



cc MA
F20

DG

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

THE PRIME MINISTER

13 October 1986

Dear Robert,

Thank you for your letter of 29 September and for passing on the good wishes from Abdul Haq, whose visit I remember very well.

I entirely agree with you that we should do everything we can to avoid allowing the Soviet Union to subjugate Afghanistan. Certainly I shall never acquiesce in the Soviet occupation. I cannot conceive why anyone should think our attitude negative or defeatist in the light of the extensive help which we have given to the Afghan resistance. I have no grounds, from my own discussions with President Reagan, to believe that the United States Administration thinks anything of the sort.

I agree with you on the need for greater unity among the resistance alliance and for better presentation of their case. On the former, we cannot take them further or faster than they are ready to go. And we do not want to draw more attention to their disunity since this would only hand the Russians a propaganda advantage. But we are looking hard at both aspects and, as Presidency of the European Community, we are taking the lead in considering with other European Governments how we can move matters forward, paying particular attention to possible action at the United Nations.

SMW

I recognise well the need for humanitarian aid inside Afghanistan; our resources are, unfortunately, limited but we shall continue to do what we can and certainly admire the efficiency and experience of your own organisation in that field.

Your letter raises some other important points. I believe that they need to be looked at carefully, but would prefer not to write about them. I suggest that you might see Geoffrey Howe or Janet Young to discuss what might be done. If you agree, perhaps you would contact the Foreign Office direct about that. And perhaps you would come to me as soon as Parliament has recessed. Would you contact Mitchell Alison

Yours ever

Raymond

CCP



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

9 October 1986

*Dear Charles*Afghanistan: Letter from Lord Cranborne

Thank you for your letter of 30 September, with which you enclosed a copy of Lord Cranborne's letter to the Prime Minister of 29 September.

Lord Cranborne makes some important points. The conduct of the war by the Mujahedin, the American role in supporting them and the respective relationships of the Americans and Mujahedin with the Pakistanis are complex issues.

The American administration and Congress are giving generous support to the Resistance. As Lord Cranborne points out, however, the problem is how to channel it effectively. The agencies involved, whether supplying military support or aid for humanitarian purposes inside Afghanistan, are under strong pressures to be able to demonstrate results in areas which are not susceptible to quick solutions.

There is no doubt of the continued resolve of the Mujahedin, but they are under increasing pressure from more efficient and sophisticated Soviet/Afghan regime tactics and weaponry. It is probably fair to say that while a few Mujahedin commanders may

/realise



realise the need for cooperation with each other, on the whole the Resistance is beset by divisions between the seven main parties which make up the Resistance Alliance. Nor is there always full cooperation between the political leaders in Peshawar and the commanders fighting inside Afghanistan.

Pakistan has been remarkably resolute and generous in its support for Afghanistan, whether in receiving and helping look after over 3 million refugees (the largest concentration in the world) or in allowing the Mujahedin to operate from its territory. We know the Soviet Union sees Pakistan as the key to Afghanistan and has been putting Pakistan under increasing diplomatic pressure recently, as well as cross-border aerial incursions, bombardments on refugee camps, bombs in public places, destabilisation of the frontier tribes, etc. The Pakistanis have, therefore, always tried to keep a balance between supporting the Afghans in their struggle against the occupation and letting them become too successful, in order not to provoke the Russians too far. So they are, perhaps understandably, anxious to avoid being seen too much as the catspaw of a superpower and have insisted that money and material support for the Mujahedin should be channelled through them - or at least with their knowledge - and that they should have the responsibility for the training (and planning of some operations) of the Mujahedin.

These complex factors contribute to the problems which Lord Cranborne describes. The Prime Minister will be aware that we give careful consideration to what support we can give the Mujahedin; it is also important that the Americans should provide the right form of support. There might be something we could do to help steer it in the right direction, but they would be unlikely to thank us if we merely criticised, without producing constructive alternative solutions.

/We



We are already trying to encourage Resistance unity and, in our own conversations both with the Resistance and with our partners in the European Community, are actively considering how we can help. But we cannot push the Resistance faster than they are ready to go; by exposing their disunity to the world that would risk presenting a propoganda victory to the Russians.

Finally, we recognise the need for humanitarian aid inside Afghanistan. The ODA gave £50,000 to Lord Cranborne's organisation Afghanaid last year, and will probably give considerably more this year, although they have not yet told the organisation the exact figure. Soviet/regime operations have done immense damage to the agricultural infrastructure in Afghanistan: the aid is necessary both in strictly humanitarian terms and also to prevent the displacement of persons either to Afghan towns, where they can be more easily controlled by the regime, or across the borders to Iran and Pakistan, adding to the refugee burden and, either way, depriving the Resistance of support. Lord Cranborne's organisation is - although small - one of the most experienced and efficient of those working in the field.

It is not easy, however, to do justice to these sensitive subjects in correspondence. I therefore enclose a draft reply to Lord Cranborne which acknowledges the importance of the points he raises and suggests that he should call on the Foreign Secretary or Lady Young to discuss at greater length the issues he raises.

Yours ever

Robert Culshaw

(R N Culshaw)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
No 10 Downing St

DRAFT: minute/letter/teleletter/despatch/note

TYPE: Draft/Final 1 +

FROM: PRIME MINISTER

Reference

DEPARTMENT: TEL. NO:

Your Reference

BUILDING: ROOM NO:

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

- Top Secret
- Secret
- Confidential
- Restricted
- Unclassified

TO: VISCOUNT CRANBORNE MP
HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Copies to:

Handwritten: DG2BKP To [unclear] as.

PRIVACY MARKING

..... In Confidence

SUBJECT:

Thank you for your letter of 29 September and for passing on the good wishes from Abdul Haq, whose visit I remember very well.

CAVEAT

I entirely agree with you that we should do everything we can to avoid allowing the Soviet Union to subjugate Afghanistan, ~~whether for the sake of that poor country and of Pakistan, or because of the blow it would represent to Western interests.~~

~~I for one will never acquiesce in the Soviet occupation, and I hope that during your visit to Washington you will help convince the Americans that we are neither negative nor defeatist.~~
Handwritten: I cannot conceive of anyone who would make an attitude negative or defeatist in the light of the evidence which we have given to the Afghan resistance. I have no doubts I can assure you that President Reagan and I

share the same view of the occupation of Afghanistan; you will be aware of reports that he plans to raise the subject with Mr Gorbachev in Reykjavik.

~~To think that~~
Handwritten: regards, to put my own business with President Reagan, to believe that the US administration thinks rightly of the situation.

Enclosures flag(s)

I agree with you on this

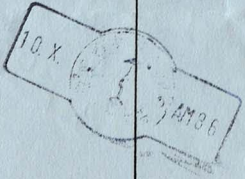
We are also well aware of the need for greater unity among the resistance alliance and for better presentation of their case. On the former, we cannot take them further or faster than they are ready to go. But we are looking hard at both aspects and, as Presidency of the European Community, we are taking the lead in considering with our partners how we can move matters forward, paying particular attention to possible action at the United Nations.

I fully recognise ^{well} the need for humanitarian aid inside Afghanistan; our resources are, unfortunately, limited, but we shall continue to do what we can and certainly admire the efficiency and experience of your own organisation in that field.

Your letter raises some other important points which I believe ^{that they need to be looked at carefully} should be looked at carefully. ^{but would prefer not to write about them} But rather than pursue them in correspondence I suggest that you might discuss them ^{see} with Geoffrey Howe or Janet Young ^{to discuss with} to see if anything might be done. If you agree, perhaps you would contact the Foreign Office direct about that.

ON

And we don't do not want to ~~draw attention~~ more attention to this disturbing our own world only leads to a propaganda advantage.



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

CCMA ✓

SECRET

Dear Prime Minister,

29th September 1986

You have consistently shown admirable support for the Afghan cause, which has certainly kindled reciprocal feelings among a high proportion of the Mujahedeen. (Abdul Haq, whose visit to Downing Street is indelibly imprinted on his mind, said to me a few days ago: "Give my kind regards to Mrs. Thatcher and tell her I do not understand why some people in England complain about her. If I could tell them what I know about her etc. etc.")

I hope you will forgive me, therefore, if I burden you as succinctly as I can with what I feel is happening now that I have returned from my latest six-monthly visit to the area. For I believe the Mujahedeen are rapidly approaching a crisis in their affairs.

You will know that the Americans have provided an increasing amount of help, both military and civil, to the Mujahedeen during the last few years. Generally, this has contributed dramatically to their level of armament and to their ability to buy food and clothe themselves. To that extent, therefore, it has been beneficial.

However, the Americans seem yet again to have failed to grasp the essentials of how to conduct a guerrilla war. Instead of encouraging highly mobile tactics employing a high proportion of tough and relatively simple weapons, they consistently show a bias towards fixed positions and conventional methods employing relatively high-tech weapons. They show little sign of understanding the importance of the non-military part of the war, which is at least as important as the fighting itself, and how to blend together its various constituent parts (alternative internal administration, diplomatic offensives overseas, press and television and undermining Soviet morale).

As a result, the Americans have spent their money in a way that is not only tragically wasteful, but which, because of their lack of a clear policy, is contributing substantially to the corruption, drug and arms trafficking in the area now reaching

/continued



SECRET

29th September 1986

epidemic proportions, and therefore to the demoralisation and divisions among the Mujahedeen. It is no coincidence that one of the most consistently successful of their commanders, Massoud of the Panjshir, has resolutely refused to leave Afghanistan since the war began and has thus isolated himself from the corruption of Peshawar.

As they spend more and more money, the Americans are becoming increasingly visible in Islamabad and Peshawar. They are thus, of course, risking the charge from Pakistani public opinion that, because of U.S. Afghan policy, Pakistan is becoming effectively an American colony. At the same time world opinion will be less likely to accept the war as a struggle between the Soviet Goliath and the Mujahedeen David, but will come to see it as merely a battle between the Soviets and an American surrogate. Perhaps most important of all, as the pressure for a successful outcome mounts from Washington, unwarrantably optimistic reports from messengers afraid of being shot for delivering bad tidings will contribute to an almost Viet-Nam-like cocooning of American officialdom in Pakistan from reality. It is already beginning to happen as I can testify as a result of being accused by Dean Hinton, U.S. Ambassador to Islamabad, and his no. 2 Macarthy, of typically British "negativism". I fear that, for all their good intentions, if the Soviets do manage to subjugate Afghanistan, the Americans will have become yet again associated publicly with a humiliating defeat with consequent damaging effects on their own standing and self-confidence.

To be fair, they have not been helped by Pakistan's own fairly equivocal position on the Afghan conflict. As you know, for various reasons Pakistan has hoped to keep the war going as it is, raking in Western and Saudi money, and keeping the Mujahedeen divided and under control. This was always a short-sighted policy which would ultimately guarantee Soviet success. Its ill-effects are being accentuated by the corruption now an institutionalised part of not only the refugee administration, but also the I.S.I.D., the intelligence service which, under General Akhtar, administers Pakistan's own part in the war. After dinner à trois with President Zia and Akhtar it is clear that at best Zia is being ill-informed about the course of the conflict. Pakistan is the only base of operations available both to the Mujahedeen and the Americans and, however visible the Americans may be, there must be a limit to the amount of pressure they can put on Pakistan.

/continued



SECRET

29th September 1986

I believe that were the Soviets to succeed in subjugating Afghanistan this would constitute a strategic defeat for the Western alliance of considerable proportions. It would also represent a tragically wasted, and possibly unrepeatable, opportunity to inflict at least a substantial propaganda and political defeat on the Soviets too close to home for comfort.

We should also remember what a Soviet success will do to Pakistan, an important country already in a volatile political state. Soviet successes near the Afghan border with Pakistan have already enabled them to begin playing the tribal game in the Pakistani tribal areas and the fire could spread from them all too quickly into the rest of the North-West Frontier Province, and into Baluchistan. A Soviet victory in Afghanistan could therefore have an increasingly destabilizing effect on Pakistan.

What therefore can we do? Quite a lot; particularly because there are signs that some Americans are becoming worried and also since we are respected in Pakistan, especially by the army.

Firstly we must insist continually to the Americans that we are neither negative nor defeatist, that we want to help and to be constructive and realistic.

Secondly, we should encourage them to build a more refined and cost-effective image-building policy than their present one in which we might discreetly assume much of the responsibility for mobilising diplomatic support for the Mujahedeen and for press and television coverage of the war and its diplomatic ramifications. The more the Americans appear to take a hand in this side of things the less support do the Mujahedeen command at the U.N. and in the Islamic world.

Thirdly, we should try and persuade the Mujahedeen to become more united both as far as the outside world is concerned and inside Afghanistan itself. This may not now be as difficult as it once seemed. Many leading Afghans themselves are finally realising how important it is to co-operate with each other genuinely rather than just for show and their ideas contain, reassuringly, much common ground: notably the need firstly to find a source of authority in the constitutional sense for those who claim to lead the Afghan people in their resistance (luckily such a mechanism does exist in Afghan tradition) and, secondly, to build up the power of the best Mujahedeen commanders inside Afghanistan. Success in the latter

/continued



SECRET

29th September 1986

endeavour especially would concentrate the minds of the increasingly corrupt Afghan political leaders in exile in Peshawar.

Fourthly, we should do what we can to make the guerrilla war more effective. In practical terms the Americans will have to continue paying the Pakistanis and the parties in Peshawar even though at least 50% of this help fails to reach its intended destination (an unofficial estimate from an American official and in my view, if not already an optimistic one, it soon will be). However, our own present contribution in this field could serve as a guide. It is said to be extremely effective and it is unquestionably the only help the Mujahedeen receive that is not the subject of common gossip or gossip of any kind in Peshawar and Islamabad, for obvious reasons. This kind of help can only be limited in extent for fear of overloading the system. However, increased training is essential to success and we do not need to train many. To quote Abdul Haq again "If my help from the Americans was 50% good training and 50% equipment instead of 95% equipment and 5% bad training I would be a happy man". As we discussed after the Abdul Haq meeting you were going to consider whether more still could be done. My Afghan friends intimate this has not yet proved possible. However, more help of this kind would make an important contribution.

Fifthly, we should encourage everyone to give humanitarian aid inside Afghanistan. This is the subject I know most about since my organisation does it on quite a large scale, although, sadly, mainly funded by the Americans. The more we can persuade other countries to contribute the less the Afghan tragedy becomes part merely of a superpower struggle and the more it is made to seem an international humanitarian rescue. Besides, it helps the war effort very considerably indeed. I have found the Canadians, the Norwegians, the Dutch, the Swedes and more recently the Australians encouragingly responsive. The first three, of course, contribute substantial sums already. The Saudis are more difficult, but they are important and if anything are spending their money more unwisely than the worst Americans. The French are interesting, experienced and a law unto themselves.

I do hope you will forgive so long a letter, but I feel strongly on the subject and have made something of a study of it in the last seven years. Your own interest has emboldened me to take advantage of your good nature before I talk to the Americans in Washington towards the middle of October.

Yours ever,
Robert.

The Rt. Hon.
Margaret Thatcher M.P.