



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Mr The Minister
JF

23/12

Dear John,

Afghanistan

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary thinks the Prime Minister might find it useful to have a short survey of what we are doing to help the Afghans and prevent Afghanistan from being forgotten. He believes that this is important in itself, and also as a means of giving public opinion here an illustration of the nature of Soviet policy.

UK aid to Afghan refugees

The number of Afghan refugees in Pakistan is now some 2.7m, with about a further 400,000 in Iran. This represents an exodus of approximately one fifth of the Afghan population. UK aid to the refugees exceeds £1m given or pledged since January 1980 (including £4.32 through the European Community). Mr Hurd announced the most recent allocation of £1m during his visit to a refugee camp near Peshawar on 14 November. The bulk of this grant will go to the UNHCR, ICRC and voluntary agencies working in Pakistan. We also intend to channel £50,000 of this money via the Afghanistan Support Committee (see below) to a Swedish voluntary agency in Peshawar (there being no suitable British relief agency on the spot) who will organise the supply of food into areas of need inside Afghanistan such as the Panjshir Valley, which have been devastated by recent Soviet/Afghan offensives. There are of course political and practical problems in getting relief into Afghanistan, but that is where the people are in the greatest need, and Mr Pym believes that we must try.

Afghanistan Support Committee (ASC)

We are supporting the all-party Afghanistan Support Committee (who brought a delegation to see the Prime Minister on the occasion of Afghanistan Day on 21 March). Mr Hurd is encouraging the new Chairman, Viscount Cranbourne MP. A new executive director was appointed in November, who has already put forward an ambitious programme to promote publicity and relief work for Afghanistan. So far we have supplied the ASC with a pump-primer of £20,000 and a further £15,000 from the supplementary reserve for 1983/84 to meet their administrative expenses. They are also raising money privately. The ASC have already stimulated some public and parliamentary interest in Afghanistan by tabling parliamentary questions and Early Day Motions and by writing to national newspapers such as the Times and the Daily Telegraph. Lord Cranborne and Mr Neville Sandelson MP also made a useful visit to Peshawar in November to look at the situation on the

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ground; the Labour member of the delegation had to drop out. The ASC should now prove a more effective body than hitherto.

Information effort

The COI have made a third film on Afghanistan for unattributable showing by foreign television stations. This includes a very effective interview with President Zia of Pakistan and was distributed just before the UNGA debate on Afghanistan last November. In Mr Hurd's view, this film is the best of the three.

At our suggestion the BBC will be increasing their Pashto service (for Afghanistan and Pakistan) from the present 15 minutes per day to half an hour (the Prime Minister may recall placards calling for an increase when she visited Pakistan last year). The service reaches an avid audience in Afghanistan and in the refugee camps of Pakistan. The increase will take effect from the New Year.

Diplomatic Initiatives

- a) We have reaffirmed on several occasions the validity of our initiative on Afghanistan calling for a two-stage conference. At our suggestion the latest communiqué of the European Council, 3-4 December, drew attention to these proposals again as a way forward if the Soviet Union ever demonstrated a genuine commitment to withdraw.
- b) At the same time we keep under consideration last year's proposal for a conference on Afghan refugees. The Pakistanis, whose lead in this is essential, were reluctant to go for a refugee conference in 1982, but they may wish to reconsider their position in 1983, when the problems of the refugees are likely to become more acute.
- c) At the latest debate on Afghanistan in the UNGA the Pakistanis and Islamic countries took the lead and tabled a further strong resolution on Afghanistan which secured overwhelming support (114-21-13). We and the Ten gave discreet lobbying support in the final stages. There were no major changes of position. This result serves as a forceful reminder that international concern on Afghanistan is undiminished.

We are doing much to keep the Afghan problem in the news and to maintain the pressure on the Soviet Union. We have written separately about our other activities. Meanwhile President Zia of Pakistan, during his visit to the United States, strongly reaffirmed his commitment to work for a Soviet withdrawal and to resist pressures to engage in direct talks with the Babrak Karmal regime. Early press

/speculation

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Early press speculation following Brezhnev's death that the Russians might be contemplating a change of policy on Afghanistan has proved unfounded; the latest unsigned Pravda article on the subject re-stated their previous hard line.

Yours ever
J E Holmes

(J E Holmes)
Private Secretary

23.12.82.

A J Coles Esq
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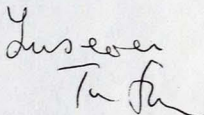
10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

24 December 1982

Dear Tom,

This is just to record that the Prime Minister has seen and noted your letter of 23 December about the measures we are taking to help the Afghans. She was grateful for this summary.



Timothy Flesher

John Holmes, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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