

surgical, orthopaedic and paraplegic procedures, and you have, in the ICRC reports, the microcosm of a nation massacred and mutilated.

Over one million dead. An equal or greater number physically scarred by battle for life. Between one and two million uprooted, ravaged and homeless in their own land. Four to five million as wretched refugees in Pakistan and Iran. Is it any wonder that the Helsinki Watch Committee in its recent study of Afghanistan observed, with eviscerating simplicity, that "A whole nation is dying."

And for what reason? This immeasurable human tragedy is made even more appalling because it is so utterly, inexplicably pointless.

The entire world knows that the Soviets weren't invited in. The entire world knows that Afghanistan posed no threat — not even to Soviet secularism. Afghanistan was a middle-sized non-aligned power whose neutrality was never menacing. The entire world knows that the Soviet invasion and occupation weren't prompted by some startling geopolitical imperative of the moment; the circumstances of December 1979 were hardly sufficient to merit a diplomatic note, let alone an act of aggression and war.

Perhaps it is an expression of the ugly, age-long lust for territorial expansion — a Soviet version of *lebensraum*; perhaps it is some unfulfilled strategic design to reach a warm-water port; perhaps it is a deliberate policy, with as yet unstated objectives, to unsettle further that already destabilized region of the world; perhaps having intervened to install a puppet regime, ideological rigidity took over, and departure became impossible.

But whatever the rationale, explicit or conspiratorial — and not a word of it is believable in any event — the Soviet Union, in its war against the people of Afghanistan, has reverted to the ethics, the excesses, and the excrescences of Stalinism.

The Soviet Union, however, will not win. Russia has unleashed 115 000 troops, equipped with the most lethal and technological of modern conventional weaponry, but the people of Afghanistan cannot be subdued. No matter to what extent the Soviet high altitude saturation bombing and helicopter gunships decimate civilian populations, reduce whole communities to ashes, or turn the countryside to cinders, the Afghan *mujahideen* fight on.

After nearly six dreadful years, it is now clear that the Soviet Union cannot impose a military solution. It might wish to make of Afghanistan a subservient, vassal state, but it will not succeed. The words of the Secretary-General's report ring true: "Peace, and the degree of national reconciliation that it should entail to allow the Afghan people to decide their own future, cannot be attained by military means."

The only answer is a negotiated settlement which embraces the principles in the resolution before us, and reflects the views expressed in this debate by the overwhelming majority of member states of the General Assembly. It is an answer for which the Secretary-General, and his Special Representative have been nobly — at times, productively — striving. In that context, we more than welcome the pending third round of proximity talks.