

The Soviet Occupation of Afghanistan

Statement by Mr. Stephen Lewis,
Canadian Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN,
to the 40th Session of the UNGA,
New York, 12 November, 1985.

The reports of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) say it all. At regular intervals, these short documents cross the desks of the missions here in New York, setting out, in unemotional language, the chronicle of a ghastly war.

Each report -- "Afghan Sitreps" they're called -- up-dates the activities of the Red Cross in the border areas of Pakistan. Let me quote briefly from report number 40, issued in July of this year:

"During July, an exceptionally high level of military operations in Pakia Province (Afghanistan) resulted in the highest ever number of war casualties evacuated through the ICRC/Pakistan Red Crescent Society first-aid mobile post in Miramshah to the surgical hospital in Peshawar... In addition to intense surgical activities, the orthopedic and paraplegic centres were also very busy, and a high level of activity was recorded for all other ICRC programmes in favour of Afghan conflict victims".

Report number 41 issued in early September, showed no let-up in the fighting. Indeed, throughout the summer of 1985, the casualties mounted. In the words of the Red Cross: "The number of patients continued to increase during August, and over last weekend, emergency measures had to be taken to strengthen ICRC's medical facilities with the provision of additional personnel and equipment".