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DOS REVIEWED 16 Apr 2007: DECLASSIFIED IN FULL

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AMB 11/27/87 ←

AMB:JGDEAN

AMB:JGDEAN:LEN

POL:RBOGGS

AMB ADCM AMB/X, CHRON

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
SECSTATE WASHDC, IMMEDIATE

File

9/Jan

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TAGS: PREL, US, IN, AF

SUBJECT: GANDHI/RYZHKOV MEETING: DISCUSSION OF
- AFGHANISTAN

1. S - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 26, I HAD A TWO-HOUR CONVERSATION WITH GANDHI'S DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR RONEN SEN. THE MEETING WAS AT HIS REQUEST AND WAS DEVOTED TO GIVING US A DETAILED READOUT ON THE STRICTLY PRIVATE MEETINGS BETWEEN GANDHI AND RYZHKOV. (THE PUBLIC STATEMENTS MADE AND THE AGREEMENTS SIGNED DURING THE VISIT ARE REPORTED SEPARATELY BY THE EMBASSY.) THIS MESSAGE DEALS WITH THE GANDHI/RYZHKOV DISCUSSION OF AFGHANISTAN WHICH WAS THE ONLY INTERNATIONAL TOPIC DISCUSSED IN DEPTH BY THE TWO LEADERS.

3. SEN SAID THAT IN HIS OWN CONVERSATIONS WITH GANDHI, THE INDIAN PRIME MINISTER HAD EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE MESSAGE WE HAD PASSED TO HIM ON AFGHANISTAN (STATE 361795). THE PRIME MINISTER HAD FOUND OUR MESSAGE TO BE "TIMELY AND USEFUL."

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4. ACCORDING TO SEN, GANDHI MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS WITH RYZHKOV:

-- SOME OF THE SOVIET OBJECTIVES IN AFGHANISTAN ARE PARALLEL TO THOSE OF INDIA. SPECIFICALLY, INDIA BELIEVES THAT ANY COALITION OR INTERIM GOVERNMENT WHICH MIGHT EMERGE IN AFGHANISTAN SHOULD NOT BE DOMINATED BY FUNDAMENTALISTS. GANDHI OPINED THAT THE VICTORY OF FUNDAMENTALISM IN AFGHANISTAN WOULD AFFECT ADVERSELY THE MUSLIM AREAS OF SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA. IT WOULD ALSO AGGAVATE INDIA'S PROBLEMS WITH PAKISTAN OVER KASHMIR.

-- INDIA ALSO REALIZES THAT WHATEVER REGIME EMERGES IN KABUL CANNOT BE ANTI-SOVIET. INDIA BASICALLY FAVORS A NON-ALIGNED REGIME FOR AFGHANISTAN.

-- GIVEN THE COMPLEXITIES OF A TRIBAL SOCIETY IN AFGHANISTAN, THE DIFFERENCES IN LANGUAGES AND ETHNIC BACKGROUND, AFGHANISTAN DOES NOT LEND ITSELF TO BEING ADMINISTERED BY A VERY CENTRALIZED GOVERNMENT. INDIA WOULD LIKE TO SEE SOMETHING REASONABLY STABLE EMERGE IN AFGHANISTAN; "SOME FERMENT IN AFGHANISTAN MUST BE EXPECTED BUT ACCEPTANCE OF PERPETUAL TURMOIL AS A NORMAL STATE OF AFFAIRS IN AFGHANISTAN IS NOT IN THE INTEREST OF ANY PARTY."

-- THE PRESENCE OF SOVIET TROOPS IN AFGHANISTAN HAS TARNISHED THE SOVIET IMAGE IN THE WORLD. THE SOVIET UNION HAS INDICATED THAT IT WISHES TO WITHDRAW HER TROOPS FROM AFGHANISTAN AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. SUCH A MOVE WOULD BE WELL RECEIVED BY INDIA.

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5. GANDHI THEN ASKED RYZHKOV FOR HIS ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN AND WHAT THE SOVIETS PLAN TO DO ABOUT IT. RYZHKOV REPLIED AS FOLLOWS:

-- SOVIETS ARE KEEN ON PULLING OUT OF AFGHANISTAN AS GORBACHEV HAD TOLD GANDHI DIRECTLY. HOWEVER, "AN AGREEMENT ON THE TIMING OF TROOP WITHDRAWAL CANNOT BE UNRELATED TO ASSURANCES OF NON-INTERFERENCE." (ON ANOTHER OCCASION SEN CLAIMED THE WORD "GUARANTEES" WAS USED INSTEAD OF "ASSURANCES".)

-- IN REPLY TO AN INDIAN QUESTION, THE SOVIET PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT MOSCOW WAS "IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH IRAN ON AFGHANISTAN." RYZHKOV THOUGHT THAT THE IRANIAN POSITION IS VERY SIMILAR TO THAT OF THE "HARDLINERS IN PESHAWAR." THE IRANIANS DON'T WANT THE PDPA TO PLAY ANY ROLE WHATSOEVER.

-- THE SOVIETS BELIEVE THAT SOME OF THE FUNDAMENTALIST GROUPS IN PESHAWAR REMAIN OPPOSED TO A SIGNIFICANT ROLE FOR THE KING. THE SOVIETS BELIEVE THAT SOME OF THE GROUPS DOING THE ACTUAL FIGHTING INSIDE AFGHANISTAN ARE SOMEWHAT MORE AMENABLE TO A SETTLEMENT THAN CERTAIN GROUPS WORKING OUT OF PESHAWAR.

-- THE SOVIETS ARE IN TOUCH WITH ALL REPEAT ALL RESISTANCE GROUPS IN AND OUTSIDE OF AFGHANISTAN EITHER DIRECTLY OR THROUGH TRUSTED INTERMEDIARIES. (SEN THOUGHT THIS WAS PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE INFORMATION.)

-- RYZHKOV MENTIONED TO GANDHI THAT THE SOVIETS HAD HELD DISCUSSIONS IN DEPTH ON AFGHANISTAN WITH HIGH-RANKING U.S. OFFICIALS.

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6. IN THE COURSE OF THE DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN THE TWO LEADERS, GANDHI MADE THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL POINTS:

-- THE SOVIETS SHOULD BE REALISTIC ABOUT WHAT TO EXPECT IN A COALITION OR INTERIM GOVERNMENT IN AFGHANISTAN. IT IS THE INDIAN ASSESSMENT THAT THE PDPA--IRRESPECTIVE OF ITS POLICIES OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION--DOES NOT ENJOY A BROAD POPULAR BASE. AS A MATTER OF FACT, THE INDIANS THINK THE PDPA IS NARROWLY BASED, MOSTLY IN URBAN CENTERS AND HENCE NOT VERY REPRESENTATIVE. AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT WHICH IS CONTROLLED BY THE PDPA WILL NOT SURVIVE.

7. IN REPLY TO THE INDIAN ASSESSMENT, THE SOVIET LEADER POINTED OUT:

-- THE AFGHAN ARMED FORCES ARE "AN IMPORTANT FACTOR WHICH CANNOT BE WISHED AWAY."

-- THE SOVIETS SAID THEY WOULD KEEP THE INDIANS "IN THE PICTURE" ON A CONFIDENTIAL BASIS AND THE SOVIETS WOULD BE HAPPY TO SEE THE INDIANS PLAY A GREATER ROLE THAN THEY HAVE DONE IN THE PAST. IN ANSWER TO THIS LAST STATEMENT, THE INDIANS AGREED TO STAY IN TOUCH WITH THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP ON THIS SUBJECT AND INDICATED THAT THE INDIANS WOULD ALSO CONTACT CERTAIN AFGHAN GROUPS DIRECTLY IN ORDER TO FORM THEIR OWN "INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT ON THE ATTITUDES OF THE DIFFERENT AFGHAN ELEMENTS."

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8. THE SOVIETS ALSO TRIED TO CONVEY THE IMPRESSION OF NAJIB BEING A VERY DIFFERENT PERSON FROM HIS PREDECESSOR KARMAL. RYZHKOV CLAIMED NAJIB IS NOT DOGMATIC AND IS WILLING TO LOOK AT ISSUES IN A PRAGMATIC WAY. RYZHKOV CLAIMED THAT NAJIB IS NOT WEDDED TO COMMUNIST IDEOLOGY AND IS WILLING TO CONTACT ALL GROUPS WITH A VIEW TO ENDING THE CONFLICT, SOMETHING KARMAL REFUSED TO DO. SPECIFICALLY, NAJIB IS MORE WILLING TO "GIVE A PLACE TO ISLAM IN THE POST-WAR PERIOD IN AFGHANISTAN." NAJIB IS ALSO CONSIDERABLY MORE WILLING THAN KARMAL EVER WAS TO ENTER INTO A COALITION GOVERNMENT WITH OTHER GROUPS OR TECHNOCRATS. }

-- THE SOVIETS ARE WORRIED ABOUT THE RESURRECTION OF FACTIONAL INFIGHTING BETWEEN PARCHAMI AND KHALQI FACTIONS WITHIN THE PDPA.

-- INDIANS FEEL THAT THE SOVIETS WILL BE TRYING TO PUT FORWARD A NEW PROPOSITION ON THE TIMEFRAME FOR WITHDRAWAL, "WHICH PAKISTAN WILL HAVE DIFFICULTY REFUSING." THE INDIANS FEEL THAT THE JANUARY PROXIMITY TALKS MAY LEAD TO SOME POSITIVE RESULTS.

9. COMMENT: AS A RESULT OF THIS MEETING WE CAN EXPECT THE INDIANS TO BE MORE INVOLVED IN FOLLOWING EVENTS IN AFGHANISTAN. IT WOULD APPEAR FROM WHAT SEN TOLD ME ABOUT THE PRIVATE MEETINGS BETWEEN GANDHI AND RYZHKOV THAT THE INDIANS TRIED TO INJECT SOME REALISM INTO SOVIET THINKING ABOUT AFGHANISTAN AND ON HOW PROGRESS MIGHT BE MADE TOWARDS A POLITICAL SOLUTION. BUT PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE FACT THAT WE RECEIVED SUCH A DETAILED READOUT ON SENSITIVE DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN INDIA AND SOVIET TOP LEADERS SPEAKS VOLUMES ABOUT THE CURRENT STATUS OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH NEW DELHI. DEAN##

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