TO WIN THE CHILDREN:
AFGHANISTAN'S OTHER WAR

HELSINKI WATCH/ASIA WATCH

DECEMBER 1986
AFGHAN PHOTO:  

AFGHAN child sent to 
row for eight years of 
USS FROM SOV FOTO 
1-School for Afghan 
see photo 39 
Gwara, Pakistan
TO WIN THE CHILDREN: AFGHANISTAN'S OTHER WAR

DECEMBER 1986

Helsinki Watch Asia Watch

36 West 44th Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. 212-940-9465
739 Eight Street, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003. 202-546-9306
HELSINKI WATCH

The U.S. Helsinki Watch Committee was founded in 1979 to promote domestic and international compliance with the human rights provisions of the 1975 Helsinki accords. Its Chairman is Robert L. Bernstein; its Vice Chairmen are Orville H. Schell and Aryeh Neier; its Executive Director is Jeri Laber; its Washington Representative is Holly J. Burkhalter.

ASIA WATCH

The Asia Watch was organized by the Fund for Free Expression in 1985 to monitor and promote human rights in Asia. Its Chairman is Adrian W. DeWind; its Vice Chairman is Aryeh Neier; its Program Director is Eric Schwartz; its Washington Representative is Holly J. Burkhalter.

Copies of this report are available for $10.00.

Previous reports on Afghanistan are also available:

"Tears, Blood and Cries: Human Rights in Afghanistan Since the Incasion, 1979-1984,
December 1984. 210 pages. $10.00.


This report was written by Jeri Laber, Executive Director of Helsinki Watch, and is based on the results of several fact-finding missions to the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan.

Photo credits: Bentley Kassai, Jeri Laber and Sovinto

Design: Charles H. Gabriel

Helsinki Watch gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the J. Roderick MacArthur Foundation in the preparation of this report.

© 1986 by the U.S. Helsinki Watch Committee
All rights reserved
Printed in the United States of America
"The Afghan wounded I have treated here have a determination that I have never seen before. I have never met a wounded or amputated man who is defeated, sad or sorry. I have never heard a woman cry, a woman shouting, a crowd of people mourning... I come from a Muslim country that mourns its dead for forty days. I have never seen anything like this." — Dr. Mahmoud K.A. Y. Bour, Director, Kuwait Red Crescent Hospital for Afghan Refugees, Peshawar, Pakistan
The human rights violations referred to in these pages have been extensively documented in two previous Helsinki Watch/Asia Watch reports, published in 1984 and 1985: "Tears, Blood and Cries: Human Rights in Afghanistan Since the Invasion 1979-1984 and To Die in Afghanistan. Those reports, together with this one, reflect the results of several years of study and inquiry, including a number of fact-finding missions to Europe and Asia.

The Watch Committees have sponsored three missions to the borders of Afghanistan in the past two years — to Peshawar, Islamabad and Quetta in Pakistan and to the Tribal Agencies of North Waziristan and Bajaur. Testimonies have been taken from hundreds of Afghan refugees from all walks of life and just about every province in Afghanistan. In addition, we have collected information from Western journalists and doctors who have worked inside Afghanistan and from individuals associated with the various relief organizations in Pakistan.

Previous reports, unlike the present one which has a specific focus, have dealt with a wide range of human rights violations. We have documented crimes committed by Soviet and Afghan government forces against the civilian population in the countryside, including indiscriminate bombing, reprisal killings and massacres, summary executions, random killings, anti-personnel mines, forced conscriptions, and the destruction of the rural economy. We have also documented severe repression in the cities, focussing both on the suppression of political freedoms and of independent institutions and on arbitrary arrests, torture, degrading prison conditions, and summary trials and executions. The Watch Committees have documented violations of specific international agreements on the part of the Afghan/Soviet forces with regard to prisoners of war, medical and humanitarian assistance, and the rights of journalists.

In the course of our inquiries we have documented the fact that Soviet forces have increasingly taken the lead, both in the attacks on civilians in the countryside and in the repression of individuals in the cities. Our findings have been corroborated by other, independent reports, such as those prepared by the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Human Rights Commission and by Amnesty International. Our efforts to visit Afghanistan officially and to discuss these matters with Afghan authorities have met with no response.

The Watch Committees have also documented violations of human rights by the Afghan resistance, in particular with regard to prisoners of war and to the use of children in battle and as spies.
CONTENTS

Introduction 1
Victimizing the Children 3
Imposing Communist Ideology 9
Fighting for Islam 13
Training Children as Spies and Assassins 17
Conclusion 21

Refugee children in Pakistan

"Happy childhood" — TASS
Amid the rubble of devastated villages and the chaos of war-torn cities, a new generation of Afghans, unlike any other, is somehow coming of age. The children of Afghanistan—survivors of the carnage that has transformed their ancient valleys and fields into a modern nightmare of death and destruction—are among the most victimized in a war that does not spare civilians. They are also the targets of another war, a war being waged for their allegiance.

With no end in sight after seven years of fighting, Soviet occupation forces and the Afghan resistance—known as mujahedin—are each seeking to influence a new generation that will someday determine Afghanistan's future. Afghan children are being polarized by a contest of ideologies. This is the "other war" that is being waged, both in Afghanistan and beyond its borders—the struggle for the minds and hearts of the Afghan children.

Those Afghan children who live in cities that are under Soviet control are being subjected to a Soviet-style education aimed at creating a new, Communist Afghan. Thousands, including children orphaned by the war, are being sent to the Soviet Union for long-term indoctrination. Still others are being trained as spies and assassins. But most of Afghanistan is not under Soviet control. Children living in areas where the resistance operates are growing up with the spirit of jihad, the "holy war" that propels the resistance. And among the five million refugees who have been
forced over the borders (one third of Afghanistan's pre-war population), about 48 percent are children, many of whom are being trained by the resistance to take up the fight against the "Russian infidels."

The Russians, known for their staying power, are in Afghanistan for the long haul. They intend to win, not just militarily but ideologically, and to realize their concept of the future—an Afghanistan run by leaders and bureaucrats loyal to their Soviet sponsors. The Communist education of the young, intrinsic to Soviet strategy everywhere, has taken on added importance in the confrontation with the Afghans. "They saw that they couldn't conquer us," a resistance commander recently explained, "and they realized that there is no way to change the people. That's when they decided to take the children, because they think that they have 'empty brains.'"

The Afghans, however, know the source of their strength and are perpetuating it: both within the country and outside its borders, they are arming their children spiritually and emotionally for the battles that lie ahead. It is the spirit of jihad with which the Soviets must contend, both on the battlefield and in their fight for the allegiance of the Afghan children.

Inside a refugee tent. Balaır Agency
"I asked my mother: 'Who is this one?' She said: 'This is your father.' — Feraydoun, six years old, from Kapisa Province

"I was conscious when I saw my nose burning, but after the next bomb was thrown, I remember nothing." — Abdul Qudus, ten years old, from Nuristan, Kunar Province

"My brother was taken under a tree and shot. Then they went inside. They killed my father and mother and wounded my sister. That was four years ago. I saw it all with my own eyes." — Mohammad Zaher, 13 years old, from Shamali

3
The war in Afghanistan is a cruel one, claiming many Afghan lives. A large proportion of the dead are civilians. Faced with a guerrilla war, Soviet and Afghan armed forces have ruthlessly aimed their firepower against the population as a whole. It is their way of fighting a war without fronts in which the resistance and the local population are virtually inseparable.

The mujahedin are not an organized army. They fight in groups, often sporadically, and are usually aligned with one of the many resistance parties. Although the vast majority of Afghan males of fighting age are mujahedin, they are also farmers and villagers, husbands and fathers, who return frequently to their homes to work, to eat, and to rest.

Determined to cut off support for the mujahedin, to "drain the sea from the fish," the Soviet and Afghan armed forces have adopted a policy of terror and intimidation. Whole villages are bombed into oblivion, sometimes as a reprisal for a mujahedin attack, often for no reason at all. Women and children are strafed from helicopter gunships as they run to seek shelter. Roads and pastures used by civilians are strewn with antipersonnel mines that have claimed countless innocent victims. Villages are invaded by specially trained Soviet counterinsurgency forces. They burst into homes, shooting blindly. They take valuables. They abduct young women. Virtually every conceivable atrocity, every known crime of war, is taking place in Afghanistan today and on a scale so vast it defies imagination.

Children are among the most victimized. They are bombed in their schools and during religious instruction in the mosques. They are burned alive in locked rooms. their charred bodies unrecognizable to their grieving parents. Village children are shot while fleeing to caves in the mountains or en route to refuge in Pakistan or Iran. City children are spied upon and urged to inform against their families and friends. Children are trained as spies, saboteurs and assassins. Nursing babies are taken from their mothers in prison, never to be seen again. Unborn children are bayoneted to death in their mothers' wombs.
On September 10, 1986, Professor Felix Ermacora, the U.N. Human Rights Commission's Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan, visited the Said Gi transit camp in North Waziristan, on the Afghan border. While he was there, Afghan jets viciously bombed a caravan of refugees that was approaching the border en route to Pakistan. The Pakistani official who accompanied Professor Ermacora later described the scene: "We could hear the strafing and see the smoke. After 45 minutes we saw the dead bodies coming in. There was a small child whose mother had died, about 11 or 12 months old. He was tied to a horse and his grandfather was riding with him."

The official lapsed into silence, then added: "It’s a ruthless policy. They take away their lands. Then, when they leave, they bomb them. There's no logic, just cruelty."

Almost from the start of the Afghan conflict, reports began circulating about the use of "toy bombs"—mines disguised as toy trucks or dolls, or as pens, watches, chewing gum, combs and other everyday objects. Sardar Gul, a 13-year-old refugee schoolboy now in Pakistan, described how two of his friends, brothers named Rafiq and Atiq, were killed when they picked up something yellow and round, about the size of a film container. "My father saw many children killed by these toys," he added. "He was always warning us not to touch such things." These lethal attractions, snatched up by curious, unsuspecting hands, explode in the children's faces. Sometimes they kill, but more often they maim. "The story is always the same," a doctor explained. "The children find something in the village, on the road. They play with it; it explodes. Usually it's a combination of hands, face and eyes. Many of them lose both hands and a few lose their sight. It always looks like a little toy, a small car, something like that."

He paused, then said angrily: "It is the most inhuman way of fighting. To give toys to children. To cause that crippling damage. This is very, very inhuman. And this is not something that happened once or twice, but many, many times."

"My father saw many children killed by these toys. He was always warning us not to touch such things."—Sardar Gul, 13 years old, refugee

"My friend picked one up and lost an arm. Then we understood why the pens were scattered all over the road. When the operations are over, they scatter these materials. ... There are also shiny tins that explode: they look like this snuff box."—Noorbeh, an elder from Dar-e-Noor, near Jalalabad, Nangarhar Province
The practice of using toys to kill is such an outrageous concept that many have refused to accept it as true. Yet Helsinki Watch has received scores of testimonies about such weapons, from credible witnesses who often had no notion of the significance of what they were reporting. It is the Afghan government itself, however, that provided physical evidence of the toy weapons. At a press conference in Kabul, reported in the Soviet newspaper Krasnaya Zvezda on June 12, 1985, the Afghan government's official press agency BAKHTAR described the toy mines as "terror methods" used by "imperialism" against Afghanistan. Although victims of the toy mines have never been able to produce samples because the "evidence" self-destructs, the Afghan news agency was apparently able to mount a sizeable display of pens, dolls, cigarette lighters and watches. It also exhibited miniature explosives that could be used to booby-trap keyholes and a tiny explosive that looked like an ordinary pebble.

Many Afghan children have become refugees within their own country, driven from their homes and villages and herded into cities where they live confused and impoverished lives. Millions more have made the arduous journey to Pakistan, where they live in camps, without purpose or direction. Many of the children have had to walk for weeks or even months before finding refuge. They are without possessions, tired, often hungry. They bear visible scars of war: wounds, burns, amputated limbs, blindness.
The emotional toll is equally severe. Some children seem excessively fearful, shrinking away at the sight of a camera, for example, thinking it might be a gun, or pulling back when offered trinkets, afraid that they will explode. Others are dispirited or despondent. A refugee woman living in a makeshift tent explained that her youngest child "is not normal." "She cries a lot, she is always sick, since the bombing." Asked how her children spend their days, she replied: "They just sit with me. Like in a jail. We just sit."

The closely knit structure of pre-war Afghan families has been torn asunder. An Afghan teacher now working for a relief agency in Peshawar confided that her eight-year old daughter "doesn't like her father." "Who is he? Why does he sleep with you?" she asks, refusing to kiss him. During her early years, living in Kabul, this child was separated from her father, a mujahed whose home in the city was staked out by secret police waiting to seize him if he came to visit. "Once he did come," his wife revealed, "but I told the children he was their uncle. I was afraid that they would tell their friends, and then we would all be in trouble."

At the Psychiatry Center for Afghans in Peshawar, Pakistan, one doctor and two psychiatrists treat about 40 patients a day, free of charge, in very modest facilities. "There are three million refugees; all of them have psychological problems," explained Dr. Mohammad Azam Dadfar, head of the clinic and one of two Afghan psychiatrists out of a total of eight psychiatrists in all of Peshawar. Dr. Dadfar treats most cases with medication; the prognosis, he says, is "very poor."

One of Dr. Dadfar's patients is two and a half years old, noticeably agitated, hyperactive and unmanageable, with spastic hand and body movements. "His mother died during bombardment," the doctor explained. "The trauma started then." The child's father, gently restraining his son, explained that he was with the mujahedins and was not in his village when it was bombed. "No one told me," he said. "They just told me to go home. When I got there, the child was unconscious..."
for three days. When he came to, he was not understandable... Now I cannot do any work. I have to look after this child. If he recovers a little, then I will go home for jihad."

Another child of about the same age is being treated together with his parents for depression and psychosomatic disturbances caused by emigration. The child has been suffering from nightmares, enuresis and behavior disorders, the parents from extreme depression. The doctor revealed that the parents had been beating the child because of his erratic behavior.

Dr. Dadfar, who himself was once imprisoned in Kabul and tortured with electric shocks, also treats patients with problems resulting from torture. He described a woman who was stripped naked in an Afghan jail and forced to watch her one-year-old child being tortured. He showed photographs of the scarred back of a boy who was beaten with sticks and whips and of the crippled leg of another whose torturers had inserted an iron rod in an open wound, twisting it until he "confessed."

Virtually all of Afghanistan's youth, those within the country and those beyond the border, has been made vulnerable by the experiences of a vicious, prolonged war. They present a challenge to which both the Soviets and the Afghan resistance have risen, each side eager to win the children to its cause.
IMPOSING COMMUNIST IDEOLOGY

"Afghan children at Kabul Airport leaving for Soviet Union" — TASS
The Soviets are at a disadvantage. They seek to impose a Communist ideology that has gone bankrupt in their own country and is foreign to Afghan thinking, an ideology that Afghans consider atheistic, evil and decadent. Moreover, only a small portion of the country is under Soviet control, and thus the Soviets can only hope to influence children living in Kabul and a few other cities. But the Russians have had long, relevant experience in subduing ethnic resistance in other countries, most pertinently in their own Central Asian republics. They believe that they are bringing progress and enlightenment to a poor and backward nation. And they have no scruples about the methods that they use.

They began, soon after the 1979 takeover, with a thorough overhaul of the existing Afghan school system, aimed at making it conform to Soviet schools in structure and in content. Soviet advisers, Soviet teachers, and Soviet-published textbooks were brought in, and socialism and dialectical materialism were added to a newly standardized curriculum. Russian replaced English as a required language. Afghanistan's history was rewritten as a continuing struggle against imperialism, aided by an enduring friendship with the Soviet Union. Teachers with independent views were fired; many were imprisoned or executed, others fled the country. Student membership in Party organizations became necessary for scholastic success, and Party loyalty required students to inform upon their teachers and each other.

Acknowledging the strong hold of Islam on the Afghan people, the Soviets moved cautiously with regard to religion. Some Islamic teaching was allowed to continue in the schools, carefully monitored to prevent any anti-government content. Nevertheless, about half of the eligible students stayed away. Some 90 percent of the Afghan population is illiterate, and the Soviets soon learned that it is senseless to distribute propaganda to a population that does not read. A new approach was necessary.

In 1984 the Afghan regime launched a new
program under which thousands of very young children—six to nine years old, or even younger—are sent to the USSR each year for ten years or more of study. The purpose of the program is evident: to remove children from the influences of family and tradition, to reach them while they are young and impressionable, to show them a "better life" in the USSR, and—ultimately—to offer them the opportunity to lead Afghanistan into a Communist future.

"The tactics of the Russians have changed," observed Habibullah Ghaleb, director of an orphanage in Peshawar. "They massacre every village and send the children to the USSR to educate them in Communism and turn them against their own people. They have categorized all the children. The geniuses are sent to the USSR. The others stay in the Fatherland Training Centers [Parwarishgah-e Watan]. Others are trained and sent as spies."

Some of the youngsters sent to the USSR are undoubtedly the offspring of Afghan Party members, sent with their parents' blessings. Others, however, are sent from their schools without their families' consent, and sometimes without even their knowledge. Children have been taken from their homes by agents of the secret police or seized on the streets, never to be seen again. Parents have been arrested for refusing to let their children go.

"My brother's daughter is in that program," an Afghan refugee reported. "She was seven years old, in school. One day she didn't come home. Each day he went to the school and they said: 'Come tomorrow.' After a week he finds out that she was sent to the Soviet Union. ...That was two years ago. She's still there. Don't mention his name, please, or he will go to jail."

In the two years since the Afghan government announced its long-term program for training children in the USSR, thousands of young Afghans—at least 2,000 a year, according to some reports—have been sent to the Soviet Union. Almost nothing is known about what happens to these children once they ar-
Some Afghans speculate that the term of study will be shortened because of strong resistance from the children's families. There have been reports of tearful farewells at Kabul Airport and of children so homesick that they had to be sent back home.

War orphans who have no close relatives are considered the most promising candidates for long-term indoctrination in the USSR. They are gathered in institutions known as Fatherland Training Centers, which have been described as "warehouses for shipment to Russia." Children from fatherless, impoverished or otherwise troubled families have also been taken to the Training Centers, and many of them end up in the USSR as well. Professor Rasul Amin, formerly of Kabul University, says that the Training Centers are run jointly by the Soviet KGB and the Afghan secret police and staffed mainly by Soviet teachers: "The majority of these orphan students are sent to the Soviet Union, because they don't have any relatives. The Soviets and the Khad (Afghan secret police) think they will be the hard core of Communism in the future. Other children might cry for their mothers and fathers, but these children have no one to cry for."

When older children are sent to the USSR for short-term study periods, deference is paid to their religious upbringing. They are usually sent to Soviet Central Asia, where they are taught by teachers who know their language and customs. They are told that there are good Moslems and bad Moslems, and that the mujahedin are bad because they are anti-Soviet.

The purpose of the short-term trips is mainly propaganda. "The boys who went to Russia said Russia is a nice place," a teenager reported. "The Russians have come here to help us, they said. When you go to Russia you get education...and money." With orphans, however, the approach is direct. "The curriculum...is different," according to Professor Amin, "based completely on the Communist way of teaching. Children in other schools might take the books home to their parents, but these children don't have any parents."
FIGHTING FOR ISLAM

463
When I came back, there was no village. I was the only one left. When I saw this I cried, cried and wept. When the planes left, the mujahedins came back and said not to cry, they would be my father.”—Abdul Karim, eight years old, from Takihan, Takhar Province

“I was very small when my father died.”—Ahmad Shah, seven years old, from Maidan, Wardak Province

Across the border, in Pakistan, there are other orphanages for Afghan war orphans, institutions run by Afghan refugees aligned with the resistance. We visited several orphanages and interviewed a number of the orphans.

Ahmad Shah, a seven-year-old who arrived in Pakistan two years before, reported the obvious: “I was very small when my father died.” Then his face lit up: “He was a commander. The Great Commander of Maidan.” Asked what he remembered about Afghanistan, he replied: “Only jihad. I have forgotten everything else.” Asked what he will do when he finishes school, he announced: “I will line up all the mujahedins and I will lead them to avenge the death of my father. We will attack the Russians and kill all of them.” The adults in the room smiled appreciatively, proudly, at his answer. Other children filed in, one by one. They related their experiences, each another version of the same tale of horror. Asked about their plans for the future, the answer was invariably “jihad.”

An orphan named Nuryalay, now fifteen, had been sent to the Soviet Union at the age of eleven and trained to be a spy. “I was eager to go,” he reported. “It was a very luxurious life. We had dancing and films on alternate nights. After a month and a half, I was sent back to Kabul and told to spy on the mujahedin.” Nuryalay was captured and held in a mujahedin camp for a year before being sent to the orphanage in Pakistan. He is now kept
under close surveillance. His goal, like that of the others, is “to fight jihad.”

“The fighting in Afghanistan is for an ideology, for a cause,” the orphanage director explained. “The Russians are imposing their ideology. But we have our own. We have plans to see that our ideology is not defeated. We have 98 percent of the Afghan people with us, and we are ready to sacrifice their bodies to this cause. We will always fight for our ideology. We have a right to live as we wish.”

At a refugee camp near the border, five small boys, sons of a mujahed who was “martyred” in the fighting, grouped together to have their photograph taken. The men in the compound asked the photographer to wait while they gave their guns to the children, who then adopted a militant pose. “This is the generation that will fight and make Afghanistan free,” one of the men proclaimed proudly.

The principal of a school for Afghan boys in Peshawar was eager to show off the talents of a nine-year-old child named Sakhidad. He took us to a classroom where Sakhidad jumped up on command and began leading the others in rallying cries and slogans. The response was deafening and continued until they were told to stop. “They are telling Karmal: You destroyed our country. You are a thief. Your followers are thieves. Long live Islam.”
“We never just teach them that two plus two makes four,” a teacher boasted. “We say that two dead Russians plus two dead Russians make four dead Russians, killed by the mujahedin.”

At a coeducational primary school in Peshawar, we were shown the students’ needlework, designed by the boys and embroidered by the girls. All of the themes were martial and anti-Soviet, featuring such things as decapitated Soviet soldiers, military executions, bombs, helicopters and parachutists. The mujahedin were always shown as the victors.

Atiqullah, a ten-year-old refugee, recently began school in Pakistan. He described how his grandmother and aunt were stabbed in their homes with bayonets and then shot: “We were standing right there. I was shouting and crying. He said something to us in Russian. We didn’t understand. They pointed their rifles at us to keep us quiet.” Atiqullah said that he misses his village in Laghman Province, but he will go back only if it is liberated. “Do not worry,” the principal assured him, telling him what he wanted to hear. “Afghanistan will be liberated.”
"We try to teach them. It is not easy for us... They can turn and kill you. There are guns there in the camp." — Commander Abdul Haq
In Peshawar we interviewed three captured spies, two of whom were children who claimed to be fourteen years old, but looked much younger. As minors, they have some immunity under Moslem law. The boys had been captured spying on resistance fighters at mujahedin bases in Pakistan. They are prisoners of the mujahedin, held illegally in an undisclosed location in Pakistan.

Boys like this are scattered all over Afghanistan. Hundreds have been sent to Pakistan as well. Some are trained in the Soviet Union to be spies and assassins; others are recruited in Kabul and promised trips to the USSR after completing a successful mission.

Masud had been captured 15 days before our interview. He is handsome, and charming, with a disarming, infectious smile. His family is in Kabul: “My parents do not know about my coming here, but the school knows.” Masud was recruited by the Party secretary in his school, a man of about thirty. “I was sent to Pakistan to search for the houses of resistance commanders. I was supposed to go back and lead others to them. I was given a little money—500 afghanis—and told I would get more here. But I was seized after three days.”

Masud spoke easily, engagingly, but in reviewing his comments, his confusion and indiscriminate desire to please became apparent. “I was deceived. I was told that when I came back I would be sent to the USSR to study spying. Yes, I wanted to be a spy. We were told it was a very good job. The salary was high. No, now I understand that it is not a good job. Because I could not do it. I want to study here in Pakistan. I want to study Islamic studies. I will not tell my parents that I am here. Yes, I will write them a letter. Yes, I am happy here. No, I do not have any friends. Yes, I will make friends. No, I do not need anything.”

Sayed Asar had been in captivity for three months. His fear was painful to witness: his hands were shaking and there was a noticeable tremor in his neck. He is fatherless, a street child from Kabul, recruited by a neighbor who worked for the secret police and sent to spy, first in Kabul and then in Peshawar.
war. He was captured by mujahed in the very night he arrived in Peshawar, a suspicious-looking character, obviously nervous, wearing conspicuous Kabuli clothes. "Yes, I wanted to go to Russia, but now I don't want to. I have become a Moslem."

The boys are being "rehabilitated" by their mujahed in captors, who say it will take a year to undo their training. The resistance fighter in whose custody the boys are kept (I shall call him Mohammad) seemed kind and expressed deep concern about their "reformation." "They are Moslems," he explained. "It is our duty to bring them back to Islam."

Mohammad said that he has re-educated more than 65 boys in a three-year period. The youngest spy who has been in his custody is Jawad, age eleven. He knows of 150 or so boys like this in the Peshawar area, held in captivity in secret institutions financed by the resistance parties. He was optimistic: "About 95 percent of them can be rehabilitated. They go back to Kabul for us." As spies? "Yes, of course. If we don't have spies in Kabul, we
would perish. We must know their operations. We use young boys and older boys. We use everyone."

The third spy at the interview was 22 years old, old enough to be tried under Moslem law. Mohammad expressed no sympathy for him: "He is a man. He came to Pakistan voluntarily. He was carrying poison, a pistol, explosive materials. He has confessed to everything. He will be sent back to the front where he will be tried and sentenced. Probably to death."

Abdul Haq, a well-known resistance commander, said that he had also captured a number of child spies. He was less optimistic about their prospects for rehabilitation. "This is the problem. We keep them. We try to teach them. It is not easy for us, you have to be a specialist. They can turn and kill you. There are guns there in the camp... Mostly we get fed up. We send them back to the cities. We tell them: Do what you want to do."

In 1985 some Western journalists filming covertly inside Afghanistan interviewed a nine-year-old, curiously named "Cherokee," who was a hit-and-run assassin for the mujahedin. "There are many more like him," they were told. Showing off for the camera, Cherokee demonstrated with his hands how he threw grenades at Russians in the bazaar or shot them with his machine gun. He looked like any nine-year-old playing with pretend weapons. Five days after he was filmed, Cherokee was captured by the Afghan army.

Commander Haq said that he did not approve of the mujahedin training young boys as spies and assassins. But he sees "differences between us and the Soviets....A kid every day sees guns and bombs. He grows up with such things. He sees Soviet jets come bombing, he sees Soviet tanks come killing. He's an Afghan boy. He wants to protect his country." "Of course," Commander Haq continued, "we want to live in peace. We want our children to be engineers and doctors. But we don't have tanks or helicopters. We have to use what we have. What you have in your hands, you use it to protect yourself."
The Soviets are pursuing expansionist policies in Afghanistan, under the guise of bringing progress. But even the progress they offer the Afghans—literacy, industrial development, a centralized economy and equality of the sexes—is not what the Afghans want. Most Afghans are set in their tribal ways and want only to be left alone. Yet the war, in many ways, has catapulted the Afghans into the twentieth century and, even if the Soviets were now to withdraw, Afghanistan will never be the same.

The Soviets, if successful in their indoctrination of the young, will at best produce only a relatively small, elite cadre of Communist puppets. The Afghans, on the other hand, are preparing millions of young people for a fight to the finish. The struggle seems destined to continue for a very long time.

New kinds of Afghans are being formed in the struggle. Caught in the midst of a grownup war, they are being politicized, one way or another, almost from birth. These children are being deprived of essential rights. Among them are the right to an education that prepares them to think independently, and the right to decide for themselves what is best for Afghanistan.
OFFICERS AND STAFF
Robert L. Bernstein, Chairman; Orville H. Schell, Vice-Chairman; Aryeh Neier, Vice-Chairman; Jeri Laber, Executive Director; Catherine A. Fitzpatrick, Research Director; Susan Osnos, Press Director; Janet Fleischman. Assistant to the Executive Director: Linda Long, Associate; Holly J. Burkhalter, Washington Representative

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

MEMBERS AND STAFF OF THE ASIA WATCH
OFFICERS AND STAFF
Adrian W. DeWind, Chairman; Aryeh Neier, Vice-Chairman; Eric Schwartz, Program Director; Susan Osnos, Press Director; Jenny Jones, Administrative Assistant; Holly J. Burkhalter, Washington Representative

MEMBERS
Floyd Abrams, Edward J. Baker, Robert L. Bernstein, Tom A. Bernstein, Dolores Donovan, Adrienne Germain, Deborah M. Greenberg, Jack Greenberg, David Hawk, Liang Heng, Jeri Laber, Virginia Leary, Amit Pandya, Dith Pran, Sheila Rothman, Barnett Rubin, Orville H. Schell, Judith Shapiro
A mid the rubble of devastated villages and the chaos of war-torn cities, a new generation of Afghans, unlike any other, is somehow coming of age. The children of Afghanistan—survivors of the carnage that has transformed their ancient valleys and fields into a modern nightmare of death and destruction—are among the most victimized in a war that does not spare civilians. They are also the targets of another war, a war being waged for their allegiance.

With no end in sight after seven years of fighting, Soviet occupation forces and the Afghan resistance—known as mujahedin—are each seeking to influence a new generation that will someday determine Afghanistan’s future. Afghan children are being polarized by a contest of ideologies. This is the “other war” that is being waged, both in Afghanistan and beyond its borders—the struggle for the minds and hearts of the Afghan children.