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10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

9 March 1990

CDP ②
Rice Minister
C800

Dear Bob,

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AFGHANISTAN

The younger brother of Commander Massoud came to see me this afternoon together with Massoud's Private Secretary. Sandy Gall also came along.

Yahya Massoud's main message was that Pakistan's tactics in Afghanistan had failed. They had supported the wrong groups and their military advice to the Resistance had been faulty and responsible for last year's defeats. Their latest ploy, which was to propose a revolutionary council to be headed by Hekhtmayar and the former Afghanistan Defence Minister, had no chance of success. All the other Resistance leaders had refused to join. They had known nothing of General Tanai's coup attempt, although the Pakistanis had undoubtedly been involved.

Yahya Massoud continued that the Resistance Commanders within Afghanistan were determined that the only way forward was to form a Defence Shura in the provisional Government, which would co-ordinate and direct operations within Afghanistan. The nucleus for it already existed with the Shura which Commander Masood had already organised in the north of the country. The Pakistanis must leave it to the Shura to allocate weapons and supplies among the resistance various groups and to set the strategy. Commander Massoud's view was that this should concentrate on the quick capture of two major northern towns, which would tilt the balance further against the régime in Kabul and attract more support to the Resistance, allowing them to advance rapidly to Kabul itself. If the Pakistanis refused to co-operate in this, Massoud hoped that the United Kingdom and others would send supplies direct to the Shura rather than through the Pakistanis. He hoped that HMG would use its influence with the Pakistan Government to persuade them to co-operate. Yahya Massoud said that the Resistance Commanders would go ahead without Pakistan's support if necessary: they were determined to make decisive advances in the current year, after the disappointments and misjudgements of 1989.

I said that the divisions and quarrelling of the various groups in Peshawar had caused some disillusionment with the Resistance in the West. We would in principle be keen to see a closer co-ordination between them, particularly on the military

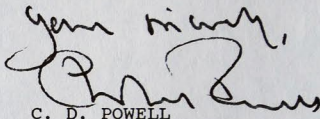
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side. I would need to take advice on the extent to which we would think it useful to intervene with the Pakistanis, but I saw no reason in principle why we should not encourage them to support the ideas which he had put to me. I would report his remarks and requests in a positive light. I asked how he saw the prospects for a major offensive against the Salang Road. Yahya Massoud claimed that it had been cut recently and that his brother regarded it as a major and important target. But to be confident of dominating it, he had to be sure of adequate supplies of weapons and ammunition.

May I leave it to you to follow this up as appropriate? I will show a copy of this letter to the Prime Minister so that she is aware of Resistance views. I am also sending a copy to James Richards in Century House.

Yours sincerely,

C. D. POWELL

R. N. Peirce, Esq.
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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