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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Dear Charles

November 1986

Prime Minister

CCP 7/14

Afghanistan

Lord Cranborne wrote to the Prime Minister about Afghanistan on 29 September. The Prime Minister suggested in her reply of 13 October that Lord Cranborne should call on Sir Geoffrey Howe or Lady Young. He called on Lady Young on 4 November. You may welcome an account of the meeting in case Lord Cranborne accepts the Prime Minister's invitation to call on her subsequently.

Lord Cranborne said he visited Washington regularly; most recently in October. He was particularly struck by two aspects. The first was that there were now so many Americans working on Afghanistan in Washington that one might begin to discern the same phenomenon as in Vietnam, namely that there developed a corporate view which needed to report good news, while anything more realistic was regarded with disfavour. He had made the point to the members of the Administration he had met that, while he was sure the resistance would not collapse, there was a danger in congratulating ourselves simply that the Mujahedin were hanging on. He was not sure this was enough.

The second problem which had struck him was that the local, endemic corruption in Pakistan/Afghanistan was expanding because of the vast sums of money floating about - Saudi as well as American. It was necessary to devise ways of getting funds to the people who really needed them. The donors could get better value for money. He recognised the difficulties arising from Pakistani sensitivities and division among the resistance alliance. Other channels could bear only so much traffic.

Lord Cranborne also pointed out that the war effort involved not only the fighting but also diplomatic efforts, publicity, cooperation between western countries and activities in the Third World to further the cause of the resistance. He hoped there would be progress on these fronts. He had been working on contacts with the Saudis and would be going there shortly; he asked if we might be able to help.

/Lady Young



Lady Young said that she believed the Americans accepted that our analysis on Afghanistan was realistic; that we were far from negative; and that we were working hard to ensure that the issue of Afghanistan was not forgotten. The problems which Lord Cranborne had raised were important; we would take them up with the Americans. Over the coming year we would be working to see how the resistance alliance could be strengthened on the political front. There were obvious problems in pushing them faster or further than they were ready to go. We would be looking for ways of helping them at the UN; of working more closely with our European partners; and of persuading the Saudis and Pakistanis to bring more Third World and Islamic countries into the effort so that the issue was seen not simply as an East-West question but involved as many countries from the Non-Aligned Movement as possible. Meanwhile, Mr Chris Patten MP would be visiting Pakistan and the refugee camps near the Afghan border in November. Lady Young also agreed that any aid should be carefully targetted. This was another area we might discuss with the Americans and other interested parties.

We have arranged for Lord Cranborne to call on officials here before going to Saudi Arabia and will alert the Ambassador in Riyadh to Lord Cranborne's impending visit.

*Yours ever*

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