

What can the ABC News: “Soviet War in Afghanistan- Resistance, Casualties and Sanctions” (January 11th 1980) tell us about American-Soviet foreign relations in 1980?

by Oliver Bartle



Image 2: flag of Communist Afghanistan. Source: Wikipedia, (accessed 22/04/2023)



Image 1: Soviet troops training in Afghanistan. Source: Wikipedia (accessed 19/04/2023)

Overview

- Discusses Russia's invasion of Afghanistan, the reasons for the invasion and the potential for spill over into Pakistan.
- Soviet casualty figures and defeats, the treatment of political prisoners and the refugee crisis caused by the invasion.
- Shows journalists interviewing Babrak Karmal in why the Soviets overthrew Amin and how long the Soviets were going to be there.
- Discusses Western reaction to the Soviet invasion and the American business community's reactions to them.

What article shows on US perspective

- America's hostility to the Soviet Union is obvious:
 - It implies America is more moral than the Soviet Union
 - Soviet atrocities and military defeats emphasised
 - Soviet military and economic weakness
 - Bias of perspective as from an American news network in the Cold War
- Shows Carter taking a hard line on the Afghanistan issue
 - Hidden agenda- election year (Skidmore, 1993)
 - Attempt to make US seem a reliable ally again (Johnson, 1992)
- Portrayal of unity of US allies in the cause
- US business elites:
 - More scared of Germany and Japan than the Soviets
 - Do not want other competitors getting Soviet resources



Image 3: Jimmy Carter.
Source: Wikipedia (accessed
19/04/2023)

What the Soviet interviews show on their perspective

- Three main points emphasised by Karmal and Soviet ambassador to the UN:
 - A fear of being surrounded by supposed US allies
 - A fear of US-China conspiracy against them
 - A fear of nations defecting from the Soviet block
- Does however want to keep Détente process going



Image 4: map of the Soviet Union. Source: Wikimedia Commons (accessed 22/04/2023)

Conclusion

- It shows the America developing a harder line in foreign affairs with Soviets
- It shows that the Americans saw the Soviets as an immoral force in the world
- It shows that economically American business was more fearful of Western Europe and Japan rather than the Soviets
- The Soviet interviews show their own geopolitical fears, and their reasoning for going into Afghanistan
- To sum up the article shows the collapse in Soviet- American relations in the early 1980s

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