

NOTE OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND PRESIDENT ZIA OF PAKISTAN IN THE HOTEL INTERCONTINENTAL IN BELGRADE AT 1000 ON 8 MAY 1980

Present

The Prime Minister
Mr. C.A. Whitmore

President Zia of Pakistan

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Afghanistan and Iran

President Zia said that he had derived a lot of benefit from Lord Carrington's visit to Pakistan. He had had two meetings with him and had found these very useful. He would be grateful to know how the Prime Minister saw the problem of Afghanistan. He believed that we had to "keep the pot boiling" on Afghanistan. Unfortunately, the focus of interest had recently been directed to Iran. He believed that we must ensure that attention was concentrated on Afghanistan, and he thought that Britain could do a lot in this respect.

The Prime Minister agreed that Afghanistan was a more important problem than Iran. This was the first time the Soviet Union had invaded a totally independent country outside the Warsaw Pact. Every country had the right to decide its own future, but Afghanistan was now denied this right. She was anxious that the world should not simply come to accept this situation as normal. We were doing what we could to find^{the} means which would bring about the withdrawal of Soviet troops. We had, of course, put forward our proposals for the neutrality of Afghanistan. We had to keep up the pressure on the Soviet Union at every opportunity. Experience showed that the Russians did not like hostile opinion and sometimes responded to it. She wondered whether the forthcoming Islamic Conference might have a part to play in this.

/President Zia

President Zia said that he agreed entirely on the need to keep up the pressure on the Soviet Union. He did not expect the Islamic Conference to achieve very much on Afghanistan. There was little that any of the countries concerned could do in a practical way, though he agreed that they could emphasise their abhorrence for the Russian invasion.

In reply to a question from the Prime Minister, President Zia said that the burden of the refugees from Afghanistan on Pakistan had lessened somewhat now that the world community was helping. He was, however, concerned about the lack of assistance for the freedom fighters inside Afghanistan. Pakistan might put at risk its own security by involving itself fully with the freedom fighters, and he believed that this was an area where the United States should play a much bigger part. Otherwise we should be letting the Soviet Union get away with it.

The Prime Minister said that the British Government had been warning the United States that if they did anything rash about Iran, this could compromise the West's position on Afghanistan. We had urged them not to use force to secure the release of the hostages. If they intervened militarily, this might drive Iran into the arms of the Soviet Union and it would certainly alienate other Middle Eastern countries from the United States. We were continuing to try to persuade them to go on being patient over the hostages and to try to obtain their release by non-military means. We had ourselves recently had to take steps to protect the Iranian diplomats who had been taken hostage in their Embassy in London, and we hoped that the Iranian Government would draw the lesson from this incident that they, too, should protect foreign diplomats in Iran. Once the problem of the hostages in Tehran was satisfactorily settled, it would be all the easier to get countries to concentrate their attention on the much bigger problem of Afghanistan.

The meeting ended at 1015.

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