



Teacher's Guide

Russian-Afghanistan War: 1979-1989 **World At War**

Grade Levels:

7 - 12

Subject Areas:

World History, U.S. History

Synopsis:

A British narrator explains that the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan to prevent the spread of Islamic fundamentalism but soon found their heavy armaments were no match for the determined Afghan guerrillas. As helicopter gunships and anti-aircraft armaments gradually dominate the war, the Soviets begin to realize that they can never win a victory where roads were few and bands of guerrillas take shelter in mountain caves and valleys. As the war progresses, the leadership of General Boris Gromov assures the safety of many Soviet troops as they withdraw. Nevertheless over 14,000 Soviet troops die in the ten years of fighting, and Afghans are left to rebuild their destroyed villages.

Learning Objectives: Students will:

- Explain what the Soviet Union hoped to gain by invading Afghanistan.
- Explain why the heavily armed Soviets were not successful against the Afghan guerrillas.
- Compare the leadership of General Gromov and Afghan leader Ahmad Shah Massoud.
- Discuss the gains and losses made by both sides in this war.

Vocabulary:

Hindu Kush, Islamic fundamentalism, xenophobic, pacification

Pre-Viewing Discussion:

Where is Afghanistan located?

Why would the Soviet Union wish to establish their dominance in this area?

What religion do most Afghans practice?

Why would an increase in Islamic fundamentalism in Afghanistan worry the Soviets?

Post-Viewing Discussion:

Why were the Afghans able to hold out so long against the military bombardment of the Soviet army?

Why was Ahmad Shah Massoud a successful Afghan leader?

Why were the Afghans never able to claim a victory in the war?

What was General Gromov's greatest achievement?

Was the war fought in vain?

Further Activities:

Do further research into General Gromov's training and military experience.

Find out what kinds of military equipment the Soviets brought into Afghanistan.

Investigate the methods used by Afghan craftsmen who made their own weapons.

View a topographical map of Afghanistan to determine how landforms prevented a Soviet victory.