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FM UKMIS GENEVA
TO DESKBY 061545Z FCO
TELNO 215
OF 061421Z APRIL
INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON, MOSCOW, ISLAMABAD, KUALA LUMPUR
INFO PRIORITY KABUL, NEW DELHI, UKMIS NEW YORK

KUALA LUMPUR FOR PRIVATE SECRETARY TO FOREIGN SECRETARY

MY TELNO 210: AFGHANISTAN: PROXIMITY TALKS

SUMMARY

1. UN, PAKISTAN AND AMERICAN NEGOTIATORS REGARD SHEVARDNADZE'S VISIT TO KABUL AS POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT. SYMMETRY ISSUE SOLVED AND BORDER ISSUE NEAR SOLUTION. SIGNATURE POSSIBLE IN NEXT FEW DAYS.

DETAIL

BORDER ISSUE

2. PECK (AMERICAN OBSERVER) TOLD ME LATE ON 5 APRIL THAT MAIN PURPOSE OF SHEVARDNADZE'S VISIT TO KABUL HAD BEEN TO PUT PRESSURE ON NAJIB TO COMPROMISE ON BORDER ISSUE. SHEVARDNADZE HAD LATER TELEPHONED WASHINGTON TO ASK FOR AMERICAN HELP TO PERSUADE PAKISTAN TO BE FLEXIBLE. NAJIB HAD NOW LEFT KABUL WITH SHEVARDNADZE, AND IT WAS POSSIBLE THAT THEY WOULD MEET GORBACHEV IN TASHKENT. THIS WOULD PUT STILL MORE PRESSURE ON NAJIB.

3. PAKISTAN AND THE SOVIET UNION WERE NOW DISCUSSING POSSIBLE TEXTS IN GENEVA. THE BORDER WAS THE LAST OUTSTANDING ISSUE: SYMMETRY WAS NO LONGER A PROBLEM AS THE SOVIET UNION APPEARED TO HAVE ACQUIESCED IN THE SHULTZ STATEMENT ON NON-RESUMPTION OF SUPPLY BY BOTH SIDES. IN PECK'S WORDS, 'WE HAVE A DEAL'.

4. THIS OPTIMISTIC ASSESSMENT WAS CONFIRMED BY PICCO (ASSISTANT TO CORDOVEZ) AND BASHIR BABAR (PAKISTAN DEPUTY FOREIGN SECRETARY) ON 6 APRIL. PICCO SAID THAT TWO POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES TO THE PHRASE 'EXISTING INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNISED BOUNDARIES' WERE UNDER CONSIDERATION. PAKISTAN COULD ACCEPT EITHER, AND CORDOVEZ WAS NOW AWAITING A REPLY FROM WAKIL (AFGHANISTAN). BASHIR CONFIRMED THAT PAKISTAN WAS BEING ACCOMODATING ON THE BORDER PROBLEM, WHICH WAS NEAR SOLUTION.

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5. PICCO SAID THE SEPARATE CORDOVEZ STATEMENT ON DISENGAGEMENT ETC. WOULD PROBABLY BE WHITTLED DOWN TO VAGUE PHRASES ON THE DESIRABILITY OF AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT AND THE NEED FOR SELF-DETERMINATION FOR THE AFGHANS. HE AND BABAR WERE BOTH SCEPTICAL ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF A REAL ROLE FOR CORDOVEZ IN PROMOTING INTER-AFGHAN CONTACT AFTER THE ACCORDS HAD BEEN SIGNED. BABAR SAID THAT THE PREVIOUS PAKISTAN CONCERNS ABOUT DISENGAGEMENT AND PHASING OF WITHDRAWAL HAD BEEN MET BY THE RUSSIANS AGREEING TO PROVIDE DETAILS ON DISENGAGEMENT DIRECT TO THE FINNISH COMMANDER OF UN MONITORING TEAM, AND BY SHEVARDNADZE'S INDICATION IN WASHINGTON THAT ITS TROOPS WOULD HAVE LEFT AFGHANISTAN BY THE END OF 1988.

6. PICCO NOTED THAT MODIFICATIONS TO THE TEXT OF THE AGREEMENTS, TOGETHER WITH VARIOUS UNILATERAL DECLARATIONS BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER SIGNATURE, MIGHT MAKE IT LESS EFFECTIVE THAN PREVIOUSLY HOPED IN FACILITATING THE PEACEFUL RETURN OF THE REFUGEES AND A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT. HE WAS APPREHENSIVE ABOUT A LENGTHY DEBATE IN CONGRESS ON THE AMERICAN DECLARATION ON SYMMETRY. BABAR ALSO COMMENTED ON THE CYNICAL APPROACH OF US CONSERVATIVES, WHO WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE SOVIET UNION REMAIN IN AFGHANISTAN AND SUFFER MORE CASUALTIES, ALTHOUGH THIS WOULD BE AT THE EXPENSE OF THE AFGHAN PEOPLE THEMSELVES. WHILE THE CONCEPT OF SYMMETRY OF SUPPLY WOULD BE AT VARIANCE WITH PAKISTAN'S OBLIGATION TO PREVENT MOVEMENT OF MILITARY SUPPLIES TO RESISTANCE LEADERS ACROSS ITS FRONTIER, THIS WOULD NOT BE A PROBLEM IF THE SOVIET UNION HAD TACITLY AGREED WITH THE US NOT (REPEAT NOT) TO SEND NEW SUPPLIES TO THE PDPA AFTER ENTRY INTO FORCE OF THE ACCORDS.

7. BABAR DISMISSED THE VIEWS OF RESISTANCE SPOKESMEN IN PESHAWAR AS UNIMPORTANT: IT WAS THE MILITARY COMMANDERS INSIDE AFGHANISTAN WHO REALLY MATTERED. HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT THE FRAMEWORK PROVIDED BY THE ACCORDS WOULD HELP CREATE THE RIGHT ATMOSPHERE FOR REFUGEES TO RETURN. IN HIS VIEW, THE SOONER THE ACCORDS WERE SIGNED, THE BETTER.

8. BABAR HIMSELF WAS DUE TO FLY TO TEHRAN LATER ON 6 APRIL, IRAQI MISSILES PERMITTING, TO BRIEF THE IRANIANS ON LATEST DEVELOPMENTS. HE DID NOT ANTICIPATE TROUBLE. EVEN THE IRANIANS WOULD SEE ADVANTAGE IN A SOVIET WITHDRAWAL AND HAD ENOUGH DIFFICULTIES OF THEIR OWN WITHOUT PROVOKING MORE.

COMMENT

9. SIGNATURE OF THE ACCORDS WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS NOW POSSIBLE.

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BUT WE HAVE BEEN ON THE VERGE OF SIGNATURE ON PREVIOUS OCCASIONS,
AND UNEXPECTED HITCHES CAN STILL OCCUR.

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