

CONFIDENTIAL

mt

CONFIDENTIAL

FM PARIS 221035Z FEB 84

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 221 OF 22 FEBRUARY

INFO ISLAMABAD, WASHINGTON, NEW DELHI, KABUL, MOSCOW
 INFO SAVING UKDEL STRASBOURG, ANKARA, OSLO, LISBON, MADRID, TOKYO,
 WELLINGTON, TEHRAN, ATHENS, BONN, BRUSSELS, COPENHAGEN, DUBLIN,
 THE HAGUE, LUXEMBOURG, ROME, UKREP BRUSSELS, UKDEL NATO, UKMIS
 NEW YORK, OTTAWA, MEXICO CITY, BERNE

POLITICAL COOPERATION: POLITICAL COMMITTEE: 21/22 FEBRUARY 1984
 PARIS: AFGHANISTAN: SOVIET PRISONERS

1. BULLARD (UK) SAID THAT LORD BETHELL, MEP, HAD WRITTEN TO THE PRIME MINISTER AND TO YOU ABOUT THE SOVIET PRISONERS HELD BY AFGHAN RESISTANCE GROUPS. IT SEEMED THERE COULD BE AS MANY AS 200 SUCH PRISONERS, OF WHOM 20 - 30 WERE BEING HELD INSIDE PAKISTAN. LORD BETHELL'S LETTERS GAVE SOME NAMES AND ENCLOSED 2 WRITTEN APPLICATIONS FOR POLITICAL ASYLUM. WE WERE CONSIDERING OUR REPLY. IF THERE WERE MORE SUCH CASES THE WHOLE SUBJECT COULD ATTRACT CONSIDERABLE PUBLICITY. WE WOULD WANT TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE HUMANITARIAN FACTORS, PAKISTANI SENSIBILITIES, PUBLIC INTEREST AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR WIDER EAST/WEST RELATIONS. WE THEREFORE SUGGESTED THAT PARTNERS KEEP EACH OTHER INFORMED AND RESPOND TO THE US COMMUNICATION BY SUGGESTING THAT THE AMERICANS CALL AN OPEN-ENDED MEETING IN WASHINGTON TO EXCHANGE INFORMATION.

2. SEVERAL SPEAKERS EXPRESSED DOUBTS ABOUT THE IDEA OF A MEETING WITH THE UNITED STATES AND SUGGESTED THAT IT WOULD BE BETTER TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM CASE BY CASE. THE FOLLOWING POINTS WERE MADE:

(A) PROBABLY MOST OF THE 200 WOULD PREFER TO GO BACK TO THE USSR: THE PROBLEM OF THOSE WANTING TO GO TO THE WEST WAS LIKELY TO BE SMALL:

(B) THE UNHCR SHOULD BE INVOLVED:

(C) THE ICRC WAS INVOLVED ALREADY:

(D) THE QUESTION SHOULD BE HANDLED DISCREETLY TO AVOID UNNECESSARY FRICTION WITH THE USSR.

3. BULLARD REPLIED THAT:

(A) IT HAD NOT YET BEEN POSSIBLE EITHER TO ARRANGE FOR SOVIET PRISONERS TO RETURN TO THE USSR OR TO BE EXCHANGED. IF THE PRISONERS WERE FACED WITH THE CHOICE BETWEEN STAYING IN THE HANDS OF THE AFGHANS OR GOING TO THE WEST, MANY WERE LIKELY TO CHOOSE THE LATTER. MOREOVER, SEVERAL OF THOSE WHO HAD BEEN INTERNED IN SWITZERLAND WERE NEARING THE END OF THEIR TIME THERE AND MIGHT ALSO APPLY FOR ADMISSION TO WESTERN COUNTRIES:

CONFIDENTIAL

(CA)

CONFIDENTIAL

(B) HE DOUBTED THAT THE UNHCR WOULD REGARD PRISONERS AS REFUGEES;

(C) THE ICRC APPEARED TO BE SOMEWHAT DISCREDITED BECAUSE IT HAD TRIED AND FAILED TO ARRANGE AN EXCHANGE;

(D) LORD BETHELL'S INTEREST RULED OUT ANY CHANCE OF HANDLING THIS DISCREETLY IN THE UNITED KINGDOM.

4. BULLARD NOTED HOWEVER THAT THERE WAS NO COMMON DISPOSITION TO SUGGEST TO THE US THAT THEY CALL A MEETING. ANDREANI CONCLUDED IN THIS SENSE TOO, BUT SAID THAT PARTNERS SHOULD EXCHANGE INFORMATION ON ANY REQUESTS FOR ASYLUM WHICH THEY RECEIVED.

FCO PASS SAVING ADDRESSEES

FRETWELL

(REPEATED AS REQUESTED)

[COPIES SENT TO NO 10 DOWNING STREET]

AFGHANISTAN

STANDARD DISTRIBUTION

SAD

SOV DEPT

MED

FED

UND

ECD (E)

SEAD

NAD

NEWAD

MR DONALD

CABINET OFFICE

COPIES TO:

COL JURY D14 MOD

-2-
CONFIDENTIAL