

PRIME MINISTER

## AFGHANISTAN

I attach a reply from the Foreign Secretary to my letter of last week setting out your views on Afghanistan. It is generally satisfactory in that it says:

- the date of 15 May for the beginning of Soviet withdrawal should not be allowed to slip;
- we should support Pakistan's efforts to secure formation of a satisfactory interim government before that date;
- but we should not support a linkage between Soviet withdrawal and formation of an interim government. Signature of the agreement should not be delayed while negotiations on an interim government continue;
- we should seek a strict parallelism between cut-off of western military aid to the resistance and Soviet aid to the regime (although this is not stated strongly enough in the FCO letter).

I also attach a note by David Hart. His argument - which I am not sure that I follow entirely - is that a Soviet withdrawal on the basis of the agreements currently on the table in Geneva could be turned politically against you and President Reagan. His proposals (pages 4 and 5) are not entirely realistic in that

- they envisage our aid to the resistance continuing until the last Soviet soldier leaves Afghanistan. This conflicts with the Geneva agreements.
- they make Soviet withdrawal dependent on satisfaction of Pakistan's objectives for an interim government. This is contrary to the conclusion you have reached;
- they would also make a settlement dependent on the payment by the Soviet union of reparations. This too is not in the Geneva Agreement.

You may like to discuss with the Foreign Secretary tomorrow.

C.D.P.  
Charles Powell

22 February 1988



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23 February 1988

*From the Private Secretary***AFGHANISTAN**

Thank you for your letter of 22 February about Pakistan. In practice it seems to me to match neatly the Prime Minister's views set out in my letter of 18 February namely:

- our priority is to see the Russians leave quickly;
- we support Pakistan's efforts to put together an interim government for Afghanistan before Soviet withdrawal;
- but if they fail, this should not be allowed to hold up Soviet withdrawal. Pakistan should be encouraged to sign in Geneva anyway (with a disclaimer on the legitimacy of the PDPA government);
- the really important additional concession we want from the Russians is a commitment to cease arms supplies to the regime in Kabul at the same time as western supplies to the resistance are terminated. It must be primarily for the Americans to negotiate an understanding on this with the Russians.

(CHARLES POWELL)

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22 February 1988

*Dear Charles,*

Afghanistan

Thank you for your letter of 18 February.

The Foreign Secretary and Lord Glenarthur saw Zain Noorani, the Pakistani acting Foreign Minister, on 19 February (you will have seen the summary reporting telegram). Noorani emphasised that, although an agreement could probably be reached in Geneva, it could not be implemented if it were signed between Pakistan and the Najib regime. The war would continue, and the refugees would not return. Nevertheless Pakistan remained determined that Soviet withdrawal should start on 15 May. The requirement was for a change of government in Afghanistan by that date to enable the Geneva agreement to be implemented and peace restored. Najib would of course have to be persuaded to go. It was up to the Russians to ensure that he did so. Noorani thought there would be a Russian interest in this since it would ensure their troops could be withdrawn safely.

Noorani said the Pakistanis were also keen that the Geneva texts should provide for the geographical phasing of a Soviet withdrawal, to prevent any risk of the Russians pulling their troops out of the south first and then halting the withdrawal, thus leaving them in effective possession of the north. The Pakistanis were also concerned at the imbalance in the texts which permitted arms supplies to the regime to continue but cut off all military aid to the resistance the day the agreement came into force: they had asked Shultz to raise this last point in Moscow and Shultz had agreed.

Noorani summed up that Gorbachev's statement, with its 15 March deadline and "take it or leave it" wording, had changed the whole picture. It amounted to blackmail. Pakistan was in a difficult position and needed the support of her friends. Noorani sought our considered advice on the way forward.

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The Foreign Secretary entirely agrees with the Prime Minister that the aim must be to get the Russians out. He fears for the stability of Pakistan if the Najib regime does not collapse quickly following a Soviet withdrawal and there is chaos on the border. While there is no question of linkage between Soviet withdrawal and formation of an interim government, still less of allowing the Russians a role in forming an interim government, he believes that we should continue to give some support to the Pakistanis on interim government arrangements. Meanwhile the Russians must not be let off the hook over the 15 May withdrawal date. It was encouraging that Noorani was quite firm on this point.

We propose to advise the Pakistanis as follows, subject to further developments including Shultz' impending visit to Moscow.

(a) We believe that the 15 May date for the commencement of a Soviet withdrawal must not be allowed to slip. Suspicions that Pakistan intended to delay withdrawal would undermine the Western and non-aligned consensus. Pakistan should make their position on the withdrawal date clear to friendly governments.

(b) Pakistan should make every effort to encourage the formation of a satisfactory interim government as soon as possible. But it is essential that the Soviet Union should be allowed no role in the setting up of this government. Soviet action should be confined to convincing Najib and his immediate circle that their safety depended on their stepping down, or better still leaving with the first Russian troops.

(c) If the Russians refuse to cooperate and Najib remains, our advice would be not to delay signature because that would give great propaganda advantage to the Soviet Union and place the Western consensus in support of Pakistan under strain.

Points (a) and (b) above represent an optimum solution. The Pakistani proposal may not work because the Russians may well not co-operate. But provided we

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continue to insist on withdrawal by 15 May, it would not be right to stand in the way of Pakistan's very understandable efforts to bring along the resistance in the way they propose. It is they who will face the serious hazards that could result from failure.

*Yours ever*

*R N Culshaw*  
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Private Secretary

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# Prime Minister,

## AFGHANISTAN

### Introduction

There is an increasing possibility that Reagan, under pressure from the State Department, will inadvertently give to the Soviet Union by negotiation the victory that it has been unable to win by military force.

Although Soviet troop withdrawal on any terms has considerable attractions a defective settlement could have very grave consequences.

### Soviet Objectives.

Gorbachev does want to withdraw Soviet troops from Afghanistan. Who wouldn't. But he would not be much of a leader if he didn't do everything he could to achieve, through such a withdrawal and its covering agreement, the objectives that his soldiers have been unable to win by military action.

Yalta 1945, Laos 1962, Vietnam 1973 should be remembered.

### Reagan's Objectives

Reagan's policy on Afghanistan has always been that aid to the resistance fighters should continue until all Soviet troops have been withdrawn and a genuinely independent government is in place in Kabul.

Reagan restated it clearly after the December summit. His statement was 'clarified' by the State Department. I believe he was not told of this clarification.

Although Reagan's speeches remain as robust as ever, he is desperately isolated from reality. He sits in the White House imagining that his cabinet is busy enacting the Reagan agenda. The State Department, at least, is busy enacting its own agenda.

### State Department Objectives

Schultz committed America in 1985 to accepting the principal Soviet demand, that Western aid to the resistance be cut off as soon as a Soviet troop withdrawal begins.



Senator Gordon Humphrey, at a Congressional hearing in 1986, managed to elicit from the State Department's, Robert Peck, that this commitment had been made and that it had been made without the knowledge or permission of the President

The published text of this testimony was expurgated by the State Department, as is customary, but the Peck admissions were reported in the New York Times on the 11th February and admitted by both the State Department and the White House.

The State Department now claims that Fortier, of the NSC, accepted the commitment on behalf of the President. But Fortier is dead and, in any case, he had no authority.

I have informed you in a previous note of the unauthorized Schultz initiative over the Chemical weapons negotiations.

#### British Objectives

There is no doubt that the best result for Britain and the West would be an unconditional Soviet troop withdrawal leaving the Afghans to settle their own affairs however messy that process might be.

It would demonstrate to the world that the long advance of communism has been halted and that the West will not allow the Soviet Union to make gains by military aggression.

It is just possible that a concerted diplomatic push from you and Reagan could achieve this under cover of some verbal face-saving formula for the Soviet Union. Gerasimov said at the ITN lunch in London last week that the Soviet Union was washing its hands of Afghanistan. It was not Gorbachev who sent the troops in.

The second best result for Britain and the West would be that the Soviet Union continue to fight a war that they clearly are not prepared to escalate to the point of victory.

If Soviet troops do withdraw from Afghanistan the Soviet leadership will not want the kind of moral crisis to occur in their armed forces and political establishment that overcame the Americans after Vietnam. They might feel that the only way to avoid it would be either to secure a communist government in Kabul or, claiming that the withdrawal was a case of reculer pour mieux sauter, to undertake another adventure, soon.

### Likely Consequences of a Soviet Negotiated Victory

Although there are many similarities between the Contras and the Afghan resistance, the attitude of Western public opinion to the two groups is radically different. The West is irrational in its condemnation of the Contras. And just as irrational in its support of the Afghans.

The West believes that the resistance is made up of brave individuals who are fighting for freedom, the right to self-determination, democratic values, etc., even though, of course, many resistance groups, particularly the fundamentalists are, in fact, anti-democratic and if they ever achieved power in Kabul would not by any means be friendly to the West.

There have been few issues on which the West has been so united. Even in the UN the Soviet occupation is widely condemned and the resistance supported.

If Soviet troops withdraw on the basis of the prospective Schultz-Shevardnaze agreement the following should be considered:

(i) Because the withdrawal will have been negotiated over the heads of the Afghan resistance without any public meetings between the protagonists the resistance will go on fighting.

(ii) Amongst themselves as well as against whatever government is in Kabul. The resistance are only united in their hatred of the Soviet invaders.

(iii) The existing government or a slightly modified one will drift on and might achieve a measure of international recognition.

(iv) Such an arrangement will undoubtedly attract intense Western political opposition.

Beginning with the Democrats. It was Carter who first sent aid to the resistance. The more cynical Democrats find support of the Afghans a useful fig leaf to cover their isolationism. They know that Bush won New Hampshire because of his loyalty to Reagan and see Reagan as their greatest enemy in the forthcoming Presidential election. Democrats might calculate that this issue could provide them with an election winning platform.

(v) Western journalists have a romantic attachment to the Afghan resistance. Many of them have undergone extreme physical hardship to go into Afghanistan.

Incited by the Democrats, and possibly the Labour Party if it wakes up to the issue, the Western press would be delighted to claim that the Afghan resistance had been sold out by Reagan - and by you.



## Proposals

Any negotiated settlement must include the following:

- For that Western aid / Soviet aid are cut off at the same time*
1. Arrangements to ensure that Western military aid to the pro-Western factions is only cut off when all Soviet troops are withdrawn.

There is considerable danger that the proposed UN supervised international verification group, which, by imposing itself along the Pakistan Afghan border will certainly succeed in greatly impeding if not entirely cutting off Western aid, will be unable, in practice, to verify Soviet troop withdrawals.

2. Arrangements satisfactory to Pakistan concerning the government in Kabul.

To force Pakistan into an agreement it finds unsatisfactory will be to destabilize further an already unstable country. As a consequence, it could well see an accommodation with the Soviet Union as its only option. Pakistan is a much greater prize than Afghanistan.

3. Arrangements to ensure that the Afghan secret police is disbanded. If it is not the Soviet Union will retain de facto control of Afghanistan whatever happens.

Imagine the outcry in Moscow and in the West if America had insisted that a CIA controlled secret police be maintained in Saigon before the troops were withdrawn.

4. Arrangements for the return of the Afghan children.

According to the Congressional Task Force on Afghanistan, at least ten thousand Afghan children have been abducted and are currently in the Soviet Union. According to Freedom House, the widely respected New York institute, sixty thousand children were taken from Afghanistan to the Soviet Union between July 1980 and December 1984.

Some of them have been brainwashed and returned to infiltrate the resistance. Others are being held, effectively as hostages.

5. Britain should not under any circumstances seek or agree to act as a co-guarantor of any agreement between Pakistan and Afghanistan if the Soviet Union is another of the guarantors. (Nor should America. But Schultz has committed it). The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. By joining with the Soviet Union, America and any other guarantor will effectively legitimate the invasion as well as conferring a measure of undeserved moral equivalence on the Soviet Union.

### Reparations

An increasing number of Conservatives and some Democrats in Washington are calling on the Soviet Union to make reparations. If you want to put pressure on the Soviet Union and galvanise Western public opinion to take a more realistic view of Gorbachev you could consider a call for reparations.

The Soviet Union will, of course, dismiss it, claiming that they were invited into Afghanistan by its legitimate government. Western public opinion certainly does not see it like that and would accept that reparations are in order.

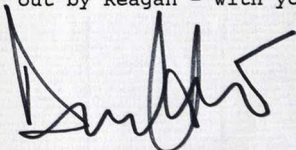
There have been over one million Afghans killed. Over five million Afghans are refugees. The Soviet Union has dropped hundreds of thousands of tons of bombs on Afghanistan and destroyed at least five hundred Afghan towns.

Calling for reparations would have the added advantage of creating parallels in Western minds between a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and the American withdrawal from Vietnam

### Conclusion

Schultz is in Moscow. The Geneva talks will convene again on the 2nd March. If agreement is achieved in Geneva Reagan will come under intense pressure from Schultz on the 8th or 9th of March to accept. Schultz will tell him that the agreement reflects his, Regan's, policy and will lead to a genuinely independent and neutral Afghanistan. If he is still behaving like the Wizard of Oz, Reagan is likely to accept Schultz at face value.

A defective settlement could have grave short-term consequences for stability in the area, particularly in Pakistan. It could have grave long-term consequences for East, West relations, since Soviet aggression will, yet again, have succeeded. It could expose you to criticism that the Afghans have been sold out by Reagan - with your connivance.



David Hart, 22nd February 1988.