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FM WASHINGTON
TO DESKBY 140830Z FCO
TELNO 975
OF 132200Z APRIL 88

INFO IMMEDIATE KABUL, MOSCOW, UKMIS GENEVA, PARIS, BONN, ROME,
INFO IMMEDIATE NEW DELHI, RIYADH, ISLAMABAD, UKMIS NEW YORK,
INFO IMMEDIATE UKREP BRUSSELS

OUR TELNO 946: AFGHANISTAN: POSITIVE SYMMETRY
SUMMARY

1. THE ADMINISTRATION HAVE NO FORMAL AGREEMENT WITH THE RUSSIANS ON POSITIVE SYMMETRY. BUT THEY ARE CONFIDENT THAT SOVIET ASSURANCES, BACKED BY AN EXCHANGE OF LETTERS AND OTHER RECORDS, AMOUNT TO A RELIABLE BASIS FOR US SIGNATURE AS GUARANTORS. THE ADMINISTRATION HAVE BROAD CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT.

DETAIL

2. THE FOLLOWING IS BASED ON A BRIEFING BY ARMACOST OF WESTERN AMBASSADORS ON 13 APRIL (MINISTER ATTENDED IN MY ABSENCE), AND OTHER RECENT DISCUSSIONS WITH OFFICIALS IN STATE AND NSC.

3. ARMACOST EMPHASIZED THAT US AND PAKISTANI INSISTENCE ON SYMMETRY OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS HAS NOT BEEN A LAST-MINUTE ADDITIONAL DEMAND ON THE SOVIET UNION, AS ALLEGED BY THE RUSSIANS AND IN SOME MEDIA REPORTS. THE ISSUE AT STAKE, SECURING SOVIET WITHDRAWAL ON ACCEPTABLE AND BALANCED TERMS, HAS REMAINED THE SAME THROUGHOUT. THE ISSUE OF FUTURE SOVIET MILITARY SUPPLY TO KABUL ONLY CAME TO CENTRE STAGE AFTER THE FAILURE OF EFFORTS TO REACH AGREEMENT ON AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT AND ON DETAILED TERMS FOR AFGHAN NEUTRALITY. REPEATED SOVIET STATEMENTS THAT AFGHANISTAN WOULD BE THE MODEL FOR THE SETTLEMENT OF OTHER REGIONAL CONFLICTS ONLY REINFORCED THE NEED TO INSIST ON BALANCE AND SYMMETRY IN THE OVERALL AFGHANISTAN AGREEMENT.

4. THE POSITION EVENTUALLY REACHED BETWEEN THE US AND THE SOVIET UNION ON POSITIVE SYMMETRY IS NOT ENSHRINED IN ANY ONE FORMULA OR FORMAL AGREEMENT. AFTER RUSSIAN REJECTION OF NEGATIVE SYMMETRY AND OF THE US PROPOSAL FOR A MORATORIUM ON ARMS SUPPLIES, SHULTZ WROTE TO SHEVARDNADZE ON 30 MARCH. IN THE LETTER, HE SET OUT US TERMS FOR POSITIVE SYMMETRY, STATED THE ASSUMPTION THAT QUOTE THIS WILL NOT PROVE AN OBSTACLE TO SOVIET SIGNATURE AS GUARANTOR UNQUOTE AND REQUESTED A FORMAL SOVIET RESPONSE. THE TERMS USED FOR POSITIVE SYMMETRY WERE THAT THE US INSISTED ON RETAINING THEIR OWN RIGHT TO CONTINUE TO SUPPLY ASSISTANCE TO PARTIES IN AFGHANISTAN: THAT THEY WOULD EXERCISE THAT RIGHT, IF THE SOVIETS

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CONTINUED TO SUPPLY KABUL AFTER THE BEGINNING OF SOVIET WITHDRAWAL: AND THAT THE US WOULD RETAIN EFFECTIVE MEANS TO DO SO AS NEEDED.

5. IN HIS REPLY LAST WEEK, SHEVARDNADZE DID NOT EXPLICITLY ACCEPT THE US TERMS IN ANY DETAIL. STATE HAVE GIVEN US THE FOLLOWING SIGNIFICANT PASSAGE: QUOTE IN RESPONSE TO YOUR LETTER, WHICH WAS CONSIDERED POSITIVELY, WE CAN AFFIRM WITH YOU OUR MUTUAL READINESS TO BECOME GUARANTORS. UNQUOTE. THERE WAS ALSO A DIRECT REFERENCE TO THE RECORD OF US-SOVIET EXCHANGES AND DISCUSSIONS.

6. THE ADMINISTRATION TOOK THE SHEVARDNADZE LETTER AS FORMAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THEIR POSITION ON SYMMETRY. AT THE VERY LEAST, BEFORE SIGNATURE AT GENEVA THE SOVIETS HAD BEEN OFFERED AND HAD DECLINED A CLEAR OPPORTUNITY TO CONTEST THE US ASSERTION OF THEIR RIGHT TO CONTINUE TO ASSIST THE RESISTANCE. AND ON THAT BASIS, TOGETHER WITH THE NEGOTIATING RECORD AND THE MINUTES OF RECENT SHULTZ-SHEVARDNADZE MEETINGS, THE ADMINISTRATION CONCLUDED THAT THEY HAD SUFFICIENT GROUNDS (WHICH, CRUCIALLY, WOULD BE DEFENSIBLE ON THE HILL) TO AGREE TO SIGN AS GUARANTORS AT GENEVA.

7. BOTH THE ADMINISTRATION AND, IT APPEARS, THE PAKISTANIS HAVE FULLY CONSIDERED THE RISKS OF SOVIET CRITICISM OF PAKISTAN IF CROSS-BOARDER SUPPORT FOR THE RESISTANCE DOES CONTINUE AFTER 15 MAY. STATE TOLD US THAT THE SOVIETS HAD ADMITTED THAT THEY WOULD CRITICISE PAKISTAN IN THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES. IF SO, THE US AND PAKISTAN WOULD RESPOND IN KIND WITH CRITICISM OF SOVIET SUPPLIES TO KABUL. IT WAS BELIEVED UNLIKELY THAT THE RUSSIANS WOULD MOVE BEYOND CRITICISM TO ACCUSATIONS THAT PAKISTAN WAS IN BREACH OF THE GENEVA AGREEMENT OR TO OTHER ATTEMPTS (EG AT THE UN) TO PUT PAKISTAN IN THE DOCK. THE RUSSIANS WOULD KNOW THAT, IN THAT CASE, THE US AND PAKISTAN WOULD BE ABLE TO PUBLISH THE SHULTZ-SHEVARDNADZE EXCHANGES AND THE NEGOTIATING RECORD. EVERYONE WOULD BE REMINDED THAT THE RUSSIANS HAD BEEN AWARE OF US AND PAKISTANI INTENTIONS BEFORE THE GENEVA AGREEMENT WAS SIGNED.

8. THE ADMINISTRATION APPEAR TO HAVE PRESERVED BROAD SUPPORT IN CONGRESS FOR THEIR POSITION. SHULTZ, ARMACOST AND OTHERS HAVE BEEN ENERGETICALLY BRIEFING KEY FIGURES. SENATOR BYRD WHO ENGINEERED THE SENSE OF THE SENATE RESOLUTION ON 29 FEBRUARY CRITICAL OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S POLICY HAS ENDORSED THE PRESENT TERMS FOR US SIGNATURE AT GENEVA. ONLY A VOCIFEROUS RIGHT-WING CAUCUS CONTINUE THEIR ACCUSATIONS OF A SELL-OUT. THEY WERE GIVEN AN OPPORTUNITY TO LET OFF STEAM AT A MEETING ON 12 APRIL WITH PRESIDENT REAGAN, CARLUCCI, COLIN POWELL AND HOWARD BAKER. BUT THE OPPOSITION OF THIS SMALL MINORITY IS NO LONGER A SIGNIFICANT FACTOR, EXCEPT PERHAPS FOR THEIR CONTINUED ATTEMPTS TO STIR UP OPPOSITION TO THE

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GENEVA SETTLEMENT AMONG THE RESISTANCE. (US OFFICIALS EXPECT RESISTANCE CRITICISMS TO DIMINISH AS SOVIET WITHDRAWAL ACTUALLY PROCEEDS.)

9. OTHER POINTS OF NOTE IN ARMACOST'S BRIEFING WERE:

I) SOVIET AGREEMENT TO WITHDRAW WAS AN HISTORIC ACHIEVEMENT FOR WHICH THE WEST IN GENERAL COULD TAKE CREDIT. (HE PAID DUE TRIBUTE ALSO TO THE RESISTANCE AND THE PAKISTANIS.)

II) SOVIET WITHDRAWAL MIGHT WELL IN THE END BE COMPLETED WITHIN SIX MONTHS FROM 15 MAY, NOT NINE MONTHS AS IN THE AGREEMENT. THE SOVIETS HAD THEMSELVES SPOKEN OF COMPLETING WITHDRAWAL WITHIN 1988. MILITARY CONSIDERATIONS MIGHT WELL FURTHER ACCELERATE THEIR DEPARTURE.

III) THOUGH THERE WAS NO UNDERSTANDING TO THIS EFFECT, THERE WERE SIGNS THAT THE SOVIETS MIGHT WELL NOT CONTINUE THEIR MILITARY SUPPLIES TO KABUL BEYOND 15 MAY. THERE WAS AMPLE TIME BEFORE THEN FOR LAST MINUTE SUPPLY. WEAPONS COULD ALSO BE LEFT BEHIND BY SOVIET FORCES. NUMEROUS SOVIET OFFICIALS HAD SAID PRIVATELY THAT LACK OF WEAPONRY WAS NOT THE PDPA'S PROBLEM. AND THE TASHKENT COMMUNIQUE, DESPITE MANY REFERENCES TO ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION, HAD BEEN NOTICEABLY SILENT ABOUT MILITARY AID.

IV) THE US WOULD NOW TURN TO THE MAJOR TASKS OF ASSISTING THE RETURN OF THE REFUGEES AND RECONSTRUCTION. IN THESE WE ALL HAD A COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY. THE US HAD ASKED THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL TO APPOINT A SPECIAL CO-ORDINATOR. ONE OF THE CO-ORDINATOR'S FIRST ACTS SHOULD BE TO CALL A DONORS CONFERENCE (SEE UKMIS NEW YORK TELNO MODEV 6).

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