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TO IMMEDIATE COLOMBO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 222 OF 11 APRIL

AND TO NEW DELHI

INFO ROUTINE ISLAMABAD, KABUL, WASHINGTON, MOSCOW

FOR PRIME MINISTER'S PARTY

CIVIL FRONT INTERVIEW WITH MR RAJIV GANDHI

1. CHANNEL FOUR TELEVISION CARRIED AN INTERVIEW BY TREFORD, EDITOR OF THE OBSERVER, WITH RAJIV GANDHI ON 10 APRIL. THE IMPRESSION HE GAVE OF MODESTY, OPENNESS AND SINCERITY WILL FURTHER HAVE ENHANCED HIS REPUTATION IN THE UK. THE INTERVIEW MAY ENCOURAGE MODERATE SIKHS IN BRITAIN TO PLAY A MORE CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE.

INDO-BRITISH RELATIONS

2. RAJIV GANDHI WAS ASKED WHETHER HE BELIEVED SIKHS OUTSIDE INDIA WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR MRS GANDHI'S ASSASSINATION. HE SAID THAT 'THESE THINGS ARE VERY DIFFICULT TO QUANTIFY'. IT WAS NOT JUST A CASE OF THOSE WHO PULLED THE TRIGGER, BUT THOSE INVOLVED BEHIND THE SCENES, WHO WERE INVOLVED IN RAISING THE TEMPO, RAISING A CERTAIN MOOD IN INDIA. ASKED SPECIFICALLY ABOUT SIKH EXTREMISTS IN THE UK, HE SAID THAT THEY WERE 'CAUSING MORE HARM THAN THEY REALISE'. THEY WERE OUT OF TOUCH WITH THE REALITIES OF INDIA. THE INTERVIEWER ASKED WHETHER MR GANDHI EXPECTED THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT TO TAKE MORE ACTION: HE REPLIED 'I THINK THEY ARE ALREADY TAKING SOME ACTION'.

3. MR GANDHI SPOKE WARMLY OF HIS COLLEGE DAYS IN ENGLAND AND THE 'SENSE OF VALUES IN BRITAIN'. HE SAID THAT ASIAN IMMIGRANTS TO THE UK HAD 'SETTLED IN MUCH BETTER THAN FIFTEEN YEARS AGO WHEN TENSIONS WERE MUCH HIGHER ... BUT THERE IS STILL SOME WAY TO GO'. ASKED WHETHER HE WOULD COME TO BRITAIN IN THE NEAR FUTURE, HE SAID HE HAD PROMISED TO DO SO.

INTERNAL

4. RAJIV MADE IT CLEAR THAT FOLLOWING HIS RECENT INITIATIVES OVER PUNJAB, THE BALL WAS NOW IN THE SIKH COURT. HE AWAITED THEIR RESPONSE. BUT HE ALSO WENT FURTHER THAN PREVIOUSLY IN MAKING CLEAR THAT HE WAS 'OPEN TO' GRANTING THE SIKH DEMAND FOR A JUDICIAL ENQUIRY INTO THE RIOTS AFTER MRS GANDHI'S DEATH.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

5. RAJIV SAID HE WAS HAPPY TO SEE A SOLUTION TO SRI LANKA'S PROBLEMS ACCEPTABLE TO THE TAMIL COMMUNITIES AND THE SRI LANKAN GOVERNMENT. INDIA WAS NOT HARBOURING TAMIL TERRORISTS; SHE TRIED TO CONTROL THE 90,000 REFUGEES BUT THEY WERE GEOGRAPHICALLY DISPERSED AND 'WE CAN'T ABSOLUTELY CLAMP DOWN'. BUT THE SRI LANKAN GOVERNMENT MUST CONTROL ITS SECURITY FORCES; AT PRESENT THEIR ACTIVITIES ALMOST AMOUNTED TO TERRORISM AGAINST THE TAMILS. AS LONG AS THIS WENT ON THERE COULD BE NO SOLUTION. ASKED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF INDIAN INTERVENTION IN SRI LANKA, HE SAID INDIA WOULD NEVER INTERVENE.

6. ON INDIA-PAKISTANI RELATIONS, RAJIV LAID HEAVY EMPHASIS ON THE PAKISTANI NUCLEAR PROGRAMME. 'EVERY INDICATION WE HAVE IS THAT PAKISTAN IS DEVELOPING A NUCLEAR BOMB'. ZIA'S WORDS WERE ENCOURAGING BUT HIS ACTIONS WERE NOT CONSISTENT WITH THEM (THE INTERVIEW WAS RECORDED BEFORE BHANDARI'S RECENT VISIT TO PAKISTAN). RAJIV ALSO MADE CLEAR THAT, WHILE INDIA WANTED BETTER RELATIONS WITH THE USA, THIS WAS CONTINGENT ON US POLICY TOWARDS PAKISTAN: THE US WAS GIVING THEM LARGE QUANTITIES OF ARMS AND TURNING A BLIND EYE TO PAKISTAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAMME. HE SPOKE OF INDIA'S 'LOVE-HATE RELATIONSHIP' WITH THE US. GANDHI DENIED ANY BIAS TOWARDS THE SOVIET UNION, BUT SAID INDIA HAD RECEIVED 'A GOOD DEAL' IN SOVIET AID AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND THAT THE SOVIET UNION HAD STOOD BY INDIA IN TIMES OF NEED.

7. IN A SOMEWHAT OBSCURE PASSAGE ON AFGHANISTAN, RAJIV APPEARED IMPLICITLY TO LAY EQUAL BLAME ON SOVIET 'INTERVENTION' AND OUTSIDE 'INTERFERENCE', AND TO SAY THAT WHILE INDIA WANTED SOVIET TROOPS TO LEAVE, THE RUSSIANS WOULD FIND IT DIFFICULT TO DO SO WHILE A MAJOR CAMPAIGN 'RAN BY WHOEVER' CONTINUED MUJAHIDEEN ENTERING THE COUNTRY AS LIBERATORS. IF THAT STOPPED WITHDRAWAL MIGHT BE POSSIBLE.

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