

SECRET AND PERSONAL

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I agree with

100P I share your unease about the Foreign Office letter of 14 May. Under the guise of contingency planning they are coming close to advocating cutting our losses and acquiescing in the present state of affairs.

It is true that the Resistance are desperately divided and have made little military progress. Also that the Americans are thinking about a possible compromise with the Russians, perhaps allowing Najibullah to stand for election to the final Afghan government, rather than disappearing gracefully from the scene. Also that Congressional patience is limited and we cannot afford to be left out on a limb.

But, as the letter admits, no early US/Soviet compromise is likely and Congress still supports arms supplies. We do not want to get ahead of them and thereby encourage a cut-off of arms from the West. Nor do we want to give the Russians a half victory - they withdraw but their puppets stay. Massoud is still a considerable asset; we do not want to abandon him before we have to. Our aid costs little: most of the expenses are borne by the Americans.

I do not argue for a rigid policy of no change. But we should not cut and run before we have to.

As for the Embassy, until the political situation has changed it cannot go back without giving great and undeserved comfort to Najibullah.

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PERCY CRADOCK

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