

Thursday, February 16, 1989

Soviet Union finishes pull-out of Afghanistan

TERMEZ, U.S.S.R. (AP) — The Soviet Union ended its costly nine-year intervention in Afghanistan on Wednesday when the last soldier — the commander of the Red Army contingent — walked across a border bridge clutching flowers.

"I wasn't looking back," said Lt. Gen. Boris Gromov after leaving Afghan soil where 15,000 Soviets died.

The pullout through this border town — where many of the 115,000 Soviet troops had entered Afghanistan — closed a painful chapter in Soviet history that Mikhail S. Gorbachev once called a "bleeding wound."

But it did little to silence the critics who said the Kremlin's December 1979 intervention to aid a Marxist government against U.S.-backed Moslem guerrillas was a costly mistake.

About 200 cheering, wind-burned soldiers clutched automatic rifles as they rode mud-spattered armored personnel carriers across the Friendship bridge over the Amu Darya River on Wednesday — the U.N.-mediated deadline for all Soviets to be out of Afghanistan.

Gromov, the 45-year-old commander of the Soviet contingent in Afghanistan, rode the last armored personnel carrier off Afghan soil.

His vehicle stopped halfway across the bridge linking Termez with the Afghan town of Khairaton, and his 14-year-old son, Maxim, ran out. He gave his father a bouquet of carnations and they walked arm-in-arm the final yards to Soviet soil.

At the border, the sunburned general appeared to be near tears when he said his thoughts were for his countrymen who served or died in Afghanistan.

"I thought about those who were left behind, but most importantly about those who have come home," said Gromov, who took command in Afghanistan in 1984 on his third tour of duty there.

Lt. Col. Igor Azarenok of the Soviet Defense Ministry said Gromov's headquarters, group was the last to leave, and the official news agency Tass said other troops crossed the border Wednesday at Kushka.

In Afghanistan, tens of thousands of guerrillas reportedly were advancing on the capital, Kabul and other major cities.

The Afghan government Wednesday night expressed its appreciation to the Soviet Union for its assistance. But it also said relations between the two should develop on the basis of non-interference in each other's internal affairs.

Book enrages Moslems; Iran wants author dead

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Iran on Wednesday placed a \$2.6 million bounty on the head of Salman Rushdie, whose novel "The Satanic Verses" has enraged many of the world's Moslems, and he dropped from sight with police guarding his home and his publishers.

"If the executioner is a foreigner he will receive a million dollars," said Hojatolislam Hassan Saneie, head of the 15th Khoradad Relief Agency, according to the Iranian news agency.

The reward for an Iranian, however, will be 200 million rials, or \$2.6 million, the Islamic Republic News Agency quoted Saneie as saying.

Tehran Radio denounced the book as "a shameful onslaught on the sacred character of Islam's prophet," and protesters shattered windows at the British Embassy in Tehran.

"With a glance at the writer of this book one may see the hidden hands of world imperialism and the devious role of arrogance in the activities of publication agencies which serve it," said a Tehran Radio broadcast monitored by the British Broadcasting Corp.

About 2,000 noisy protesters appeared at the British Embassy in Tehran, Charge d'Affaires Nick Browne told BBC-TV, but he said authorities protected the embassy and the seven people inside.

"There was never any question of any of us being in danger," Browne said.

Tehran Radio, monitored by the BBC, reported other protests Wednesday in Kashan, southeast of the holy city of Qom, and Firuzkuh, east of Tehran.

Six people died earlier this week in protests in Pakistan.

A day earlier, Tehran Radio quoted Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini as saying Rushdie and his publishers "are hereby sentenced to death."

"I call on all zealous Moslems to execute them

quickly, wherever they find them, so that no one will dare to insult Islamic sanctity," it quoted Khomeini as saying.

Rushdie — a Moslem born in Bombay, India, and educated at Cambridge — was reported to be under police guard Wednesday with his wife, American novelist Marianne Wiggins, as he pondered whether to go ahead with a tour of the United States that was to begin Friday.

"The Satanic Verses" has sold more than 100,000 copies since it was published in Britain in September to critical acclaim.

At least five countries have formally banned the novel: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Egypt and South Africa.

Christian Bourgois, a French publishing house that bought the rights to the novel, said Wednesday it was delaying publication to avoid any risk to the company, its clients and readers.

Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati told diplomats in Tehran the government would order the closure of cultural centers of nations that permit publication of the book, Tehran Radio reported.

"There has been no direct impact on ties so far," IRNA said Wednesday, "but by being the first to allow the book to be published on its soil, Britain could pay a heavy price for ignoring the strong sentiments of over 1 billion Moslems worldwide."

Mostafa Barzegar, spokesman for Iran's Culture and Islamic Guidance Ministry, announced a ban on books published by Viking and other imprints of the Penguin Group, and said Penguin's invitation to the Tehran International Book Fair in May has been canceled.

Playwright Harold Pinter led a delegation to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's residence at 10 Downing St. to deliver a letter denouncing the Iranian threats.

"Salman Rushdie lives in this country and must be given full protection, along with the other people involved," the letter said.

America's smaller businesses reporting early signs of inflation

NEW YORK (AP) — Signs of inflation are showing up in many of the smaller businesses of America, where economic stresses sometimes make their first appearance.

Some are reporting small increases in wage pressure, which has been at minimal levels through most of the six-year-old economic expansion. Plans to raise prices are on a sharp ascent. Actual price increases are rising also.

The evidence is contained in the latest quarterly economic survey of small and independent businesses, ranging from proprietorships to companies that just fail to make listings of the 1,000 largest companies.

The survey, conducted by the National Federation of Independent Business, "shows the worst set of inflation numbers in the expansion," said economist William C. Dunkelberg, who analyzes and interprets the data.

Dunkelberg, dean of Temple University's school of business and management, said first-quarter plans to raise prices jumped 5 percentage

points from fourth-quarter levels to 30 percent of all companies in the survey.

The latest percentage contrasts with only 19 percent in July 1986. Levels in some categories were even higher — 38 percent among wholesalers, followed by manufacturing at 37 percent and professional service firms at 36 percent.

Actual price increases rose to 29 percent, indicating that companies were following through on plans. Although that percentage was exceeded briefly early in 1988, Dunkelberg pointed out that it was close to the highest since 1981.

The data, gathered from more than 2,000 written responses from the 500,000 business members of the federation, led Dunkelberg to conclude, "Although not rampant, the pace of price increases clearly continues to gain momentum."

He said overall price increases in the general economy once again may be held down by falling oil prices, but without a decline in energy or food prices, 1989's inflation rate will

be above the 1988 experience.

He estimated the first-quarter inflation level would measure about 4.9 percent on an annual basis, compared with a 1988 increase in the consumer price index of 4.4 percent.

In spite of some evidence of rising wages, there is no evidence that gains are 'alarming,' Dunkelberg said. He added, however, that as inflation rose labor would demand larger wage increases, which they feel could be funded out of the earnings being posted by many of our companies.

He said employment of the over-16 population is at record high levels, and that small-firm job openings are at their highest for the more than six years of expansion.

"Multiple job holding is becoming quite common," he said. Overall, the small business optimism index, made up of such factors as expected business conditions, current job openings, expected credit conditions, and expected sales volume, barely changed from the fourth quarter of 1988.

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