

Prime Minister. 2



FCS/80/141

MEMBERS OF ODHelp for the Afghan Resistance

1. In view of the continuing Parliamentary and press interest in the Afghan efforts to resist the Soviet occupation it may be helpful to my OD colleagues if I briefly set out the position on a number of questions.

2. Supply of Arms

When the head of one of the resistance groups, Mr Gailani, was in Britain recently he referred to the need for anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons and ammunition and small arms (.303) ammunition, though he made no specific requests. From information available to us I am satisfied that arms are getting through to the Afghan resistance. I do not think therefore that we need or should get into the business of supplying arms to the resistance ourselves although I would, of course, look at any specific requests on their merits. Public admission or even suspicion that we were considering or were actually supplying arms would not be helpful to the Afghans themselves, would embarrass the Pakistanis and could provoke reactions from the Russians. Our main tactic of bolstering Islamic and non-aligned opposition to the Russians will be spoilt if the conflict in Afghanistan takes on the appearance of an East/West confrontation. Our public line which has been used on several occasions in Parliament should therefore be that it is desirable that the Afghan resistance should have the wherewithal to oppose the Soviet invasion; that arms appear to be getting through; and that it is not helpful to the Afghans themselves to be specific about the sources.

3. Other Forms of Assistance: Medical Supplies, Clothing or Food

The logistics present considerable problems and to some extent the arguments against arms supplies apply here too. But I am looking into the possibilities. We may need to consider action in the early autumn if the situation of the resistance worsens with the approach of winter and an increase in Soviet military activity.

/4. Publicity

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The level of recent publicity about Soviet activity within Afghanistan seems to me to have been satisfactory both in the press and on television. We shall do what we can to maintain this during the coming months by briefing the media with suitable material which comes our way.

5. Diplomatic Activity

We shall continue to probe Soviet intentions, though without much hope of finding any flexibility. We are in close touch privately with the Islamic countries about wider international action, in particular at the United Nations General Assembly which starts in September. So long as there is no sign that the Soviet Union is prepared to envisage an acceptable political settlement, our objective will be to make the consequences of their continued occupation as burdensome as possible.

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(CARRINGTON)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

19 August 1980

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