

Prime Minister

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fs. Hurd

*Another example of poor coordination
1 year.*

Hurd - 25/2

Afghanistan

Mr Mallaby

AFGHANISTAN: CALL BY THE US AMBASSADOR

Mr Brewster saw the Secretary of State briefly this afternoon at his own request. He explained that he had been instructed to see the Prime Minister, but thought that would be overdoing things.

He handed over the attached talking points giving the initial US reaction to Brezhnev's speech, together with the statement which the State Department were issuing in Washington today. He explained that the main purpose of his call was to ensure that our responses to Brezhnev were coordinated as far as possible, to avoid the West being picked off one by one.

Lord Carrington said that our preliminary view was that the remarks by Brezhnev and Gromyko left the door open for the Nine to float their neutrality proposal in Moscow as evidence of our seriousness. We were thinking of discussing this in the Nine later in the week. It would be a pity to pass up the opportunity Brezhnev's speech appeared to offer. He wondered whether the first paragraph of the American statement might not sound a little cold. Mr Brewster commented that the American position was not frozen over, and the statement was meant to indicate that they were still interested. Lord Carrington asked whether there was a risk of the West appearing divided if the American statement were contrasted with the intention of the Nine to push ahead with their proposal on neutrality. Mr Brewster thought that this could be overcome by the Americans making it clear that they supported the Nine's action with the Russians when this came. Meanwhile, it was agreed that, when asked to comment on the American statement, we would avoid saying whether we agreed or disagreed with the American assessment of Brezhnev's speech as "insufficient"; say that we were still assessing the implications of the Brezhnev/Gromyko remarks in the light of the developing situation in Afghanistan; and that meanwhile our neutrality proposals were still on the table.

In response to a question by Lord Carrington, Mr Brewster said he knew nothing about the suggestion in this morning's Times that Herr Brandt might mediate over Afghanistan. He intended to telephone Mr Vance this evening about our reaction to Brezhnev's speech and would ask him about The Times' report.

G. G. H. Walden

(G G H Walden)

25 February 1980

- cc:- PS
- PS/LPS
- PS/Mr Hurd
- PS/Mr Blaker
- PS/PUS
- PS/Sir D Maitland
- Mr Bullard
- Mr Carrington
- SAD
- News Dept
- NAmD

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25 FEB 1980



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-- While we would welcome a concrete proposal that would lead to a prompt withdrawal of all Soviet troops from Afghanistan and to the establishment of a neutral and non-aligned government in Kabul acceptable to the people of Afghanistan, we find the statement of the Soviet position as set forth in President Brezhnev's speech of February 22 insufficient.

-- Soviet statements continue to cite external aggression as a justification for the Soviet invasion and for the continued presence of Soviet forces. It is amply evident however that the events now taking place in Kabul and throughout the country reflect the determination of the Afghan people to defend their independence by resisting the Soviet invaders.

-- The United States supports the restoration of a genuinely neutral and non-aligned Afghanistan, which would threaten none of the nations of the region. We are prepared to work toward that end.

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-- Brezhnev's February 22 formulation on Afghanistan appears similar to public and private statements the Soviets have made since the invasion of Afghanistan which seem designed to shift the responsibility for their presence there.

-- In fact, the Brezhnev statement is less forthcoming than some earlier Soviet formulations in that Brezhnev said that withdrawal could only "begin" when "all forms of interference" against Afghanistan were terminated. A February 13 Tass account of India-Afghan discussions reported that Afghanistan gave assurances that Soviet troops "would be withdrawn" as soon as there are firm guarantees that outside aggression has ended.

-- Some media analyses have drawn attention to the Gromyko election speech of February 18 which includes expressions of Soviet readiness to negotiate on all international problems. However this statement was made in the context of Soviet disarmament proposals, not Afghanistan.

-- Negative Soviet media reaction to President Carter's February 13 expression of support for a neutral Afghanistan and to the EC proposal of February 19 tends to support the conclusion that the Brezhnev linkage of withdrawal to a "guarantee" against intervention was more propagandistic than substantive.

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-- At the same time, Brezhnev's statement offers a possible opportunity to maintain pressure for the withdrawal of all Soviet forces from Afghanistan.

-- To date we have avoided detailed comment on Brezhnev's speech, emphasizing the need for the withdrawal of all Soviet forces while promising to give careful study and consideration to any further clarification of the Soviet position on Afghanistan.



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