

*Can we not*

*Prime Minister*

Jp 0522

MR POWELL

c Sir Robin Butler

*Whom needs to know*

*to Pakistan? Who would*

*be liable if they were responsible for keeping the Soviet troops in*

*COP*

*1873*

*Afghanistan*

Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan

A Soviet official spokesman said yesterday that, while the Soviet Union would like a withdrawal to be within the framework of a Geneva accord, they would go ahead without it.

2. We have recently assessed that withdrawal without an agreement, while possible, was the least favoured Soviet option. The Russians might be able to claim the moral high ground and, more practically, to organise the manner of their own going without any externally imposed conditions - for example, an arms supply symmetry. But in military terms such an outcome would mean a continued supply of arms to the Mujahedin, and unconstrained Mujahedin activity against a regime no longer supported by Soviet forces.

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3. If no agreement were signed, Soviet forces would probably take longer to pull out - there is already some talk of two years. There would be continued uncertainties about their intention to withdraw completely, and there would be no legal obligation not to reintroduce forces into Afghanistan at any time after withdrawal.

4. There is little doubt that the Soviet Union is angered by what they characterise as Pakistan's delaying tactics. Both Pakistan and the Kabul regime have hardened on the sticking points (arms symmetry and concrete progress forwards a transitional Government), and there is unlikely to be any perceptible movement now before the Shultz-Shevardnadze meeting next week. The Soviet Union has already said that delay in signing will mean a delay in withdrawal. This was



clearly to put pressure on Pakistan: preparations for Soviet withdrawal have been going on for some time and there is no doubt that withdrawal could begin quite quickly after signing if the Russians chose. This most recent Soviet announcement should be seen as yet a further step in the screwing-down process. They must realise that agreement is in sight; and there is no suggestion at the moment of a suspension of the Geneva talks. But it is conceivable that even if the current impasse is not resolved either at Geneva or during the Shultz-Shevardnadze meeting, Soviet troops, which are already poised to withdraw, will still begin to pull out within the next few months.

CC  
PERCY CRADOCK

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10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister

We have indeed  
let our views be  
known to the  
Pakistanis. I think  
there is little doubt  
that they will sign  
an agreement, once  
they are sure that  
they have got everything  
they can out of the  
Russians. The meeting

between Shultz and  
Shevardnadze on  
Tuesday / Wednesday will  
be crucial in this  
respect.

CSO  
18/3

Phanlyon  
✓