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AFGHANISTAN: BRIEFING OF NAC BY U S DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY PECK

SUMMARY

1. PECK REPORTS ON GENEVA AGREEMENT. GIVES DETAILED INFORMATION ON SITUATION INSIDE AND OUTSIDE AFGHANISTAN. OPTIMISTIC ON PROSPECTS FOR DEFEAT OF KABUL REGIME AFTER SOVIET WITHDRAWAL AND FOR NATIONAL RECONCILIATION.

DETAIL

2. DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY PECK BRIEFED THE NORTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL TODAY (15 APRIL) ON THE GENEVA ACCORDS. HE BEGAN BY NOTING THAT IT WAS NOT DIPLOMACY ALONE WHICH HAD BROUGHT ABOUT THE AGREEMENT, BUT RATHER THE AFGHAN RESISTANCE, PAKISTANI SUPPORT FOR THE RESISTANCE AND THE REFUGEES, AND THE SOLIDARITY OF THE ALLIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY GENERALLY. A DIFFICULT PERIOD OF IMPLEMENTATION WAS NOW IN PROSPECT, WHICH WOULD BE CRITICAL FOR THE AREA.

GENEVA ACCORDS

3. PECK OUTLINED THE FOUR INSTRUMENTS. ON THE U S/USSR DECLARATION OF GUARANTEES HE OBSERVED THAT 'GUARANTEES' WAS A MISNOMER. THE WORD APPEARED ONLY IN THE TITLE OF THE DOCUMENT. THE U S AND USSR HAD ENTERED INTO OBLIGATIONS ONLY WITH RESPECT TO THEIR OWN BEHAVIOUR: TO REFRAIN FROM INTERFERENCE IN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN AND TO RESPECT THE COMMITMENTS ENTERED INTO BY THE PARTIES TO THE GENEVA ACCORDS.

SYMMETRY

4. PECK REVIEWED THE GENEVA NEGOTIATING HISTORY. IT WAS ONLY IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS, WHEN IT HAD BECOME CLEAR THAT THE RUSSIANS WERE COMMITTED TO AN AGREEMENT, THAT THE U S HAD BEGUN TO EXAMINE THE BASIC DRAFT UNDERTAKINGS SERIOUSLY. IT HAD BECOME APPARENT THAT THESE CONTAINED A SERIOUS FLAW, GIVING POLITICAL AND MILITARY ADVANTAGE TO KABUL. WHILE THE U S HAD ALWAYS ASSUMED THAT WITHOUT THE SOVIET PRESENCE THE KABUL REGIME COULD NOT LONG SURVIVE,

PAGE 1
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CONTINUED ACCESS TO SOVIET MILITARY EQUIPMENT FOLLOWING A CUT OFF OF AID TO THE RESISTANCE COULD HAVE PROLONGED THE CONFLICT UNNECESSARILY. PAKISTAN AND THE U S HAD THEREFORE SET OUT TO SOLVE THIS PROBLEM, PAKISTAN BY EMPHASISING THE NEED FOR PRIOR AGREEMENT ON A BROAD-BASED INTERIM GOVERNMENT. THIS HAD REGRETTABLY NOT PROVED POSSIBLE SINCE NEITHER THE RESISTANCE NOR THE REGIME WERE PREPARED TO COMPROMISE.

5. THE U S HAD THEREFORE EMPHASISED THE SECOND TRACK (SYMMETRY), ASSERTING THAT THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE TWO GUARANTORS MUST BE BALANCED. AT THE WASHINGTON MINISTERIAL THE U S HAD PROPOSED NEGATIVE SYMMETRY (IE SUSPENSION OF SUPPLIES DURING THE WITHDRAWAL PERIOD AND FOR A FURTHER THREE MONTHS THEREAFTER). THIS HAD PROVED UNACCEPTABLE TO THE RUSSIANS. THE U S HAD SUBSEQUENTLY RECONSIDERED AND PROPOSED THAT THE U S WOULD SIMPLY ASSERT UNILATERALLY THAT IT RETAINED THE RIGHT TO SUPPLY THE RESISTANCE. THE U S HAD EMPHASISED TO THE RUSSIANS THAT IT WAS CONFIDENT OF ITS ABILITY TO CONTINUE TO SUPPLY THE RESISTANCE, BUT WOULD PREFER BOTH SUPERPOWERS TO EXERCISE RESTRAINT. SHULTZ SUBSEQUENTLY TOLD SHEVARDNADZE THAT THE U S WAS PREPARED TO SIGN THE GENEVA ACCORD UNDER THAT UNDERSTANDING. PECK EMPHASISED THAT THE RUSSIANS HAD NOT EXPLICITLY ACCEPTED A FORMAL AGREEMENT (THIS HAD BEEN EVIDENT IN SHEVARDNADZE'S PRESS CONFERENCE AT GENEVA) BUT HAD INDICATED A WILLINGNESS TO MOVE FORWARD TO A SETTLEMENT ON THIS BASIS.

DEVELOPMENTS ON THE GROUND

6. PECK SAID THAT ACHIEVEMENT OF THE IMPLICIT UNDERSTANDING ON SYMMETRY WOULD NOT LEAVE THE RESISTANCE AT A DISADVANTAGE. THE U S EXPECTED THAT THE SUPERIOR STRENGTH OF THE RESISTANCE WOULD QUICKLY ASSERT ITSELF. FIGHTING WOULD CONTINUE. THE RESISTANCE WOULD MOVE DEEPER INTO AFGHANISTAN AND OVER TIME WOULD PREVAIL. ESTIMATES OF HOW LONG THE KABUL REGIME COULD SURVIVE VARIED. THE U S INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY DOUBTED THAT IT COULD LAST LONG: IT MIGHT EVEN FALL BEFORE THE LAST SOVIET TROOPS LEFT.

SOVIET WITHDRAWAL

7. PECK NOTED THAT WHILE THE FORMAL PERIOD FOR COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL WAS 9 MONTHS, SHEVARDNADZE HAD INDICATED THAT THE RUSSIANS WOULD BE OUT BY THE END OF 1988. SOVIET NEGOTIATORS HIN GENEVA HAD BEEN HINTING WITHDRAWAL COULD BE EVEN FASTER, PERHAPS COMPLETED WITHIN 6 MONTHS. THE DEPARTING SOVIET TROOPS WOULD BE CONCENTRATED IN KABUL AND ALONG THE ROAD TO THE SOVIET BORDER.

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102016
3077
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8. PECK CONCLUDED HIS PRESENTATION WITH A REFERENCE TO THE REFUGEES. THERE MIGHT BE A TOTAL OF 6 MILLION (2 1/2 MILLION IN PAKISTAN, 1-2 MILLION IN IRAN AND 2 MILLION INTERNAL REFUGEES). THEIR RETURN WOULD REQUIRE A MAJOR INTERNATIONAL EFFORT. THE UNHCR WOULD PLAY THE MAJOR ROLE. THE U S HAD URGED THE UN SECRETARY GENERAL TO APPOINT A SPECIAL CO-ORDINATOR, AS FOR ETHIOPIA, WHO WOULD CALL A DONORS CONFERENCE TO TAKE MATTERS FORWARD.

9. IN SUBSEQUENT DEBATE HANSEN (FRG) DREW ATTENTION TO THE STATEMENT BY THE TWELVE. HIS AUTHORITIES CONSIDERED THE AGREEMENT VERY IMPORTANT FOR EAST/WEST RELATIONS IN GENERAL. HE NOTED THAT AFTER 1979 THERE HAD BEEN FEARS ABOUT LONGER RANGE GEOSTRATEGIC SOVIET OBJECTIVES, (INCLUDING ACCESS TO THE INDIAN OCEAN). WHAT WAS THE U S ASSESSMENT NOW? PECK SAID THAT THE DEBATE ON SOVIET MOTIVATION FOR THE ORIGINAL INVASION COULD PROBABLY NEVER BE RESOLVED SATISFACTORILY, BUT SOVIET WITHDRAWAL WOULD BE A FACT IN THE REGION, LIMITING SOVIET ABILITY TO BRING DIRECT MILITARY PRESSURE TO BEAR IN THE INDIAN SUB-CONTINENT. AT THE SAME TIME IN STRATEGIC TERMS AFGHANISTAN WAS (RELATIVELY) UNIMPORTANT. IRAN, ON THE CONTRARY, WAS: IT MIGHT BE THAT THE RUSSIANS HAD REASSESSED THEIR GAINS AND LOSSES AND THAT CURRENT SOVIET POLICY REFLECTED A MORE REALISTIC JUDGEMENT OF WHERE SOVIET LONG TERM INTERESTS LAY. FOR SOME TIME THE RUSSIANS HAD BEEN SEEKING TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH IRAN.

10. HANSEN ASKED WHETHER THE RUSSIANS REALLY INTENDED TO STOP SUPPLIES TO THE KABUL REGIME. PECK REPLIED THAT THE EVIDENCE SHOWED THAT THE RUSSIANS WERE INDEED PREPARING TO SUSPEND MILITARY SUPPLIES. RECENT MASSIVE DELIVERIES HAD BEEN NOTED IN ANTICIPATION OF 15 MAY. HE ADDED IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION FROM DE HOOP SCHEFFER (NETHERLANDS) THAT IN RECENT MONTHS THERE HAD ALSO BEEN A SERIES OF BILATERAL AGREEMENTS BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL SOVIET REPUBLICS AND NORTHERN AFGHAN PROVINCES. ADDITIONAL PROMISES HAD PROBABLY ALSO BEEN MADE TO KABUL IN TASHKENT.

11. BERG (NORWAY) SAID HIS AUTHORITIES SUBSCRIBED TO THE MAIN TERMS OF THE TWELVE'S DECLARATION. ON AID, NORWAY HAD PROVIDED VERY LARGE AMOUNTS INSIDE PAKISTAN. HIS AUTHORITIES WOULD NOW BE PREPARED TO DO THE SAME INSIDE AFGHANISTAN. THE RETURN OF THE REFUGEES OUGHT TO BE MANAGED IN AN ORDERLY MANNER. HE ASKED FOR U S VIEWS. PECK SAID THAT THE RETURN OF THE REFUGEES WAS LIKELY TO BE EXTENDED AND INFLUENCED BY SEASONAL FACTORS, NOT LEAST THE NEED TO PLANT A SPRING WHEAT CROP IN APRIL FOR JULY HARVESTING. THE LIKELIHOOD WAS THAT MANY WOULD REMAIN WHERE THEY WERE FOR THE PRESENT BEFORE STARTING TO RETURN.

WITH REGARD TO PROVISION OF AID THE RESISTANCE HAD LIMITED BUT NOT NEGLIGIBLE ORGANISATIONAL CAPABILITIES. IT REMAINED TO BE SEEN HOW THESE COULD BE USED. THE U S HAD EMPHASIED TO THE UNHCR THAT IT SHOULD WORK CLOSELY WITH REPRESENTATIVE AFGHAN INSTITUTIONS, NOT WITH THE REGIME. THE FIRST PRIORITY WAS FOOD. THE SITUATION HAD BEEN COMPLICATED BY THE FAILURE OF THE PAKISTANI WHEAT CROP. OTHER PRIORITIES WERE ANIMAL FEED, DRAFT ANIMALS, AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTS AND, FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD, TRANSPORTATION AND IRRIGATION INFRASTRUCTURE. ANOTHER MAJOR CONSIDERATION WAS MINE CLEARING (PECK ESTIMATED SOME 4-5 MILLION MINES HAD BEEN LAID INSIDE AFGHANISTAN). THE U S HAD RAISED THIS DIRECTLY WITH THE RUSSIANS, SUGGESTING THAT THE RUSSIANS MIGHT REMOVE THE MINES AS THEY WITHDREW. THIS WAS CLEARLY IN THE SOVIET INTEREST: THE SOVIET IMAGE ABROAD AND SOVIET/AFGHAN RELATIONS GENERALLY WOULD SUFFER IF HUNDREDS OF AFGHANS CONTINUED TO BE MUTILATED.

12. ROBIN (FRANCE) NOTED THAT HIS AUTHORITIES HAD ALSO ISSUED A STATEMENT. THERE WERE STILL SEVERAL INCALCULABLE ELEMENTS IN THE SITUATION. THE SUCCESS OF THE GENEVA ACCORDS WOULD DEPEND ON WHETHER MOSCOW HAD TAKEN A POLITICAL DECISION TO ALLOW THE PDPA REGIME TO FALL AND TO WHAT EXTENT NAJIB COULD COUNT ON DIVISION WITHIN THE RESISTANCE. PECK SAID THAT THERE WAS NO DOUBT THAT NAJIB WAS A FORMIDABLE LEADER: IF HIS CREDIBILITY HAD NOT BEEN FATALLY UNDERMINED BY ASSOCIATION WITH THE RUSSIANS HE COULD HAVE PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE IN THE FUTURE. INTELLIGENCE REPORTS INDICATED THAT HE WAS PLANNING A 'FORTRESS KABUL' STRATEGY, WITH THE REGIME PREPARING TO FALL BACK ON THE CAPITAL CONCURRENT WITH SOVIET WITHDRAWAL FROM OUTLYING AREAS, AND TO HOLD A SMALL BUT EASILY DEFENSIBLE AREA AROUND THE CAPITAL. WHILE THE CONSCRIPTED AND DEMORALISED ARMY WERE OF LITTLE USE, OTHER FORCES AT NAJIB'S DISPOSAL - THE 70-80,000 MILITARY POLICE AND THE 20,000 STRONG SECRET POLICE - WOULD GIVE A BETTER ACCOUNT OF THEMSELVES. THEY COULD PROBABLY HOLD A SMALL AREA AROUND KABUL FOR SOME TIME. IT WAS TRUE THAT THE RESISTANCE HAD BEEN VERY SUCCESSFUL IN DENYING TERRITORY TO THE REGIME/RUSSIANS BUT NOT IN TAKING AND HOLDING AREAS THEMSELVES. THERE MIGHT THEREFORE BE A PERIOD DURING WHICH THE RESISTANCE HELD THE COUNTRY-SIDE AND NAJIB HELD KABUL. IT WAS POSSIBLE THAT A PROVISION AFGHAN GOVERNMENT MIGHT BE ESTABLISHED INSIDE AFGHANISTAN BY THE RESISTANCE, PERHAPS IN KANDAHAR, TO BEGIN THE PROCESS OF POLITICAL RECONCILIATION. IF SO, THE ALLIES WOULD HAVE TO CONSIDER WHETHER THEY SHOULD SUPPORT IT. BUT A MORE LIKELY PROSPECT WAS THE FALL OF KABUL AS MUTINIES, FACTIONAL PDPA FIGHTING AND CREEPING RESISTANCE ENCROACHMENT REDUCED THE REGIME'S ABILITY AND WILL TO DEFEND ITSELF.

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13. I DREW ATTENTION TO YOUR STATEMENT OF 14 APRIL. I NOTED THAT THE GENEVA AGREEMENT WOULD NOT OF COURSE CHANGE THE STATUS OF THE KABUL REGIME. THE UK HAD NO PLANS TO RAISE THE LEVEL OF OUR DEALINGS WITH IT. WE MIGHT RECONSIDER IF THE PDPA REGIME WAS REPLACED BY A TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT WHOSE INDEPENDENCE COULD NOT BE CONTESTED. BUT IN THE MEANTIME WE HOPED OTHER ALLIES WOULD LIKEWISE REFRAIN FROM UPGRADING RELATIONS WITH THE REGIME PREMATURELY. I NOTED THAT THE RUSSIANS, ALTHOUGH FACING A CONSIDERABLE REVERSE, WOULD CLEARLY SEEK TO EXTRACT THE MAXIMUM PROPAGANDA BENEFIT FROM THEIR WITHDRAWAL. THE TASK FOR THE ALLIES WAS TO ENSURE THAT OUR PUBLICS AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY DID NOT FORGET THE SOVIET INVASION AND SOVIET RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DEVASTATION OF AFGHANISTAN. THAT SAID, WE STOOD READY TO MAKE A FINANCIAL AND PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTION TO REPAIR THE DAMAGE. I NOTED THAT THE UK HAD DECIDED TO PLEDGE PDS 10M FOR RELIEF AND RESETTLEMENT.

14. I ASKED PECK WHETHER THERE HAD BEEN ANY KIND OF UNDERSTANDING THAT SOVIET WITHDRAWAL WOULD TAKE PLACE UNMOLESTED. PECK REPLIED THAT WHILE THERE HAD BEEN NO UNDERSTANDING THAT THE RESISTANCE WOULD DISENGAGE FROM THE RUSSIANS, GORBACHEV HAD PROMISED THAT SOVIET FORCES WOULD NOT ENGAGE IN OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS ONCE THEIR WITHDRAWAL BEGAN. DESPITE PROVOCATIVE RESISTANCE THREATS TO ATTACK THE RUSSAINS AS THEY WITHDREW, PECK DOUBTED THAT THIS WOULD BE A SERIOUS PROBLEM. THE RESISTANCE WOULD RECEIVE SOME 'VERY CLEAR ADVICE' AS TO THE LACK OF WISDOM OF SUCH A COURSE. THIS WAS LIKELY TO BE HEEDED: PROVIDED THE RUSSIANS DID SUSPEND DELIVERIES TO THE REGIME, WITH THE U S DOING LIKEWISE FOR THE RESISTANCE, THE RESISTANCE WOULD BE LEFT WITH A FINITE AMOUNT OF EQUIPMENT TO PROSECUTE THE WAR. IT WOULD NOT MAKE SENSE TO WASTE IT ON RUSSIAN TROOPS WHO WERE ALREADY ON THEIR WAY OUT.

15. PECK WAS UPBEAT IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION ABOUT THE LIKELIHOOD OF CONFLICT BETWEEN FUNDAMENTALIST AND MODERATE GROUPS WITHIN THE RESISTANCE. WHILE DIVISIONS WERE CLEARLY EVIDENT IN THE RESISTANCE, THEY WERE NOT CLEAR CUT. IT WAS WRONG TO SPEAK OF 'FUNDAMENTALISTS' VERSUS 'MODERATES'. EVEN THE 'FUNDAMENTALISTS' HAD NO GRUDE AGAINST OUTSIDE FORCES, EXCEPT THE SOVIET UNION AND IRAN (SINCE IRAN HAD NOT SUBSTANTIALLY HELPED THE RESISTANCE). FUTURE IRANIAN MEDDLING IN SUPPORT OF THE RESISTANCE WAS NOT LIKELY: IRAN WAS WHOLLY PREOCCUPIED WITH THE GULF WAR. WHILEST THERE WAS LIKELY TO BE A STRUGGLE FOR POWER AMONG RESISTANCE FORCES THIS WOULD NOT CENTRE AROUND THE PESHAWAR PARTIES. THE DECIDING FIGURES WOULD BE THE TEN OR SO REGIONAL COMMANDERS. THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT OF THESE (MASUD AND ISMAIL KAHN) HAD NEVER LEFT AFGHANISTAN AND WERE REALLY UNKNOWN

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102016
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QUANTITIES. THERE WAS NO LOGICAL COMBINATION OF ONE SET OF COMMANDERS AGAINST ANOTHER. THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND AFTER SOVIET WITHDRAWAL AND THE DEFEAT OF THE PDPA REGIME WOULD THEREFORE PROBABLY REMAIN ATOMISTIC. WHATEVER GOVERNMENT EMERGED IN KABUL WOULD BE LARGELY IRRELEVANT AT FIRST, ALTHOUGH FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD THERE WOULD PROBABLY BE A LOYA JIRGA OF THE MAIN CHIEFS TO SELECT A LEADERSHIP AND PROMOTE RECONCILIATION. EVOLUTION IN AFGHANISTAN WOULD NOT BE LOGICAL OR ORDERLY, BUT NOR WOULD IT BE CHAOTIC OR PARTICULARLY VIOLENT.

16. IN RESPONSE TO FURTHER QUESTIONS, PECK SAID THAT THE U S BELIEVED THE RESISTANCE WERE ADEQUATELY EQUIPPED FOR VICTORY. SUCH EQUIPMENT AS THEY ALREADY HAD WOULD BE SUPPLEMENTED BY THAT OBTAINED BY BATTLE OR BY DEFECTIONS. HE REPEATED THE PUBLIC U S LINE THAT THE ADMINISTRATION REMAINED CONFIDENT OF ITS ABILITY TO SUPPLY THE RESISTANCE IF NECESSARY, BUT DID NOT ADDRESS THE MODALITIES.

ALEXANDER

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