

**January 10, 1988**

**Report to Minister of Defense Gen. Dmitri T. Yazov  
from Gen. Valentin Varennikov in Kabul, January  
1988**

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**Summary:**

General Varennikov reports on a meeting with Layek, a close advisor of Afghan President Najibullah. They discussed steps necessary to strengthen the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan and stabilize the country prior to the withdrawal of Soviet troops.

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(Secret)

To the USSR Minister of Defense  
General of the Army, D. T. Yazov

I report:

...after the visit of [Soviet foreign Minister] Cde. E. A. Shevardnadze Cde. Najibullah asked to meet with Cde. Layek for a conversation. It ought to be noted that there are very close relations between Najibullah and Layek. They often meet together to discuss various questions, chiefly to submit them to the Politburo or the Defense Council. For the last year and a half Najibullah has repeatedly sent Layek to me for frank conversations, the content of which was doubtless transmitted to Najibullah.

On 10 January the meeting with Layek took place. He arrived under the pretext of discussing the situation in the Gardez - Khost region, [but] in fact he was interested in the opinion of Soviet representatives about the results of Cde. Eh. A. Shevardnadze's visit to Kabul.

At the beginning of the conversation I shared with Layek our estimate of the influence of the meetings with Cde. Eh. A. Shevardnadze on the Party and government bureaucracy of the country. In this regard Layek confirmed the conclusion that the Afghan leadership has finally understood that Soviet troops would soon begin a withdrawal from Afghanistan and this predetermines the necessity for decisive steps to strengthen the position of the PDPA regime and further stabilize the situation in the country.

I further described to Layek the most important problems which should be solved in the shortest possible time. He agreed that it is quite necessary:

1. To speed up the elections to local governments (villages, rural districts, provinces). During the elections the people themselves will decide whom to elect. Fearlessly start to involve the heads of local [rebel] groups in government bodies...
2. Consolidate the positions of government authority. The main figure in the province should be the governor. Examine the leadership echelon at the provincial level and remove people who do not enjoy authority among the population...
3. Strengthen the Party. At the upcoming CC PDPA plenum determine the role and place of the PDPA in the new conditions (a multi-Party system, coalition, the upcoming withdrawal of Soviet troops) and the tactics of their future activities right now and for the long term...
4. Accelerate the strengthening of the bloc of leftist forces and its active inclusion in the political processes in the country...
5. Concentrate efforts in 8-9 key provinces (Kabul, Herat, Kandahar, Paktia, the Khost district, Nangarhar, Jowzjan, Balkh, and Kunduz), firmly holding the west, south, and some of the east of Afghanistan.
6. Start creating a coalition government now while Soviet troops are in the country. For this, it is necessary to look for nontraditional means, make contacts, and use all the possibilities for work with the most influential group leaders such as Ahmad Shah and Jelialuddin.

Regarding the question of strengthening the Party, Layek assured me that this would not be difficult to achieve. It is enough to stop factionalism at the highest level and everything will be in order. In his words, the differences at middle and lower levels of the Party bureaucracy are not sharp and easily eliminated. It is necessary to achieve Politburo unity [by] removing 3 or 4 people who are strenuously pursuing factional activity. Layek did not name who these people are.

...Layek noted that the policy of national reconciliation is the only correct way to solve the Afghan problem. Afghan leaders should not scare off the opposition while carrying it out - "the doors to talks should be open."

I said to Layek that the opposition will not crawl to these doors itself. They need to be assiduously invited, moreover, into talks as equals so that the opposition can maintain their political face. Only in this case can you count on anything. For a long time only one method was used regarding the intransigent leaders - active combat operations. Now the time has come to again reexamine the attitude toward authoritative [rebel] leaders and make a decision about each one personally. The main thing is to draw them into contact, into talks, and into participation in coalition government bodies and offer [them] prestigious positions in the provinces and in Kabul. At the same time, decide the problem of reducing the influence of important leaders by splitting away small detachments.

Not all Afghan leaders correctly understand this issue. The DRA Special Revolutionary Court has not yet revoked the sentence which in 1986 handed down a death sentence in absentia to seven important and authoritative leaders, including A. Shah and Jelaluddin. Threats are directed against them on Afghan television. All of this is obviously not going to help establish contact with them.

Layek agreed with these conclusions. However he expressed doubt that A. Shah and those like him would sit at a negotiating table (although the Afghan comrades still have not tried to propose this) since they hope that the absence of unity in the PDPA will lead to the destruction of the Party, which would facilitate the seizure of power...

Varennikov

January 1988