GR 900
CONFIDENTIAL
DESKBY 290600Z
FM FCO 281915Z FEB 80
TO IMMEDIATE MOSCOW
TELNO 158 OF 28 FEBRUARY
AND TO FLASH WASHINGTON IMMEDIATE DESKBY 290800Z ROME
INFO PRIORITY OTHER EC POSTS

NEUTRALITY FOR AFGHANISTAN.

1. THE PUS SUMMONED THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR THIS EVENING, OSTENSIBLY TO TALK ABOUT RHODESIA. AFTER THIS SUBJECT AND GENERAL QUESTIONS CONCERNING EAST-WEST RELATIONS AND AFGHANISTAN HAD BEEN DISCUSSED (RECORD BY BAG), THE PUS SPOKE TO THE FOLLOWING SPEAKING NOTE ON NEUTRALITY FOR AFGHANISTAN:

BEGINS

2. LORD CARRINGTON'S SPEECH ON 22 FEBRUARY MENTIONED THE NINE'S INITIATIVE CONCERNING NEUTRALITY FOR AFGHANISTAN. THAT COUNTRY HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN NEUTRAL. THE SOVIET UNION HAS APPROVED ITS NEUTRALITY. FOR INSTANCE, IN OCTOBER 1963, MR BREZHNEV SAID: 'IN THE SOVIET UNION THE POLICY OF NEUTRALITY AND NON PARTICIPATION IN MILITARY BLOCS' PURSUED BY AFGHANISTAN 'IS HIGHLY VALUED. THANKS TO THIS POLICY' AFGHANISTAN WAS 'GREATLY RESPECTED IN THE WORLD'.

3. THE UNITED KINGDOM BELIEVES THAT THE INTERESTS OF WORLD STABILITY AND OF FRUITFUL EAST/WEST RELATIONS WOULD BE GREATLY ADVANCED BY AN AGREED SOLUTION TO THE CONTINUING PROBLEM IN AFGHANISTAN.

4. WE HAVE NOTED THE SOVIET UNION'S EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN ABOUT SECURITY ON ITS SOUTHERN BORDER AND THE SOVIET POSITION, RESTATED BY PRESIDENT BREZHNEV IN HIS SPEECH ON 22 FEBRUARY, THAT SOVIET FORCES WILL WITHDRAW ONCE THE CLAIMED REASONS FOR THEIR PRESENCE NO LONGER EXIST. LORD CARRINGTON ALSO NOTED MR GROMYKO'S STATEMENT ON 18 FEBRUARY THAT THERE ARE 'NO MAJOR INTERNATIONAL PROBLEMS' UPON WHICH THE SOVIET UNION WOULD NOT BE READY FOR NEGOTIATIONS ON AN EQUAL BASIS. WE HAD ALSO NOTED VERY RECENT PRESS REPORTS ATTRIBUTING CERTAIN VIEWS TO THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT. /5. WE

5. WE BELIEVE, AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, THAT THE IDEA OF AFGHANISTAN RESUMING ITS TRADITIONAL NEUTRALITY SHOULD BE CONSIDERED ON A FLEXIBLE BASIS, AS A SERIOUS APPROACH TO A POSSIBLE SOLUTION WHICH WE HOPE THE SOVIET UNION WILL CONSIDER VERY SERIOUSLY.

6. THE ELEMENTS IN A NEUTRALITY ARRANGEMENT MIGHT INCLUDE UNDERTAKINGS ASSUMED BY AFGHANISTAN ON AN APPROPRIATE NEUTRAL AND NON-ALIGNED STATUS: UNDERTAKINGS, IN LINE WITH PRESIDENT BREZHNEV'S SPEECH OF 22 FEBRUARY, BY THE UNITED STATES AND THE NEIGHBOURS OF AFGHANISTAN, AND PERHAPS OTHER COUNTRIES, THAT THEY WILL RESPECT THE UNDERTAKINGS BY AFGHANISTAN AND WILL NOT INTERFERE IN THAT COUNTRY'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS: AS WELL AS OTHER PROVISIONS TO BE DISCUSSED.

7. OUR IDEAS HAVE NOT BEEN WORKED OUT IN DETAIL. WE ARE NOT PREPARING A CUT AND DRIED ARRANGEMENT. ANY SUGGESTIONS BY THE SOVIET UNION WILL BE WELCOME AND WILL BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY INTO ACCOUNT.

8. OUR THINKING IS FLEXIBLE ON PROCEDURE TOO. THE NINE WILL NO DOUBT BE SEEKING THE VIEWS OF A VARIETY OF GOVERNMENTS. WE WOULD NOT EXCLUDE THE NEED IN DUE COURSE FOR SOME SPECIAL CONFERENCE, BUT DISCUSSION IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE UNITED NATIONS MIGHT BE ANOTHER POSSIBILITY.

ENDS

9. LUNKOV EVIDENTLY HAD NO INSTRUCTIONS. HE PLAYED THE GRAMAPHONE RECORD ABOUT THE REASONS FOR SOVIET INTERVENTION, AND THEN REITERATED BREZHNEV'S CALL FOR GUARANTEES FOR NON-INTERVENTION BY THE US AND AFGHANISTAN'S NEIGHBOURS. HE CLAIMED THAT YESTERDAY BABRAK HAD CALLED PUBLICLY FOR GUARANTEES BY THE US, CHINA, PAKISTAN AND SAUDI ARABIA. HE SUGGESTED THAT THE UK SHOULD ADVISE THE US TO AGREE TO GUARANTEES. SIR D MAITLAND REMINDED LUNKOV THAT THIS POINT WAS INCORPORATED IN OUR CONCEPT OF A NEUTRALITY ARRANGEMENT. WE UNDERSTOOD THAT THE US WOULD BE WILLING TO JOIN WITH AFGHANISTAN'S NEIGHBOURS IN A GUARANTEE OF TRUE NEUTRALITY AND OF NON-INTERVENTION IN AFGHANISTAN'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS, GIVEN THE RIGHT CIRCUMSTANCES INCLUDING SOVIET WITHDRAWAL. (SIR D MAITLAND DID NOT IDENTIFY THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER TO TITO AS THE SOURCE FOR THIS). LUNKOV ASKED HOW THE SOVIET UNION COULD WITHDRAW BEFORE AMERICAN AND OTHER GUARANTEES WERE GIVEN. SIR D MAITLAND SAID NO ONE HAD SUGGESTED THAT. THE UK, AT LEAST, WAS OPEN-MINDED ABOUT THE SEQUENCE IN WHICH ALL THE VARIOUS ELEMENTS IN A NEUTRALITY ARRANGEMENT MIGHT BE PUT IN PLACE. THE PUS SAID NEITHER SIDE SHOULD ASK THE OTHER TO DO SOMETHING FIRST: WE SHOULD ALL STEP FORWARD TOGETHER. LUNKOV DOUBTED THAT THE SAME VIEW WAS HELD IN WASHINGTON. /10. THE

10. THE PUS IN CONCLUSION ASKED LUNKOV TO LET US HAVE ANY SOVIET SUGGESTIONS OR QUESTIONS. THE NINE WERE TRYING TO HELP TO FIND A SOLUTION TO A DANGEROUS SITUATION. THE PUS AND LUNKOV AGREED TO VOLUNTEER NOTHING TO THE PRESS ABOUT THE INTERVIEW.

11. NEWS DEPARTMENT WILL SAY NOTHING, OR AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE, ABOUT THE INTERVIEW TO JOURNALISTS. IF PRESSED THEY WILL SAY THAT THE INTERVIEW WAS AT THE PUS'S INITIATIVE AND WAS A REGULAR TOUR D'HORIZON ABOUT EAST-WEST MATTERS AND AN UPDATE ON RHODESIA. IF ASKED WHETHER AFGHANISTAN WAS MENTIONED, NEWS DEPARTMENT WILL SAY THAT EAST-WEST RELATIONS COULD HARDLY BE DISCUSSED WITHOUT AFGHANISTAN COMING UP. THEY WILL DECLINE TO COMMENT FURTHER, ON THE GROUNDS THAT THIS WAS A CONFIDENTIAL DISCUSSION BETWEEN OFFICIALS

12. FOR MURRAY IN ROME. PLEASE TELL THE ASIA WORKING GROUP ON 29 FEBRUARY THAT THE QUESTION OF AFGHANISTAN CAME UP IN THE COURSE OF A ROUTINE CALL TODAY ON THE PUS BY THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR, MAINLY TO DISCUSS EAST/WEST RELATIONS GENERALLY AND RHODESIA. THE PUS REFERRED TO THE NEUTRALITY PROPOSAL AGREED BY THE FOREIGN MINISTERS OF THE NINE ON 19 FEBRUARY. LUNKOV'S LINE WAS THAT THE PRE-CONDITION FOR PROGRESS WAS A DECLARATION BY THE AMERICANS, AND BY THE OTHERS WHO WERE AT PRESENT INTERFERING IN AFGHANISTAN'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS, THAT THEY WOULD CEASE DOING SO. THE PUS MADE THE POINT THAT ANY GUARANTEE OF NON-INTERVENTION IN AFGHAN AFFAIRS WOULD ONLY BE POSSIBLE IN THE CONTEXT OF SOVIET WITHDRAWAL.

13. OTHER EC POSTS SHOULD STICK TO LINE IN PARA 12 PENDING FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS.

CARRINGTON

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F I L E S	
EESD	PS/MR BLAKER
N AM D	PS/MR HURD
NEWS D	PS/FUS
OID	SIR D MAITLAND
SAD	MR BULLARD
ECD (E)	MR CORTAZZI
PS	MR MURRAY
PS/LPS	MR FERGUSSON
	MR HANNAY