

PRIME MINISTER

cc Mr Powell

I had dinner last night at Alastair Goodlad's house with Abdul Haq, who is due to see you tomorrow. Julian Amery and Robert Cranborne were also there. He is passing through London on his way to have further operations on the remains of his right leg which was blown off.

Haq says that an agreement has been reached on the formation of an interim government to replace the communist regime when the Soviets withdraw. The agreement envisages a 50% reduction of Soviet forces after 60 days, and a complete withdrawal in approximately 9 months.

However, Haq is very concerned

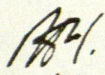
- that the Soviet offer to withdraw is solely designed to influence public opinion in the West
- or that they will withdraw and go back again shortly after
- that they will use breaks in the ceasefire as an excuse not to withdraw
- that the Soviets are leaning on the Pakistan Government and threatening to undermine Zia's regime, with the hope that a communist interim regime will be recognised by Pakistan
- underlying all this is a view that the Americans have agreed a secret global deal with the Soviets which will result in the ending of all aid to the Mujahadeen in return for Soviet withdrawal from the Gulf, Angola and Nicaragua.

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It is difficult to get him to think constructively about a Soviet withdrawal, and from what Robert Cranborne said afterwards, it seems almost inevitable that civil war will then break out.

Clearly, the worst outcome for both our interests and those of the Mujahadeen would be a deal which ultimately left 100,000 ^{some} troops in Afghanistan, coupled with a cessation of US aid to the Mujahadeen.



ARCHIE HAMILTON

23.2.88

(Haq.)

PPS notes.

INDEPENDENT 17th November 1987

Afghan rebel chief defies death

ABDUL HAQ, one of the commanders of the anti-communist resistance in Afghanistan, is recovering in an American hospital after being badly wounded by an anti-personnel mine. Kabul radio has claimed he was killed.

Abdul Haq — who commands more than 5,000 Mujahedin in Kabul province and who met Mrs Thatcher in Downing Street in March 1986 — was injured about a month ago as he was about to lead some of his men on what was to have been a simultaneous attack on four targets around the Afghan capital, including the main Soviet base at the airport.

Only the tip of his right shoe touched the mine, blowing two-thirds of his foot off and lodging hundreds of shrapnel splinters in his legs. If his foot had been another two or three inches further forward, the force of the explosion would have ripped off half

From Aernout van Lynden in Pittsburgh

his leg. After a painful week-long journey to Pakistan, the 29-year-old commander was finally transferred to Shadyside Hospital in Pittsburgh.

For the Afghan resistance, which has little understanding of the notion of a hierarchy of command, the survival of commanders such as Abdul Haq is extremely important. Such senior figures may have any number of "local commanders" under them — but never an equally capable deputy.

The death of a commander can have a dramatic impact. In the region around the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif, for example, the resistance was once led so capably that for much of the time most of the city itself was in resistance

hands. Since the death of the local leader, Zabiullah, three years ago, however, the Soviet army has been able to pacify most of the region and Mazar is now one of the principal points on the itinerary of any official foreign guest of the Communist regime.

Abdul Haq, in his hospital bed in Pittsburgh, is concerned that the various groups under his command in and around Kabul lack cohesion, and he spends a good deal of time giving instructions and advice over the telephone to Peshawar.

His morale, however, is high. "This is not the first time I've been wounded. It's the ninth time," he says with pride. He still carries bits of shrapnel from one attack in his skull and has had his left lung punctured by a bullet. He was also imprisoned for nearly two years at one stage, and twice sentenced to death.