

### **Soviet Primary Source Discussion Questions**

#### **Document #1**

As you read the telephone conversation between Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin and Afghan Prime Minister Nur Mohammed Taraki:

1. What appears to be Taraki's most immediate concern?
2. Taraki mentions Iran and Pakistan during the conversation. At the time, a revolution was going on in Iran and Pakistan was a U.S. Cold War ally. Given this context, why do you think Taraki mentioned these nations? What does he say, and how does this relate to the context of the Cold War?
3. In response to Iran, what does Kosygin suggest to Taraki, and what does this reveal about the nature of Cold War relationships in the Middle East at this time?
4. Taraki makes a suggestion to Kosygin regarding the use of "propaganda," although Kosygin refuses to follow his advice. What did Taraki want, and why does Kosygin refuse?
5. Concerning troops and equipment, to what degree is Taraki dependent on the Soviet Union? Why is this so?
6. Concerning the idea of Marxism, Taraki (who is a Communist) reveals something about the people of Afghanistan that tends to undermine Marxist theory all together. What did he say to Kosygin in this regard?
7. Taraki, for a second time, brings up Iran and Pakistan. What does this suggest about Taraki's own knowledge concerning international Cold War policies? How does Kosygin read the situation differently than Taraki?
8. Kosygin seems reluctant to send in Tajiks, Uzbeks, or Turkmen. Why is he hesitant to grant Taraki's request?
9. Taraki "sounds" desperate, but considering the status of Cold War relations, what might Taraki be attempting to achieve during this conversation with Kosygin? How dependent is he on the Soviets?
10. What has Kosygin learned from this conversation? What has Taraki learned?

## **Document 2**

Regarding the meeting of the Politburo Central Committee, March 17-19, 1979:

1. Where is the center of the crisis taking place in Afghanistan?
2. What concerns do the members of the Politburo have regarding the crisis? Who are they blaming?
3. How many insurgents do the Soviets suspect they're dealing with? Are insurgents the main problem they have to deal with?
4. Hazifullah Amin gives the Soviets a much different picture than what was shared by Taraki. How do these viewpoints differ, and do (or should) the Soviets trust either Amin or Taraki?
5. Who do the Soviets blame for the insurgency? Does this reflect greater Cold War perspectives?
6. What concerns do the Soviets attempt to communicate to Amin? What is Amin's stance on this issue?
7. Gromyko says, "under no circumstances may we lose Afghanistan." If the Soviets "lose" Afghanistan, what exactly are they "losing"?
8. Why is the Politburo reluctant to send Soviet troops into the region? What concerns do they have regarding the insurgency? Are they convinced that sending troops will keep them from "losing" Afghanistan?
9. Why does Kosygin discuss raising gas prices?
10. In relation to question #4, what are Kosygin's concerns regarding both Taraki and Amin? What further concerns does he have regarding Parchami prisoners in Afghanistan?
11. Why does the Politburo wish to send Ustinov and what do they expect him to achieve? Why does Ustinov not want to go to Afghanistan (aside from wanting to save his skin)?
12. How reliable do the Soviets consider the Afghan army? What is happening to the rank and file soldiers that might cause concern in Moscow?
13. At this point in time, what does the Politburo decide on the issue of sending in Soviet troops and why did they come to this decision?
14. If Jimmy Carter had been a fly on the wall in this meeting, how might his response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan been different? Or would it have been different?