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FM FCO
TO IMMEDIATE ISLAMABAD
TELNO 26
OF 081030Z JANUARY 88
INFO IMMEDIATE KABUL, MOSCOW, WASHINGTON, UKMIS NEW YORK
INFO PRIORITY ROME, PARIS, NEW DELHI, UKMIS GENEVA, PEKING
INFO PRIORITY RIYADH, BONN

MIPT AFGHANISTAN: ARMACOST'S VISIT TO LONDON .

1. FOLLOWING A MORNING OF TALKS WITH THE PUS ARMACOST CALLED ON ME AND SUMMARIZED HIS IMPRESSIONS.

2. ON THE MILITARY FRONT THE SITUATION WAS GOING VERY WELL AND COULD GET MUCH BETTER. DRAMATIC THINGS COULD YET HAPPEN THIS WINTER. THE BATTLE AT KHOST HAD DEMONSTRATED THE COLLAPSE IN MORALE OF THE AFGHAN ARMY. MILITARY SUPPLIES WERE FLOWING INTO THE RESISTANCE.

3. ON THE DIPLOMATIC FRONT HE HAD FOUND IN ISLAMABAD THAT AS THE PAKISTANIS FACED UP TO A POSSIBLE WITHDRAWAL TIMETABLE OF BETWEEN 8 TO 12 MONTHS SO THEY WERE BECOMING MORE EXERCISED BY THE NON-INTERVENTION OBLIGATIONS WHICH THEY (AND THE USA) WOULD BE UNDERTAKING UNDER THE GENEVA AGREEMENT. WITH AMERICAN ENCOURAGEMENT THEREFORE THEY WOULD BE IMPRESSING UPON CORDOVEZ THE NEED TO BUILD INTO THE UN AGREEMENT ADDITIONAL SAFEGUARDS ABOUT THE FRONT-LOADING OF TROOP WITHDRAWAL, PHASING, GEOGRAPHICAL CONCENTRATION AND A CESSATION OF SOVIET MILITARY OPERATIONS.

4. THERE WAS NO DATE YET FOR THE RESUMPTION OF THE GENEVA TALKS. THE BEST GUARANTEE FOR SUCCESS AT GENEVA WOULD BE AGREEMENT ON AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT WHICH DID NOT INCLUDE NAJIB. IF IDEAS FOR AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT COULD BE GIVEN MORE CONTENT THEN THE SECOND TRACK APPROACH COULD CATCH UP WITH THE EXISTING GENEVA NEGOTIATIONS. THIS WOULD VERY MUCH BE A TASK FOR GENERAL GUL TO PURSUE WITH THE ALLIANCE LEADERS. IT MIGHT TAKE 2 TO 3 MONTHS BEFORE AGREEMENT COULD BE REACHED WHICH MADE IT IMPORTANT TO CONTINUE TO PRESS FOR AS MUCH DETAILED SOVIET COMMITMENT ON THE WITHDRAWAL PROCESS IN GENEVA AS POSSIBLE.

5. IN ISLAMABAD THE PRIME MINISTER WAS PRIMARILY CONSCIOUS OF DOMESTIC POLITICAL PRESSURE FOR AN INTERNAL SOLUTION WHEREAS PRESIDENT ZIA WAS MORE IMPRESSED BY THE ADDITIONAL LEVERAGE WHICH PAKISTAN AND THE RESISTANCE WERE ACQUIRING OVER THE RUSSIANS BY VIRTUE OF RESISTANCE MILITARY SUCCESSES AND THE SOVIET INABILITY TO REINFORCE SUFFICIENTLY TO GUARANTEE A MILITARY VICTORY. ARMACOST FELT THAT HIS VISIT HAD BEEN PARTICULARLY HELPFUL IN PROMOTING A POLITICAL CONSENSUS IN ISLAMABAD BEHIND THE TWO TRACK APPROACH. SECOND TRACK DISCUSSIONS ABOUT AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT MUST MOVE FORWARD RAPIDLY BEFORE DECISIONS COULD BE MADE ABOUT SYNCHRONISING THE END GAME.

6. ARMACOST NOTED THAT THE PAKISTANIS WERE AT PRESENT PRESSING THE RUSSIANS TO REMOVE HALF THEIR FORCES WITHIN 3 MONTHS OF

SIGNATURE OF THE AGREEMENT, IE 30 DAYS AFTER THE AGREEMENT ITSELF BEGAN TO BE IMPLEMENTED. THE DANGER WAS THAT UNDER THIS ARRANGEMENT THE RUSSIANS COULD RETAIN IN AFGHANISTAN THE BULK OF THEIR FIGHTING TROOPS. THE AMERICANS WERE PREPARED TO HELP THE RUSSIANS TO THE EXTENT OF ENCOURAGING ARRANGEMENTS FOR AN ORDERLY

SECRET

WITHDRAWAL

321

WITHDRAWAL. THEY HAD NOT COMPLETELY EXCLUDED THE POSSIBILITY OF A LIMITED PDPA INVOLVEMENT: THEY ACCEPTED THE IDEA OF NEUTRALITY AND NON-ALIGNMENT. BUT THE LONGER THE RUSSIAN TROOPS STAYED THE WORSE WOULD THEIR PROBLEMS BECOME. AFGHANISATION OF THE WAR HAD BEEN A FAILURE. NO SOLDIER HOWEVER WANTED TO BE SHOT ON HIS WAY HOME. SO A SLOW WITHDRAWAL SEEMED UNLIKELY TO WORK. PRESIDENT ZIA AND THE MILITARY WERE STRONGLY COMMITTED TO THE MUSLIM CAUSE AND WANTED TO STRIKE A HARD BARGAIN, BUT EVEN JUNEJO WAS VERY FIRM ABOUT THE NEED FOR FRONT-LOADING. AS FAR AS THE US WAS CONCERNED THEY WOULD PREFER SOVIET WITHDRAWAL TO BE VERY HEAVILY FRONT-LOADED (AS HE SAID TO THE PUS 'WITH SOME WITHDRAWAL BEGINNING ON DAY 1') TO MATCH THE PAKISTANI AND US COMMITMENT TO CEASE OUTSIDE SUPPORT FROM DAY 1 OF THE AGREEMENT. THE AMERICANS WERE HOWEVER MUCH CONCERNED AT THE PROBLEM OF HOW TO MAINTAIN HUMANITARIAN AID AND HOW TO GET MONEY OUT TO THE COUNTRYSIDE AND NOT VIA NAJIB.

7. ARMACOST FELT THAT HIS VISIT HAD HELPED STEM A CERTAIN DRIFT ON THE DIPLOMATIC FRONT AND ENCOURAGED USEFUL CO-ORDINATION IN ISLAMABAD WHERE YAQUB KHAN WAS STILL ACTIVE BEHIND THE SCENES. IT WAS QUITE CLEAR THAT A PREMATURE RUSH TO SETTLE THE DISPUTE WOULD BE PREVENTED BY THE NEED TO DEVELOP ARRANGEMENTS IN AFGHANISTAN WHICH WOULD ENCOURAGE THE REFUGEES TO RETURN HOME. THE PAKISTANIS NEEDED REASSURANCE IN STANDING FIRM BUT ALSO NEEDED THEIR TOES KEPT TO THE FIRE - IE ENCOURAGED TO KEEP UP THE PRESSURE ON THE RESISTANCE TO COME UP WITH CEASE-FIRE AND INTERIM GOVERNMENT ARRANGEMENTS WHICH COULD BE NEGOTIATED WITH THE RUSSIANS IN THE NEAR FUTURE. IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR THE NEXT GENEVA ROUND TO BE DELAYED SO THAT IT COULD BE A SUCCESS RATHER THAN HAVE IT HELD PREMATURELY IN FEBRUARY WITHOUT ADEQUATE PREPARATION.

8. ARMACOST AGREED WITH THE NEED TO KEEP CLOSE CO-ORDINATION BETWEEN LONDON AND WASHINGTON, ON THE AGENCY, ASSESSMENT AND DIPLOMATIC FRONTS. HE HAD ALREADY COMMISSIONED MORE WORK ON THE BALANCE OF POLITICAL POWER IN THE RESISTANCE WITHIN AFGHANISTAN. IN THE END HOWEVER IT WAS PRESIDENT ZIA WHOM THE ALLIANCE RESPECTED AND WHO WOULD BE ABLE TO PUSH THROUGH A FINAL DEAL. MEANWHILE MY FORTHCOMING MEETINGS (AND THAT OF MR SCHULTZ) WITH MR SHEVARDNADZE WOULD KEEP UP THE PRESSURE.

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Additional: -
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10. 10. DAWNING STREET.

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- MR MC LAREN
- MR GILLMORE
- SIR J. FRETWELL
- PS } PLS
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