

FROM THE HELSINKI WATCH COMMITTEE, AT THE BEGINNING OF 1987, CAME THE THIRD IN A SERIES OF REPORTS CATALOGUING THE DEPRADATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN. MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY WILL REMEMBER THAT THE FIRST REPORT WAS ENTITLED "TEARS, BLOOD AND CRIES: HUMAN RIGHTS IN AFGHANISTAN"; THE SECOND WAS ENTITLED "TO DIE IN AFGHANISTAN"; AND THIS ONE IS CALLED "TO WIN THE CHILDREN: AFGHANISTAN'S OTHER WAR". IT IS A BLOOD-CHILLING DOCUMENT, BASED ON HUNDREDS OF FIRST-HAND ACCOUNTS AND TESTIMONY OF THE INCREDIBLE TOLL TAKEN OF THE CHILDREN. ONE EXTRACT WILL SUFFICE. I QUOTE: "CHILDREN ARE AMONG THE MOST VICTIMIZED. THEY ARE BOMBED IN THEIR SCHOOLS AND DURING RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN THEIR MOSQUES. THEY ARE BURNED ALIVE IN LOCKED ROOMS, THEIR CHARRED BODIES UNRECOGNIZABLE TO THEIR GRIEVING PARENTS. VILLAGE CHILDREN ARE SHOT WHILE FLEEING TO CAVES IN THE MOUNTAINS OR EN ROUTE TO REFUGE IN PAKISTAN OR IRAN. CITY CHILDREN ARE SPIED UPON AND URGED TO INFORM AGAINST THEIR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS. CHILDREN ARE TRAINED AS SPIES, SABOTEURS AND ASSASSINS. NURSING BABIES ARE TAKEN FROM THEIR MOTHERS IN PRISON, NEVER TO BE SEEN AGAIN", END QUOTE.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL HAS RELEASED A STUDY TITLED "AFGHANISTAN: TORTURE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS". WITH SCRUPULOUS CARE, AND BASED ON INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS AND TESTIMONY GATHERED AND CROSS-CHECKED FROM FORMER POLITICAL PRISONERS, AMNESTY HAS COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT TORTURE IN AFGHANISTAN IS WIDESPREAD, SYSTEMATIC AND FREQUENTLY CARRIED OUT IN THE PRESENCE OF SOVIET PERSONNEL. I SHALL NOT HERE READ FROM THE EVIDENCE, NOR DETAIL FIRST-PERSON ACCOUNTS. IT IS, CATEGORICALLY, AN ABOMINATION. AFGHANISTAN IS NOT SIMPLY A COUNTRY AT WAR; BY THE THOUSANDS, ITS CITIZENS SUFFER THE AGONY OF TORTURE AND THE FINALITY OF EXTRA-JUDICIAL EXECUTION IN A MANNER WHICH BESPEAKS BARBARITY.

FINALLY, MR. PRESIDENT, I HAVE IN MY POSSESSION, A REPORT, ABOUT TO BE RELEASED, OF THE INDEPENDENT COUNSEL ON INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS, WHICH DEALS WITH AFGHANISTAN. THE INDEPENDENT COUNSEL CONSISTS OF LAWYERS FROM SWEDEN, THE UNITED STATES, THE UNITED KINGDOM AND MALTA WHO HAVE, COLLECTIVELY, YEARS OF EXPERIENCE, CREDIBILITY AND SCHOLARSHIP IN INTERNATIONAL AND HUMANITARIAN LAW DEALING WITH HUMAN RIGHTS, REFUGEES, ARMED CONFLICT, MERCENARIES AND ALL RELATED MATTERS WHICH FLOW THEREFROM. THEIR INQUIRY IS, I THINK, UNIQUE.

THEY HAVE CAREFULLY ASSESSED ALL OF THE INTERNATIONAL LAW WHICH COULD CREDIBLY BE APPLIED TO THE PRESENT SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN. THEY HAVE CONSTRUED THAT LAW AS NARROWLY AS POSSIBLE SO THAT NO MEASURE OF DISTORTION OR EXTREMISM COULD FLAW THEIR ANALYSIS. DURING JANUARY, MARCH, AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER OF THIS YEAR THE INDEPENDENT COUNSEL OR MEMBERS OF ITS STAFF MADE PROLONGED TRIPS TO PAKISTAN, VISITED ALL OF THE MAIN REFUGEE

CAMPS, AND CONDUCTED HUNDREDS OF INTERVIEWS OFTEN ON A RANDOM AND SPONTANEOUS BASIS. ALL INTERVIEWS WERE TAPED SO THAT ALL TRANSLATIONS COULD BE CHECKED. THE INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUE WAS ADVERSARIAL IN ORDER TO ELICIT OPINIONS UNCOLOURED BY SYMPATHETIC BIAS. INTERVIEWS THAT WERE NOT REGARDED AS TRUSTWORTHY WERE DISCOUNTED OR DISCARDED. ENDLESS NUMBERS OF ADDITIONAL CONTACTS WERE MADE AND YET FURTHER INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED WITH RELIEF WORKERS, JOURNALISTS, DIPLOMATS, AND REPRESENTATIVES OF INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES WITH EXTENSIVE KNOWLEDGE OF AFGHANISTAN.

EVERYTHING WAS THEN MEASURED AGAINST THE NORMS OF INTERNATIONAL LAW. THIS IS WHAT THEY FOUND:

THERE IS A SYSTEMATIC PRACTICE OF TORTURE CARRIED OUT BY MEMBERS OF THE KHAD - OR SECRET POLICE, SOMETIMES IN THE PRESENCE OF DOCTORS AND SOVIET OFFICIALS; CIVILIANS HAVE BEEN THE VICTIMS OF INDISCRIMINATE ATTACKS, AND ATTACKS BY MEANS OF INDISCRIMINATE WEAPONS IN VIOLATION OF THE LAWS OF WAR AND INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS; THERE IS EVIDENCE OF MASSACRES OF CIVILIANS BY SOVIET TROOPS; EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS ARE UNIFORMLY CARRIED OUT IN DIRECT DEFIANCE OF INTERNATIONAL JURISPRUDENCE; SOVIET TROOPS ARE NOT INHIBITED IN THEIR CHOICE OR USE OF WEAPONS... THEY USE BOOBY TRAPS AND EXPLOSIVE HOUSEHOLD OBJECTS AS PART OF THEIR ORDINARY ARSENAL IN BLATANT VIOLATION OF THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL LAWS OF WAR; THE WAR IS BEING WAGED WITHOUT RESTRAINT ON THE CIVILIAN POPULATION OF AFGHANISTAN AND THE PHYSICAL AND RELIGIOUS STRUCTURE WHICH SUPPORTS IT; UNLAWFUL ATTACKS BY SOVIET AND DRA FORCES ON ILLEGITIMATE TARGETS IS WIDESPREAD AND SYSTEMATIC; THERE IS SUBSTANTIAL EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE ALLEGATION THAT THE DRA AND THE SOVIET UNION HAVE BEEN PURSUING POLICIES AIMED AT FORCED DEPOPULATION OF AFGHANISTAN; THERE IS A CO-ORDINATED POLICY OF FORCIBLY TRANSFERRING CHILDREN FROM AFGHANISTAN TO THE U.S.S.R.; THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT THE DRA AND THE SOVIET UNION ARE INVOLVED IN A COMPLEX AND PREMEDITATED ATTACK ON A TRADITIONAL SOCIETY AND ITS VALUES, AND THAT THE ATTACK IS BEING PRESSED AT EVERY LEVEL OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATION - THE VILLAGE, THE AGRICULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE, THE RELIGION, EDUCATION, THE CHILDREN AND HEALTH AND LIFE ITSELF.

ABOVE ALL, AND IN A WAY WHICH TENDS TO CORROBORATE THE TERRIFYING SPECTRE RAISED LAST YEAR BY THE SPECIAL UN RAPPORTEUR, THIS REPORT SAYS - QUOTE - "IN THE VIEW OF THE INDEPENDENT COUNSEL ON INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS, THERE IS CONSIDERABLE EVIDENCE THAT GENOCIDE HAS BEEN COMMITTED AGAINST THE AFGHAN PEOPLE BY THE COMBINED FORCES OF THE DRA AND THE SOVIET UNION", UNQUOTE.

MR. PRESIDENT, IN THE NAME OF CANADA, I PUT ALL THIS ON THE RECORD OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY BECAUSE AFGHANISTAN IS AN OFT-FORGOTTEN WAR. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THIS ANNUAL DEBATE, THE INSENSATE DESTRUCTION OF THAT COUNTRY AND ITS PEOPLE RECEIVES VERY LITTLE INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION.

SOMEHOW, THE SOVIET UNION MUST BE BROUGHT TO RECOGNIZE THAT THE SELECTIVE APPLICATION OF GLASNOST - AN APPLICATION WHICH FIGURATIVELY AND LITERALLY ELIMINATES AFGHANISTAN - IS UNACCEPTABLE TO THE WORLD COMMUNITY.

THIS IS PARTICULARLY TRUE BECAUSE OF THE EVENTS OF THE LAST YEAR. DESPITE ALL THE PUBLIC PROTESTATIONS ABOUT WANTING TO WITHDRAW, DESPITE ALL THE STORIES OF SOVIET SOLDIERS RETURNING BATTERED AND MAIMED TO A GRIEVING HOMELAND... OR NOT RETURNING AT ALL; DESPITE ALL THE TALK OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION, THE WAR IS MORE OUT OF CONTROL THAN EVER. THE MILITARY ENGAGEMENTS NOW NUMBER 450 TO 500 A MONTH COMPARED TO 300 TO 350 IN 1986, AND THEY ARE DOUBLE WHAT THEY WERE IN '84-'85. WHAT IS MORE, AS EVERYONE HERE KNOWS, THE SABOTAGE WITHIN PAKISTAN PROCEEDS APACE, AND THE BOMBING OF REFUGEE BORDER CAMPS HAS REACHED UNCONSCIONABLE PROPORTIONS.

WHAT IS WORSE IS THE EXTREME DISAPPOINTMENT WHICH ATTENDED THE LAST EPISODE OF THE PROXIMITY TALKS IN GENEVA IN SEPTEMBER. AFTER ALL, THE TALKS WERE REQUESTED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF AFGHANISTAN, AND THE UNITED NATIONS ASSUMED, AS DID MUCH OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, THAT AN ACCEPTABLE TIMETABLE FOR WITHDRAWAL WOULD FINALLY BE PUT IN PLACE. INSTEAD, THE SOVIET SIDE MADE A SO-CALLED CONCESSION WHICH WAS NO REAL CONCESSION AT ALL. IT SERVED ONLY TO FRUSTRATE THE PROCESS FURTHER.

MR. PRESIDENT, WE SALUTE THE PATIENCE AND STOICISM OF THE GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN. ITS POSITION IS DESPERATELY DIFFICULT, YET IT HANGS IN AND COPES WITH THE LARGEST REFUGEE POPULATION IN THE WORLD. WE SALUTE THE AFGHAN MUJAHIDEEN, THEIR COURAGE AND THEIR NEW SOLIDARITY UNDER UNIFIED LEADERSHIP. IT IS ALMOST UNIMAGINEABLE THAT THEY HAVE WITHSTOOD THE FORMIDABLE SOVIET JUGGERNAUT. BUT THE TOLL IS HORRIFIC.

ABOVE ALL, MR. PRESIDENT, WE SALUTE THE WORK OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL AND THE USE OF HIS GOOD OFFICES TO ATTEMPT TO EFFECT A SETTLEMENT. BUT OF COURSE THAT SETTLEMENT WILL NEVER COME, IN A WAY THAT ALLOWS ALL OF THE GROUPS AND PEOPLE WITHIN AFGHANISTAN TO DETERMINE THEIR OWN FUTURE, UNTIL THE SOVIET REGIMENTS WITHDRAW.

IN THE REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL, TABLED IN SEPTEMBER LAST, HE STATES THE FOLLOWING, QUOTE: "ON 29 JUNE 1987, DURING AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO MOSCOW, I MYSELF MET WITH GENERAL SECRETARY MIKHAIL S. GORBACHEV, WHO EXPRESSED HIS STRONG SUPPORT FOR THE UNITED NATIONS DIPLOMATIC PROCESS AND ASSURED ME THAT THE MAIN CONCERN OF THE SOVIET UNION WAS THAT AFGHANISTAN SHOULD HAVE A NEUTRAL AND INDEPENDENT REGIME, NOT HOSTILE TO THE SOVIET UNION NOR TO ANY OF ITS NEIGHBOURS. THE GENERAL SECRETARY EXPRESSED THE EXPECTATION THAT A SETTLEMENT WOULD BE CONCLUDED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE", UNQUOTE.

IT IS BEYOND CANADA TO IMAGINE HOW ONE BUILDS A REGIME WHICH IS NEUTRAL, INDEPENDENT AND WITHOUT HOSTILITY THROUGH TERROR, TORTURE AND WAR. IT IS EQUALLY BEYOND CANADA TO KNOW HOW A SETTLEMENT CAN BE CONCLUDED UNLESS THE SOVIETS LEAVE AFGHANISTAN. THAT IS THE PRECONDITION FOR PEACE. THAT IS THE PRECONDITION FOR A NEW GOVERNMENT WHICH, WITH HONOUR AND SAFETY, EMBRACES THE RETURN OF ALL ITS PEOPLE, AND IS ITSELF REPRESENTATIVE OF ALL ITS PEOPLE.

EVERY YEAR WE PASS RESOLUTIONS EXHORTING THE SOVIET UNION TO CONSECRATE A FORMULA FOR SETTLEMENT. EVERY YEAR WE PLEAD FOR AN END TO THE INSANITY. EVERY YEAR WE RETURN WITH THE WORDS STILL RINGING IN OUR EARS. EVERY YEAR WE ARE GREETED WITH PREVARICATION, RATIONALIZATION AND DEFIANCE. EVERY YEAR WE TRY AGAIN. WE ARE UNDETERRED.

IF EVER THERE WAS A TEST FOR GLASNOST, IT IS AFGHANISTAN. SO FAR, THE SOVIET UNION IS FAILING THE TEST. DARE ANY OF US HOPE THAT AT THIS TIME NEXT YEAR THE CRY OF THE DOVE WILL BE HEARD OVER THAT SCARRED AND ANGUISHED LAND?

THANK YOU, MR. PRESIDENT.

The Permanent Mission of Canada
to the United Nations



La Mission Permanente du Canada
auprès des Nations Unies

ITEM 31: THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

STATEMENT BY
H.E. MR. STEPHEN LEWIS
AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF CANADA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
TO THE PLENARY
OF THE 42ND SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 9, 1987

MR. PRESIDENT:

THIS YEAR, THE DEBATE ON AFGHANISTAN ASSUMES A NEW LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE. IT IS A LEVEL IMPOSED BY THE SOVIET UNION ITSELF. THIS YEAR, WE NOT ONLY DEAL WITH THE TRAGEDY OF AFGHANISTAN, BUT WE ASK OURSELVES THE QUESTION: DOES AFGHANISTAN DEFINE THE LIMITS OF GLASNOST?

DURING THE MONTHS LEADING UP TO THIS DEBATE, IT IS NO REVELATION TO SAY THAT MANY COUNTRIES VACILLATED BETWEEN ANTICIPATION AND APPREHENSION... ANTICIPATION BECAUSE ALL OF THE NOISES EMANATING FROM THE SOVIET UNION SUGGESTED A POSSIBLE CHANGE IN ITS AFGHANISTAN POLICY. APPREHENSION BECAUSE, DESPITE THE MORE POSITIVE RHETORIC, NOTHING SEEMED TO CHANGE.

MR. PRESIDENT, APPREHENSION HAS WON OUT.

THE SOVIET UNION MAY BE SHIFTING ITS INTERNATIONAL STANCE ON MANY FRONTS, BUT SO FAR, AFGHANISTAN IS NOT AMONGST THEM. THE PENDING ACCORD ON AN INF AGREEMENT, THE VARIOUS INITIATIVES AND NEW POSTURE HERE AT THE UNITED NATIONS, THE RELEASE OF SOME SOVIET DISSIDENTS - ALL THESE THINGS HAVE GIVEN HOPE AND WEIGHT TO THE CONCEPT OF GLASNOST. ALAS, HOWEVER, IT DOES NOT EXTEND TO AFGHANISTAN.

IN THAT FORLORN, RAVAGED COUNTRY, THE PRESENT POLICIES OF THE SOVIET UNION HARK BACK - PARADOXICALLY AND INEXPLICABLY - TO THOSE OF THE DAYS OF STALIN. DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM MAY SHOW A NEW AND ENLIGHTENED FACE TO THE WORLD, BUT IT CONTINUES TO SHOW AN OLD AND BRUTAL FACE TO AFGHANISTAN.

IT IS A MATTER OF EXTREME DISAPPOINTMENT THAT ONE OF THE AREAS - NAMELY AFGHANISTAN - THAT COULD GIVE MOST CREDENCE TO GENERAL SECRETARY GORBACHEV'S NEW APPROACH TO INTERNATIONAL POLICY REMAINS EXCLUDED FROM IT. LAST FEBRUARY, MR. PRESIDENT, THE CANADIAN SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, IN A SPEECH IN NEW DELHI SAID - QUOTE "THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT WELCOMED THE VERY POSITIVE FORMULATIONS CONTAINED IN GENERAL SECRETARY GORBACHEV'S VLADIVOSTOK SPEECH ON PACIFIC SECURITY... BUT A DISTINCTION MUST BE MADE BETWEEN AN EXPRESSION OF INTENT ON THE ONE HAND AND CONSTRUCTIVE ACTION ON THE OTHER... NOTHING WOULD MORE DRAMATICALLY ILLUSTRATE MR. GORBACHEV'S DETERMINATION TO FOLLOW THROUGH ON HIS VLADIVOSTOK SPEECH THAN A WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN" - END QUOTE.

NOT ONLY ARE WE NOWHERE NEAR A WITHDRAWAL, BUT IN A FASHION WHICH DEMONSTRATES UTTER CONTEMPT FOR WORLD OPINION, EVENTS DURING THIS LAST YEAR SHOW THAT THE SOVIETS SPEAK SOFTLY AND CARRY THE HAMMER OF SUBJUGATION.