchanging very angry words. Jimmy Carter accused Soviet Communist Party Chief Leonid Brezhnev of lying, and the Soviets' TASS press agency shot back that Carter's statements were "bellicose and wicked." For Carter, the rapid series of events in Afghanistan seemed to provide a remarkable kind of revelation. Said he, sounding strikingly naive in an ABC television interview: "My opinion of the Russians has changed most drastically in the last week [more] than even in the previous 2½ years before that." He added that it was "imperative" that "the leaders of the world make it clear to the Soviets that they cannot have taken this action to violate world peace . . . without paying severe political consequences."

What those consequences might be was the subject of week-long strategy sessions, and then on Friday night Carter set forth his response to the bold Soviet challenge. Appearing for 13 minutes on nationwide television, he delivered the toughest speech of his presidency. Warned Carter: "Aggression unopposed becomes a contagious disease." He denounced the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as "a deliberate effort by a powerful atheistic government to subjugate an independent Islamic people" and said that a "Soviet-occupied Afghanistan threatens both Iran and Pakistan and is a stepping-stone to their possible control over much of the world's oil supplies."

Carter then announced that he was sharply cutting the sale to the Soviets of two kinds of goods they desperately need: grain and advanced technology. Contracts for 17 million tons of grain, worth \$2 billion, are being canceled. Soviet fishing privileges in American waters are also being severely curtailed, as are new cultural exchange programs; Carter further hinted that the U.S. might boycott this summer's Moscow Olympics. To shore up Afghanistan's neighbors, Carter said that the U.S. "along with other countries will provide military equipment, food and oth-

er assistance" to help Pakistan defend its independence.

These actions were only the latest in an escalating series of retaliatory moves. Carter officially requested the Senate to postpone any further consideration of the U.S.-Soviet treaty to limit strategic arms, once the chief symbol of superpower détente. The U.S. and nearly 50 other countries then called for an emergency session of the U.N. Security Council to condemn the latest Soviet aggression. That meeting convened on Saturday. And the U.S. summoned Ambassador Thomas J. Watson Jr. home from Moscow for consultations. (Not even during the crisis triggered by the Soviet invasions of Hungary in 1956 and of Czechoslovakia in 1968 was the American ambassador recalled from Moscow.)

Had a new cold war erupted between the U.S. and the Soviet Union? Not quite. At least not yet.

But it seemed certain that the policy known as détente, which stressed cooperation between the two competing nuclear giants, had not survived the 1970s. The events of last week stood also as a grim reminder that it is not the American hostages in Iran that are the central object of U.S. foreign policy, but rather the potentially life-and-death relationship with the Soviet Union.

Afghanistan was an odd and remote focal point for such a U.S.-Soviet crisis. The snow-swept, mountainous land has few natural resources, and its Muslim tribesmen are more than 90% illiterate. Yet it was here that the Soviets chose to do something they had not done since World War II: in a blitzkrieg involving an estimated 50,000 soldiers, supported by tanks and helicopter gunships, the Soviet army crashed across the Afghan border to take control of a country that had not been a member of the Soviet bloc. By forcefully expanding its international sphere of direct control, the Kremlin in effect had violated a fundamental ground rule of East-West relations. In a meeting with his top aides, Carter said sternly that the Soviet invasion is "a quantum jump in the nature of Soviet behavior. And if they get through this with relative political and economic impunity, it will have

serious consequences on the world in years to come."

In an attempt to mobilize a broad international condemnation of the Soviet action, the President telephoned half a dozen foreign leaders and cabled about 25 others, stressing to them how gravely the U.S. viewed the matter.

The U.S. made a special effort to rally the NATO allies. Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher flew to London to meet with high-ranking British, West German, French, Italian and Canadian diplomats, then on to a New Year's Day emergency meeting at NATO headquarters in Brussels. The NATO allies agreed to review thoroughly their relations with the Soviet Union and to find ways to back countries near Afghanistan, particularly Pakistan, which is not only frightened by the increased proximity of Soviet army units but is also deeply troubled by the mounting chaos in neighboring Iran. They also decided to solicit support from Third World states for a U.N. declaration against Moscow. The U.S. received the strongest support from the British; Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher

has been taking a tough anti-Soviet stand since coming to office last year. Though the French were less firm, a French diplomat later said, "Like the U.S., we feel strongly that Soviet intervention in Afghanistan is wrong."

One of the fundamental questions was why the Soviets had suddenly torn the fabric of U.S.-Soviet relations and international order by such an undisguised invasion. Moscow had its own rationale. According to the Soviet-government daily *Izvestia*, the U.S.S.R.'s troops had saved Afghanistan from being subverted by the CIA and turned into an American base. Other Soviet versions said the U.S. had teamed up with Pakistan, China and Egypt to carry out "primarily anti-Soviet designs." They described leftist President Hafizullah Amin, who was executed four days after the Soviet invasion

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