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FM ISLAMABAD

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 111

OF 240753Z JANUARY 88

INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON, MOSCOW, KABUL, UKMIS NEW YORK

INFO PRIORITY UKMIS GENEVA, ROME, PARIS

AFGHANISTAN: CORDOVEZ'S VISIT

SUMMARY

1. CORDOVEZ DISAPPOINTED BUT NOT DOWN-HEARTED BY DIFFICULTIES IN TALKING TO THE MUJAHIDEEN. HE IS CONVINCED THE RUSSIANS MEAN BUSINESS. IN A SHORT MEETING HE TOLD ME THAT IT WAS NOW UP TO THE PAKISTANIS AND THE AFGHANS TO START MOVING TO FORM A NEW INTERIM GOVERNMENT.

DETAIL

2. CORDOVEZ AND HIS PARTY ARRIVED IN PAKISTAN LATE ON 20 JANUARY. ON 21 JANUARY HE HAD TALKS WITH THE MFA WITH NOORANI AND SATTAR AND ALSO MET THE PRIME MINISTER. HE INVITED ME IN FOR A DRINK FOR HALF AN HOUR ON 22 JANUARY BEFORE GOING TO DINNER WITH THE PRESIDENT. ON 23 JANUARY HE LEFT FOR KABUL AND EXPECTS TO BE BACK ON MONDAY 25 JANUARY (THOUGH HE IS VERY ANXIOUS TO KEEP HIS MOVEMENTS SECRET FOR SECURITY REASONS). WE HAVE PROVISIONALLY FIXED THAT HE MAY COME FOR A LONGER TALK AND DINNER WITH ME ON 25 JANUARY

3. CORDOVEZ WAS HIS USUAL JAUNTY SELF, DISAPPOINTED BUT NOT DOWN-HEARTED BY THE CLASH OF HIS VISIT WITH GHAFFAR KHAN'S FUNERAL AND KHALES NEGATIVE REACTION TO THE IDEA OF A MEETING WITH THE MUJAHIDEEN. LIKE US, HE HAD ASSUMED THAT KHALES WOULD NOT HAVE MADE THIS STATEMENT WITHOUT BEING PUT UP TO IT BY SOMEONE. HE HAD CHEERED TO SOME EXTENT BY THE MORE POSITIVE REACTION OF GAELANI AND MOJADIDI.

4. CORDOVEZ'S THEME WAS THAT THE AFGHANS MUST REALISE THAT IT IS NOW UP TO THEM TO GET GOING AND FORM A NEW GOVERNMENT. THE MUJAHIDEEN HAD DONE TOO LITTLE UP TO NOW. WERE THEY PREPARED TO WORK FOR A SETTLEMENT?

5. I EXPLAINED THAT THE MUJAHIDEEN HAD SO FAR HAD TO THINK IN TERMS OF FIGHTING THE GUERRILLA WAR AND IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR THEM TO START THINKING POLITICALLY. THE PAKISTANIS HAD ONLY RECENTLY STARTED TO TALK TO THEM IN DETAIL ABOUT THE NEGOTIATIONS. I SAID THAT EVEN IN

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LONDON AND WASHINGTON, CERTAINLY FOR PAKISTAN AND PARTICULARLY AMONGST THE MUJAHIDEEN THEMSELVES, THERE WAS YET NO CONFIDENCE THAT THE RUSSIANS WERE REALLY READY TO WITHDRAW THEIR TROOPS AND LEAVE THE FIELD TO AN AFGHAN GOVERNMENT THAT WAS NOT DOMINATED BY THE PDPA.

6. CORDOVEZ SAID THAT THERE WAS NO DOUBT ABOUT THIS IN HIS MIND. EVERYONE IN KABUL WAS IN A PANIC ABOUT THE FUTURE. NAJIB HAD HIS TICKET TO GO TO THE USSR. THE RUSSIANS WERE BECOMING MORE AND MORE COMMITTED BY STATEMENTS ABOUT AN EARLY WITHDRAWAL. HE HAD BEEN ACCUSED OF STAYING TOO CLOSE TO THE RUSSIANS BUT OF COURSE IT HAD BEEN ESSENTIAL TO GAIN THEIR CONFIDENCE BEFORE ANY MOVEMENT WAS POSSIBLE. HE HAD IN FACT TALKED TOUGHLY TO THEM ON MANY OCCASIONS. SO FAR THEY HAD NEVER LET HIM DOWN ON THEIR UNDERTAKINGS. ON THE OTHER HAND THE PAKISTANIS HAD BEEN VERY SLOW. IT SEEMED THEY WERE IN NO HURRY. HE HAD BEEN IMPRESSED BY SATTAR AND NOTED THE JOINT STATEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT AND PRIME MINISTER TO THE NEW YORK TIMES WHICH GAVE SOME ENCOURAGEMENT.

7. I SUGGESTED THAT HAVING SKILFULLY WON THE CONFIDENCE OF THE RUSSIANS, CORDOVEZ NOW HAD, AS I SAW IT, TO EARN THE CONFIDENCE OF THE PAKISTANIS AND THE MUJAHIDEEN. KHALES' STATEMENT MAY HAVE REPRESENTED A PLEA FOR MORE TIME OR MEAN PLAYING HARD TO GET. THERE MIGHT WELL BE DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE MUJAHIDEEN BUT THE MAINLINE GROUPS OF KHALES AND RABBANI NEEDED TO BE CONVINCED. THE PAKISTANIS COULD INFLUENCE THEM BUT NOT CONTROL THEM. THE PAKISTANIS HAD TO THINK ABOUT THEIR OWN RELATIONS IN THE FUTURE WITH A POSSIBLE NEW GOVERNMENT IN AFGHANISTAN: IE THAT IT SHOULD NOT BE HOSTILE. I THOUGHT THAT CORDOVEZ WOULD NEED TIME TO GAIN THE TRUST OF THE MUJAHIDEEN. IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT HE SHOULD GO TO PESHAWAR, FOR EXAMPLE, RATHER THAN HAVE THE MUJAHIDEEN LEADERS SUMMONED TO MEET HIM IN ISLAMABAD, WHICH THEY DID NOT LIKE. CORDOVEZ NOTED THIS AND LATER IN THE CONVERSATION ASKED IF I THOUGHT THAT PESHAWAR WAS SAFE FOR HIM TO VISIT (CLEARLY A PREOCCUPATION). I TRIED TO REASSURE HIM ON THIS.

8. CORDOVEZ SAID THAT IN ANY CASE IT WAS NOW UP TO THE AFGHANS THEMSELVES TO GET THEIR ACT TOGETHER AND TO CREATE A NEW GOVERNMENT THAT NEED ONLY LAST UNTIL THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE RUSSIAN TROOPS. AFTER THAT THEY MUST WORK OUT THEIR OWN PROCESSES. IN THE INTERIM PERIOD THEY WOULD HAVE TO INCLUDE SOME OF THE PEOPLE IN KABUL. THERE WERE REASONABLE MEN WORKING THERE, JUST AS THERE WERE UNREASONABLE MEN AMONGST THE COMMANDERS OF THE MUJAHIDEEN, AS ONE OF THE INTELLIGENT EXILES HAD TOLD HIM. AS FOR THE EXILES THEY SHOULD ALSO

BE CONTACTED AND TALKED TO. IT WAS ALL VERY WELL SAYING THAT SOME OF THEM HAD NOT PARTICIPATED IN THE WAR BUT THEIR EFFORTS TO HELP HAD IN THE PAST OFTEN BEEN REBUFFED. CORDOVEZ SAID HE HAD HIMSELF TALKED TO SOME OF THE EXILES AND FOUND THEM CLEAR HEADED. WE DISCUSSED SULTAN MAHMOUD GHAZI (WHOM I HAD KNOWN IN KABUL YEARS BEFORE) AND WHO WE AGREED WAS A SENSIBLE MAN. I SAID THAT PERHAPS SULTAN MAHMOUD AND OTHERS LIKE HIM SHOULD NOW COME TO PAKISTAN AND TALK TO THE MUJAHIDEEN. CORDOVEZ SAID THAT HE HAD NOT BEEN GIVEN A VISA THOUGH HE HAD GONE ESPECIALLY FROM THE US TO ROME TO GET ONE. I SAID I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR THE PAKISTANIS TO DEFEND IN PUBLIC NOT ISSUING VISAS TO SUCH PEOPLE, SINCE THEIR LINE HAD ALWAYS BEEN THAT EVERYONE WAS FREE TO COME TO PAKISTAN.

9. CORDOVEZ SAID THAT THE PAKISTANIS HAD ALL ALONG INSISTED THAT THE TIMEFRAME WAS THE ONLY POINT REMAINING AT ISSUE IN THE TEXT. AND NOW THEY HAD VIRTUALLY GOT THE TIMEFRAME TIED UP, THEY WERE ASKING FOR MORE. HE WONDERED WHETHER THE PAKISTANIS REALLY DID WANT A SETTLEMENT? AND WHAT WAS THE US ATTITUDE? I SAID I WAS SURE THAT THE PAKISTAN GOVERNMENT NEEDED A SETTLEMENT TO GET THE REFUGEES BACK, TO HAVE A CHANCE OF EXERCISING MORE CONTROL OVER DRUGS AND GUN-RUNNING ETC, AND TO BRING THE TERRORIST BOMBING CAMPAIGN TO A HALT. THERE WERE NO DOUBT A VARIETY OF VIEWS IN THE US BUT THE US GOVERNMENT POLICY WAS THE SAME AS THAT OF PAKISTAN. AS GUARANTORS THEY WERE OF COURSE CONCERNED THAT THEY WOULD NOT BE LED INTO ANY SORT OF RUSSIAN TRAP. I SUGGESTED THAT WHAT WAS NEEDED NOW WAS CERTAIN CLEAR SIGNALS TO GIVE CONFIDENCE TO THE PAKISTANIS AND TO HELP THE MUJAHIDEEN THINK MORE SERIOUSLY ABOUT A SETTLEMENT: FOR A START THIS WOULD INVOLVE THE SHORTEST POSSIBLE TIMEFRAME FOR WITHDRAWAL AND THE CERTAINTY THAT NAJIB HIMSELF WOULD GO.

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