

CONFIDENTIAL
ADVANCE COPY

1544
MDADAN 62

CONFIDENTIAL
FM MOSCOW
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELNO 1348
OF 110822Z AUGUST 88
INFO PRIORITY KABUL, ISLAMABAD, NEW DELHI, WASHINGTON
INFO ROUTINE UKMIS NEW YORK, UKMIS GENEVA

MY TELS 1330 AND 1340 AND ISLAMABAD TEL 1011: SOVIET
UNION/AFGHANISTAN

SUMMARY

1. FORCEFUL ASSERTION BY VORONTSOV THAT PRESIDENT ZIA IS BENT ON A MILITARY TAKEOVER IN AFGHANISTAN. VORONTSOV THREATENS A "PROPER REACTION" BY THE SOVIET UNION.

DETAIL

2. AT THE FAREWELL LUNCH WHICH HE GAVE FOR ME ON 10 AUGUST FIRST DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER VORONTSOV DENOUNCED THE BEHAVIOUR AND INTENTIONS OF PRESIDENT ZIA TOWARDS AFGHANISTAN.
3. THE THRUST OF VORONTSOV'S REMARKS WAS THAT ZIA HAD A GRAND DESIGN TO ESTABLISH PAKISTANI SUZERAINTY OVER AFGHANISTAN BY WAGING AN AGGRESSIVE CAMPAIGN THROUGH AND WITH THE MUJAHIDDEEN OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS. VORONTSOV SAID THAT THE PROBLEM DID NOT LIE WITH PAKISTAN IN GENERAL, BUT WITH ZIA ALONE. HE WAS A MILITARY MAN AND WAS SEEKING A MILITARY SOLUTION. HE WAS SENDING PAKISTANI OFFICERS TO DIRECT OPERATIONS BY RESISTANCE UNITS. HE WAS TRYING TO FORCE THE RESISTANCE INTO AN OFFENSIVE CAMPAIGN FOR WHICH THEY WERE UNTRAINED AND UNSUITED. ZIA WANTED THEM TO ATTACK AND FORCIBLY TAKE OVER THE CITIES. VORONTSOV'S PRESENTED THIS AS THE CULMINATION OF A LONG-TERM PLAN BY ZIA. TO THIS END, ZIA WAS FORCIBLY RESTRAINING REFUGEES FROM RETURNING, AS THEY WISHED, TO RESUME A PEACEFUL LIFE IN THEIR HOME VILLAGES.
4. I COUNTERED THAT VORONTSOV'S LINE DID NOT CORRESPOND WITH THE IMPRESSIONS GIVEN TO ME BY HIS FOREIGN MINISTER DURING OUR CONVERSAION ON THE PREVIOUS DAY (MY TELNO 1340). NOR DID WE SHARE HIS ANALYSIS. I DID NOT BELIEVE THAT PRESIDENT ZIA WOULD RUN THE RISKS WITH PAKISTAN'S STABILITY. AND ZIA WOULD BE PARTICULARLY CAREFUL NOT TO EXPOSE HIMSELF TO PRESSURE FROM INDIA. HOWEVER,

PAGE 1
CONFIDENTIAL

VORONTSOV WAS NOT TO BE DETERRED. HE REITERATED HIS ARGUMENT THAT ZIA WAS PURSUING A RISKY AND DANGEROUS POLICY. IN THIS, HE DID NOT HAVE THE SUPPORT OF HIS PEOPLE, AS THE RUSSIANS KNEW FROM THEIR OWN SOURCES. HE THOUGHT THAT ZIA WOULD FAIL, AND THAT THIS STRATEGY COULD BE THE UNDOING OF HIM. HE WARNED THAT, IF ZIA WENT TOO FAR, THE SOVIET UNION WOULD RESPOND WITH A 'PROPER REACTION'. NOT SURPRISINGLY, HE DECLINED TO BE DRAWN ON THE NATURE OF THAT REACTION. BUT HE COUPLED IT WITH A STATEMENT THAT INDIA WAS WATCHING THE SITUATION VERY CLOSELY, AND THAT IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES THE INDIANS MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO ACT. VORONTSOV MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE RUSSIANS HAD ISSUED AN EXPLICIT WARNING TO THE PAKISTANIS.

5. DRAWING AN ANALOGY WITH THE IRAN/IRAQ SITUATION, VORONTSOV SUGGESTED THAT THE BEST COURSE FOR AFGHANISTAN NOW WOULD BE A CEASEFIRE. IN REPLY TO A QUESTION, HE INDICATED THAT SUCH A PROPOSAL HAD BEEN PUT (UNSUCCESSFULLY) TO YAQUB KHAN. HE LED US TO BELIEVE THAT THE RUSSIANS WOULD ISSUE SOME FORM OF STATEMENT ON 15 AUGUST, ON THE COMPLETION OF THE FIRST HALF OF THEIR TROOP WITHDRAWAL, AND THAT THIS MIGHT INCLUDE A RENEWED CALL FOR A CEASEFIRE. HE DID NOT SUGGEST THAT THE WITHDRAWAL TIMETABLE WAS LIKELY TO BE CHANGED IF THE FIGHTING CONTINUED.

COMMENT

6. VORONTSOV'S REMARKS DEMONSTRATED THE SAME CONFRONTATIONAL MOOD WHICH THE PAKISTANI FOREIGN MINISTER ENCOUNTERED DURING HIS VISIT LAST WEEK, AND WHICH WAS SURPRISINGLY ABSENT FROM MY CONVERSATION WITH SHEVARDNADZE. VORONTSOV SEEMED OBSESSED (AS I BELIEVE HE HAS BEEN AT TIMES WITH OTHER INTERLOCUTORS) WITH THE SPECTRE THAT THE PAKISTANIS MIGHT ENGINEER A RAPID TAKEOVER OF AFGHANISTAN BY EXTREMIST ELEMENTS, DIRECTED BY AND COMPLIANT TO PRESIDENT ZIA. (HE RESERVED HIS BLAME EXCLUSIVELY FOR ZIA AND DID NOT ASSOCIATE THE AMERICANS OR OTHER EXTERNAL BACKERS WITH THE ALLEGED MASTER PLAN EXCEPT BY IMPLICATION IN A SIDE SWIPE AT THE SUPPLY OF WESTERN ARMS).

7. AS I HAVE SUGGESTED IN MY TURS, THERE MAY WELL BE AN ELEMENT OF THEATRE IN THIS. THE RUSSIANS ARE NOW LOCKED INTO A PROCESS OF WITHDRAWAL FROM WHICH IT WOULD NOT BE SENSIBLE TO DEPART. THEY WOULD OBVIOUSLY LIKE TO MINIMISE THE ATTACKS ON THEIR FORCES AND THOSE OF THE KABUL REGIME THROUGH INTIMIDATION OF PAKISTAN. THEY WILL ALSO WISH TO SECURE NAJIB'S CONTINUING COOPERATION BY SHOWING EVIDENCE OF THEIR STRONG POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SUPPORT. TAKEN AT FACE VALUE, VORONTSOV'S TONE WAS DISTINCTLY MANAGING TOWARDS PAKISTAN. BUT IT MAY HAVE BEEN NO MORE THAN A FURTHER PIECE OF SABRE-RATTLING, SUCH AS

CONFIDENTIAL

154430
MDADAN 6203

WE HAVE SEEN ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS SINCE THE SOVIET WITHDRAWAL STARTED: AND PART OF A GENERAL CAMPAIGN TO SOW ANXIETIES AMONG PAKISTAN'S FRIENDS WHICH COULD INCLINE THEM TO MONITOR PAKISTANI BEHAVIOUR WITH INCREASED VIGILANCE.

CARTLEDGE

YYYY

DISTRIBUTION

21

ADVANCE

21

.AFGHANISTAN

PS *PS/MRS CHAMBER*

PS/MR EGGAR

MR BOYD

SIR J FRETWELL

MR GILLMORE

MR MCLAREN

MR SLATER

HD/SAD

HD/PUSD

DEP HD/PUSD

HD/UND

HD/SOVIET

HD/NAD

HD/DEFENCE

HD/MED

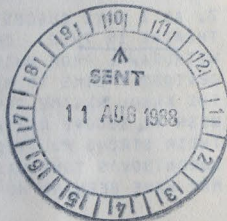
HD/NEWS

HD/CONSULAR

NO. 10 DOWNING ST.

ASSESSMENTS STAFF CAB OFF

NNNN



PAGE 3
CONFIDENTIAL