



Harold Brown, U.S. Defense Secretary, mounted atop an outmoded Soviet tank in use by the Chinese Peoples Liberation Army, during his recent visit to Peking.

The Soviet Union's offer that the U.S. turned down

The U.S.S.R. has disclosed through diplomatic channels an offer to withdraw their troops from Afghanistan if certain reasonable efforts and guarantees are met to stabilize the South Asia region.

"Much depends on the U.S. and China," said Soviet Ambassador to Japan Dimitri Polyanski. "The present situation in Afghanistan can end in the near future, unless the two countries try to escalate it." Ambassador Polyanski reported that a Soviet troop withdrawal could begin as early as the end of February if—and only if—the United States and China stop interfering in the internal affairs of Afghanistan.

The same offer is coming from channels at the Soviet Mission to the United Nations. The *New York Times* on Feb. 12 quotes high-ranking officials at the mission that the U.S.S.R. may soon begin a "substantive and meaningful" troop withdrawal from Afghanistan in exchange for "guarantees" that would ensure that Pakistan cease its military aid to Afghani rebels.

Since the Soviet Union initiated its military action in Afghanistan they have made clear that they have "no long-term designs over Afghanistan." A *Pravda*

commentary by Y. Zhukov on Feb. 10 indicated that as soon as the situation in Afghanistan is stabilized, "as soon as Washington and China stop meddling in Afghan affairs," Moscow would be willing "in the interest of peace" to negotiate a troop withdrawal. "Only if the U.S. stops interfering in Afghani affairs will the Soviet Union, on request of the legitimate government of Afghanistan, begin the pull-out of its limited military contingent from Afghanistan ... so that Afghanistan can continue its policy of developing its economy and the realization of democratic transformations under still calmer conditions."

The next day, *Pravda's* Bonn correspondent V. Mikhailov made special mention of the role America's Western allies are taking to neutralize the dangerous policies of the Carter administration. The West German government, together with other West European countries, said Mikhailov, "is paying more and more attention to the idea of creating an alliance among the countries of the Persian Gulf, not to please Washington... (They are) recognizing very well that the Anglo-Americans, under all the anti-Soviet noise and rhetoric, are trying to take control of the energy supply sources of Western Europe and Japan and in this way acquire new means of pressure on them ... preventing the development of the competitive power of these countries which is dangerous for the American monopolies."