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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Ria Lewis

London SW1A 2AH

28 June 1988

I don't think we need to encourage the dialogue -

Dear Charles but I suppose we need not actively discourage it. Agree?

Afghanistan

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You wrote to me on 17 June to say that the Prime Minister was generally content with the Foreign Secretary's plans for policy on Afghanistan, but that she would prefer us not to advocate an interim government, or encourage a UN-sponsored intra-Afghan dialogue.

The Foreign Secretary does not attach a great deal of importance to the first of these; it is simply one way to arrange a peaceful transfer of power, which has been regularly endorsed by the Twelve. He has no special affection for it.

The Foreign Secretary would however like to explain more fully his reasoning on the matter of the UN-sponsored dialogue. He entirely shares the Prime Minister's view that the Resistance should gain the victory over Najib that they deserve; they should not be expected to come to terms with the PDPA. But he does not believe that there is a contradiction between wholehearted support for the Resistance and support for an intra-Afghan dialogue. He does not see these as real alternatives. The point of the UN effort, for us, is that it counters Najib's pretensions to legitimacy through his version of "national reconciliation". As I said in my letter of 16 June, the dialogue is most unlikely to succeed. But without it Najib may well be able over time to secure some international support for his position. Either way, the fighting seems bound to continue. It would plainly be helpful if this could be seen and presented as the result of the intransigence of the regime, not that of the Resistance.

All four parties to the UN Agreement on Afghanistan (US, USSR, Pakistan and the Kabul regime) have expressed support for Cordovez's continuing efforts. The Russians have thereby implicitly accepted that the present regime is not broadly based. We have not wanted to let them off this hook. We also have reports that one of the key resistance leaders, Abdul Haq, recognises the value of talking to the UN in the search for a solution.

For these reasons the Foreign Secretary hopes that the Prime Minister can agree that we should not discourage UN efforts to promote a dialogue.

R N Peirce

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Private Secretary

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From the Private Secretary

29 June 1988

AFHANISTAN

Thank you for your letter of 28 June explaining rather more fully the Foreign Secretary's reasoning in recommending that we should encourage the UN to sponsor a dialogue between the various groups in Afghanistan. The Prime Minister remains sceptical about the advantages of this and certainly would not wish us to encourage it. But she agrees that we need not actively discourage it either.

(C. D. POWELL)

R. N. Peirce, Esq.,
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