

Eye on Washington by Nicholas F. Benton

Shultz concedes Afghan partition potential

Secretary of State George Shultz admitted during a briefing to the White House press corps April 11 that the accord signed in Geneva spelling out the terms of the Soviet troop withdrawal from Afghanistan will neither bring peace to that nation, nor prevent a Soviet client state from being consolidated, resulting in a partitioning of the country into two or more entities and an eventual partitioning of Pakistan as well.

Nothing Shultz said at his press conference indicated the State Department expects a different outcome. His remarks were so vague that many took them as a signal that an explicit deal had been worked out between Shultz and Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze that would allow exactly this to occur.

The deal: President Reagan gets credit for another foreign policy "victory" with the appearance of a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, while the Soviets get their most coveted geopolitical prize, a warm-water port on the Indian Ocean.

An exchange at the White House press briefing exemplified this:

EIR: Mr. Secretary, many people are comparing this accord with the 1954 accord in Vietnam, which ultimately led to the partition of Vietnam and everything that happened subsequent to that. If the Soviets are signing on as guarantors to the borders between Pakistan and Afghanistan, why did Shevardnadze say on March 30 in Bulgaria that he does not think that the tribal groups of Afghanistan are going to respect those borders once the So-

viet troops withdraw?

Shultz: Well, Afghanistan is a very special country, like most countries, and it doesn't have a tradition of a strong central government. And no doubt as the thing settles out it will be rather a decentralized situation there.

I don't know that people can have absolutely confident expectations of exactly how things will develop. . . . The Soviet Union will withdraw fully from Afghanistan, and then the people of Afghanistan have got to work things out. That's their right and their problem.

A Cable News Network reporter then asked Shultz, "Do you expect this to end the war?" Shultz gave a long, convoluted answer that described the chaos of 3 million refugees returning to the country.

White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater was also unable to deny the Afghan sellout. On April 8, this reporter was permitted during the daily White House briefing to summarize remarks made by Soviet academician Yuri Gankovskiy during a seminar at John Hopkins University the day before. Gankovsky, the Soviets' top Afghan expert, said he was sure the pro-Soviet People's Democratic Party would remain in control after the Soviet troop pullout (see *EIR*, April 15, p. 35).

When I asked Fitzwater if the administration were concerned that the Soviets would leave behind a client state, fully supplied and controlling the military, Fitzwater could only repeat the terms of the accord like a litany.

It was even worse the next day. The following is taken from the transcript:

Fitzwater: Generally, the conservatives consider this one of the greatest victories of the Reagan administration. . . .

EIR: You say there is virtually no opposition . . . to this accord, but the main opposition to it is coming from the moderate rebel leaders themselves, who are claiming and quoting Soviet sources as saying that the government they're going to leave behind when the troops withdraw will be a Soviet puppet government. . . . Everytime here yesterday attempts were made to pin [Shultz] down on whether this means the war would end in Afghanistan or whether the country would avoid partitioning or not—he evaded an answer, creating the impression that the State Department is fully aware that the situation will remain unstable in Afghanistan, and that an ultimate split of the country into two or three parts might be the eventual result.

Fitzwater: I just don't have that kind of analysis. I don't know.

Fitzwater flees query on crash

The question that most disturbed Fitzwater, however, came on April 14, the day the February trade deficit figures were announced and the stock market plunged over 100 points.

Fitzwater actually shut down the briefing and fled from the podium to evade my question about whether or not supplementary appropriations for the FDIC and FSLIC are now being considered, given the astonishing \$1.5 billion loss reported in the first quarter by the Republic Bank of Dallas, and the record number of bank failures expected in 1988.

As I was pointing out how 20% of the \$45 billion federal budget deficit reduction package for Fiscal Year 1989 worked out after last October's crash was made up of a \$9 billion reduction in outlays for the FDIC and FSLIC, Fitzwater cut me off and fled.