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TELNO 305 .

OF 281151Z FEBRUARY 88
INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON, UKMIS NEW YORK
INFO PRIORITY UKMIS GENEVA, NEW DELHI, ROME, PARIS, BONN, PEKING
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FOR RESIDENT CLERK (PLEASE INFORM HEAD OF SAD)
YOUR TELNO 181: AFGHANISTAN: TALK WITH US AMBASSADOR

SUMMARY

1. US AMBASSADOR REPORTS THAT ARMACOST ARGUED THE CASE FOR SIGNATURE OF GENEVA TEXTS, BUT EMPHASISED THE DECISION WAS FOR THE PAKISTANIS: THE AMERICANS WERE NOT TRYING TO EXERT PRESSURE. SOVIET UNDERTAKING NOT TO SUPPLY KABUL ESSENTIAL. PAKISTANIS NOT YET MADE UP THEIR MIND. POLITICAL CONSENSUS WILL BE IMPORTANT FOR THEM. WE SHOULD AVOID TAKING A TOUGHER LINE THAN THE AMERICANS, INCLUDING WITH THE MUJAHIDEEN.

DETAIL

2. I TOUCHED BASE WITH THE US AMBASSADOR ON 27 FEBRUARY. HE SAID THAT ARMACOST HAD GONE OVER THE GROUND THOROUGHLY WITH THE PAKISTANIS DURING HIS RECENT VISIT BUT THERE HAD NOT REALLY BEEN A MEETING OF MINDS. THE TROUBLE WAS THAT AS THE END-GAME APPROACHED THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE DRAMA HAD DIFFERENT PRIORITIES: THE AMERICANS WANTED A SOVIET WITHDRAWAL, THE PAKISTANIS WANTED THE REFUGEES TO GO BACK, THE MUJAHIDEEN WANTED A NEW ISLAMIC GOVERNMENT IN KABUL.

3. ARMACOST HAD EXPLAINED WHY THE AMERICANS THOUGHT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO GET SOME UNDERTAKING FROM THE RUSSIANS NOT TO SUPPLY ARMS TO THE KABUL GOVERNMENT (IT WAS ACCEPTED THAT HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE WOULD CONTINUE ON BOTH SIDES), IN WHICH CASE THE PAKISTANIS WOULD BE WISE TO SIGN THE GENEVA AGREEMENTS. THIS WOULD BE WITH AN APPROPRIATE RESERVATION OR DISCLAIMER ABOUT RECOGNITION (AS THE AMERICANS HAD DONE OVER VIETNAM). BUT ARMACOST HAD TAKEN PAINS TO SAY THAT THE FINAL DECISION WAS FOR THE PAKISTANIS TO MAKE. THE AMERICANS WERE NOT PRESSURISING THEM TO SIGN. THE AMERICANS WOULD SUPPORT THE PAKISTANIS IN ANY CASE. RAPHEL SAID THAT IN HIS VIEW IF THE RUSSIANS DID NOT GIVE AN UNDERTAKING ABOUT NOT SUPPLYING THE KABUL GOVERNMENT WITH ARMS AFTER THE START OF WITHDRAWAL HE

THOUGHT THAT IT WOULD NOT BE POLITICALLY POSSIBLE FOR THE US GOVERNMENT TO GUARANTEE AN AGREEMENT, SO THAT THE PAKISTANIS COULD NOT SIGN.

4. RAPHEL SAID THAT ARMACOST HAD TOLD THE PAKISTANIS THAT HE WAS IN FAVOUR OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT, BUT THE AMERICANS SIMPLY HAD DOUBTS ABOUT WHETHER IT WOULD BE FEASIBLE TO REACH AGREEMENT ON THIS, ESPECIALLY BEFORE THE TIME CAME FOR SIGNATURE OF THE GENEVA TEXTS.
5. RAPHEL CLAIMED THAT THE AMERICANS HAD HAD NO SPECIAL PRIVATE UNDERTAKINGS FROM THE RUSSIANS. HE WAS BEGINNING TO DOUBT WHETHER THE LATTER WOULD REALLY BRING ABOUT CHANGES IN THE GOVERNMENT IN KABUL IN THE NEAR FUTURE, THOUGH HE ACCEPTED THAT IT WAS PROBABLY IN THEIR INTEREST TO HAVE A GOVERNMENT WITH WHICH THEY COULD DEAL.
6. RAPHEL EXPRESSED ADMIRATION FOR THE WAY THE PAKISTANI GOVERNMENT WERE SETTING ABOUT SECURING A WIDE CONSENSUS FOR WHATEVER THEY DECIDED TO DO ON SIGNATURE. JUNEJO WAS (TYPICALLY) ANXIOUS TO OBTAIN MAXIMUM DOMESTIC POLITICAL SUPPORT, BUT THERE WERE NO MAJOR DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HIM AND ZIA. JUNEJO ATTACHED GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THE CONSULTATION WITH OPPOSITION PARTY LEADERS, NOW PROPOSED FOR 5 MARCH. THIS WAS TIMED SO THAT NOORANI COULD SEE WHETHER THE FIRST TRACK ISSUES WERE TO BE SETTLED AS EXPECTED AT THE BEGINNING OF THE GENEVA TALKS AND COULD THEN COME BACK AND REPORT, AND GET HIS INSTRUCTIONS. RAPHEL AGREED THAT THE MAIN POLITICAL PRESSURES ON THE PAKISTAN GOVERNMENT WERE LIKELY TO BE TO SIGN, THOUGH THERE COULD BE RETRIBUTION LATER IF THINGS WENT WRONG WITH NO EARLY PROSPECT OF THE REFUGEES' RETURN. THE ONLY POLITICAL PARTY LIKELY TO OPPOSE A DECISION TO SIGN WOULD BE THE JAMAAT-E-ISLAMI, WHICH ADMITTEDLY HAD LITTLE CURRENT ELECTORAL STRENGTH.
7. IN RAPHEL'S VIEW ZIA HAD STILL NOT FINALLY MADE UP HIS MIND ABOUT WHETHER TO SIGN AT GENEVA. HE HAD ARGUED THE CASE FOR AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT STRONGLY WITH ARMACOST. ZIA WAS WORRIED ABOUT THE REFUGEES RETURNING, WHICH WAS PERHAPS ONLY A QUESTION OF TIMING, BUT MORE PARTICULARLY HE APPEARED VERY CONCERNED NOT TO DISTANCE HIMSELF FROM THE MUJAHIDEEN AT THIS STAGE - HAVING TAKEN SUCH PAINS TO KEEP ALONGSIDE THEM ALL THESE YEARS. IN ANY CASE THE PAKISTANI LEADERS WERE NOW AGONISING OVER THE CHOICE THEY WOULD SOON HAVE TO MAKE.
8. WHEN I EXPLAINED CURRENT THINKING IN LONDON, RAPHEL COMMENTED

THAT IT LOOKED IRONICALLY AS IF THE BRITISH MIGHT BE TAKING A TOUGHER LINE WITH THE PAKISTANIS ON SIGNATURE THAN THE AMERICANS. WHY DID WE NOT ADVISE THEM TO STICK FIRM? I SAID WE FAVOURED KEEPING MAXIMUM PRESSURE ON FOR AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT BUT THAT ON BALANCE THE WITHDRAWAL DATE OF 15 MAY SHOULD NOT BE JEOPARDISED. BUT WE WERE CERTAINLY NOT IN THE BUSINESS OF TELLING THE PAKISTANIS WHAT TO DO, MUCH LESS THAN THE AMERICANS WHO WERE INVOLVED THROUGH THE GUARANTEE REQUIREMENT.

COMMENT

9. YOU WILL NOTE THAT THERE MAY BE A RISK THAT WE SHALL BE MORE DIRECT WITH THE PAKISTANIS THAN THE AMERICANS IN ADVISING THEM TO SIGN AT GENEVA, IF THE LATTER CONTINUE TO PUT ALL THE ONUS FOR A DECISION ON THE PAKISTANIS AND SAY THEY WILL BACK THEM WHATEVER THEY DECIDE. PRESUMABLY WE SHOULDN'T SAY ANY LESS.

10. AND IN SPEAKING TO KHALES I SHALL HAVE TO BE EVEN MORE CIRCUMSPECT. HAVING DONE OUR BEST TO PERSUADE THE MUJAHIDEEN TO ACCEPT THE IDEA OF AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT AND TO BE FLEXIBLE ON THE MATTER WE DON'T WANT TO SUGGEST TO THEM, OF COURSE, THAT IT WAS ALL A WASTE OF TIME. IF THE PAKISTANIS DO SIGN AT GENEVA THE MUJAHIDEEN WILL HAVE A DIFFICULT DECISION OF THEIR OWN TO MAKE ABOUT WHETHER TO ACQUIESCE, OR TO DENOUNCE THE WHOLE PROCESS. . . ACKNOWLEDGING THIS PROBLEM AND THINKING ALOUD (NOT TO BE QUOTED) RAPHEL WONDERED WHETHER THE US MIGHT NOT RECOGNISE THE ALLIANCE'S INTERIM GOVERNMENT AS THE GOVERNMENT OF AFGHANISTAN, IN ORDER TO KEEP THE MUJAHIDEEN ON SIDE.

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