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COPY NO 1 OF 2

PRIME MINISTER

✓ CDP 22/16

17 June 1988

POLICY ON AFGHANISTAN:
FOREIGN OFFICE LETTER OF 16 JUNE

The Foreign Secretary seeks approval for the policy objectives set out in the enclosure to the letter.

I broadly agree with the analysis and the objectives, though the list may be rather over-detailed and ambitious. Our immediate objective is to get the Russians out; as this week's JIC assessment concludes, we think they will keep to their programme despite hiccups. Next, we want to make sure the withdrawal is seen for what it is, a defeat in a war of occupation. As part of that, we want to ensure a speedy and spectacular collapse of the PDPA regime; to that end we should press for a truly representative Government and maintain our support for Masood (on the last point you have seen other papers). What precisely will replace Najib we cannot be sure; it is here that a recognition of the limits on our ability to control events is salutary. We may well have an unpleasant fundamentalist Government and a country where internecine fighting continues. I hope this will not happen and that, for example, our help to Masood will show dividends; he should be an influential figure. But in the end this is the Afghans' affair. Future relations with Pakistan, India and Iran are speculative as yet.

Then there is the aid aspect - important presentationally as well as in reality. We need to be prominent and, subject to the proviso in the letter, we should refuse to channel aid through the PDPA regime. We need to emphasise Soviet responsibility for the devastation and call on them to contribute to a multilateral aid programme.

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In short, I am sure you can approve. But we should not try to plan too far ahead; for the present we should concentrate on the great success in our hands; and ensure that poor presentation does not spoil it.

PC

PERCY CRADOCK

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