



## Afgantsy: The Russians in Afghanistan 1979-89

*By Rodric Braithwaite*

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### **Afgantsy: The Russians in Afghanistan 1979-89** By Rodric Braithwaite

The story of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan is well known: the expansionist Communists overwhelmed a poor country as a means of reaching a warm-water port on the Persian Gulf. Afghan mujahideen upset their plans, holding on with little more than natural fighting skills, until CIA agents came to the rescue with American arms. Humiliated in battle, the Soviets hastily retreated. It is a great story-but it never happened.

In this brilliant, myth-busting account, Rodric Braithwaite, the former British ambassador to Moscow, challenges much of what we know about the Soviets in Afghanistan. He provides an inside look at this little-understood episode, using first-hand accounts and piercing analysis to show the war as it was fought and experienced by the Russians. The invasion was a defensive response to a chaotic situation in the Soviets' immediate neighbor. They intended to establish a stable, friendly government, secure the major towns, and train the police and armed forces before making a rapid exit. But the mission escalated, as did casualties. Braithwaite does not paint the occupation as a Russian triumph. To the contrary, he illustrates the searing effect of the brutal conflict on soldiers, their families, and the broader public, as returning veterans struggled to regain their footing back home.

Now available in paperback, Braithwaite carries readers through these complex and momentous events, capturing those violent and tragic days as no one has done before.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"Set to be the definitive account of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, overturning several myths along the way." - *The Sunday Times*

"A minor masterpiece." -*The Observer*

"The author...may well have written the definitive account of this war." -*The Irish Examiner*

"A masterful new book...that explains the tangled events leading up to the Soviet invasion and provides fresh insights into the war that followed...With America beginning its own slow retreat from Afghanistan, this is an important book." -- *Newsweek*

"The most nuanced, sympathetic, and comprehensive account yet of the Soviet experience in Afghanistan ... this book finally dispels many of the Cold War myths."  
-- Rory Stewart, author of *The Places In Between*

"[Braithwaite] is one of the most vivid, emotionally engaged diplomats to have turned to the pen." --  
*Financial Times*

"An outstanding book ... these accounts provide a fascinating insight not only into the war but also into Soviet society." -- *Times Higher Education*

"Sir Rodric Braithwaite...has amassed a gold mine of sources for this timely study."  
-- *Sunday Telegraph*

"*Afgantsy* tells the sad story of occupying troops and Afghan civilians during the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan...His multifaceted history is a valuable addition to our knowledge of all these subjects. While American readers will naturally want to discern here lessons regarding military operations in Afghanistan, history never exactly repeats itself-there are differences as well as similarities-and Braithwaite wisely

counsels caution in applying the lessons of the past." -- *Michigan War Studies Review*

"Rodric Braithwaite brings the talents of a scholar, diplomat, and writer to the agony of the Soviet misadventure in Afghanistan...His narrative is understated but powerful, resting on a wide range of Russian sources, including interviews with veterans and many documents." -- *Foreign Policy*

"Compassionate yet critical, this is the most comprehensive portrait of the morass Soviet leaders got themselves and their army into when they invaded Afghanistan in December 1979...His book is a big, vibrant canvas painted with skill and humanity." -- *Foreign Affairs*

"*Afgantsy*, by the former British ambassador to Moscow Sir Rodric Braithwaite, is by far the best account in English of the Soviet experience there, and brings out very well how, in their fight against the Afghan Mujahideen, the Soviets wrestled with many of the same intractable Afghan realities that have bedeviled our efforts." -- *New York Review of Books*

"Braithwaite's book is a fascinating story, not only of politics and war, but about the individuals who served in Afghanistan." -- *Jerusalem Post*

"Informative and well written, Sir Rodric Braithwaite's *Afgantsy* is an invaluable book--to Russians but even more so to Americans, who are repeating most of the same mistakes in Afghanistan." --Dr. Sergei Khrushchev

#### About the Author

**Rodric Braithwaite** was British ambassador in Moscow from 1988 to 1992, and is now chairman of the International Advisory Council of the Moscow School of Political Studies. He is the author of *Moscow 1941* and *Across the Moscow River*.

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