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(AMENDED DISTRIBUTION 14 MAY 1980)

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FM MOSCOW 131630Z

TO IMMEDIATE FCO DESKBY 131800Z

TELNO 318 OF 13 MAY

RPTD PRIORITY INFO TO WASHINGTON, PARIS, BONN, UKDEL NATO,
VIENNA AND ROME

OUR TELNO 245: APPROACH TO USSR ABOUT AFGHANISTAN

1. SUSLOV SUMMONED ME THIS AFTERNOON TO DELIVER WHAT HE DESCRIBED AS THE OFFICIAL SOVIET STATEMENT IN REPLY TO THE AMBASSADOR'S REPRESENTATIONS OF 11 APRIL. THE TEXT OF WHAT HE HAD TO SAY IS RECORDED IN MIFT.

2. I TOLD SUSLOV WE SHARED THE SOVIET DESIRE FOR A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF AFGHANISTAN. I WOULD CONVEY TO YOU WHAT HE HAD SAID. I THOUGHT HOWEVER THERE WOULD BE DISAPPOINTMENT IN LONDON ON THE FACT THAT THE SOVIET ANSWERS WERE IMPRECISE. THE SOVIET STATEMENT DID NOT, FOR EXAMPLE, GO INTO THE QUESTION OF HOW GUARANTEES AND SOVIET WITHDRAWAL COULD BE LINKED. I MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE LANGUAGE OF THE STATEMENT, NOTABLY IN THE REFERENCES TO ALLEGED INTERVENTION IN AFGHANISTAN FROM OUTSIDE AND TO THE IMPOSITION OF NEUTRAL STATUS ON AFGHANISTAN, WAS WHOLLY AT VARIANCE WITH OUR VIEW, AND SOUGHT FURTHER CLARIFICATION; BUT SUSLOV SAID HE WAS NOT AUTHORISED TO GO BEYOND THE TERMS OF THE STATEMENT. THE SOVIET UNION WAS NOT AGAINST A DIALOGUE WITH BRITAIN ON AFGHANISTAN. BUT FACTS HAD TO BE RESPECTED. THOSE WHO WISHED TO EXPLOIT THE AFGHAN QUESTION AGAINST USSR WOULD GET NOWHERE. HE REPEATED THAT WHAT HE HAD TO SAY REPRESENTED THE OFFICIAL SOVIET POSITION EVEN THOUGH IT COULD NOT IN THE NATURE OF THINGS SET OUT ALL THE CONSIDERATION IN SOVIET POLICY OVER AFGHANISTAN.

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3. THIS SOVIET REPLY, WHICH IT HAS TAKEN THE MFA OVER A MONTH TO PRODUCE SINCE THE AMBASSADOR'S REPRESENTATIONS, IS CLEARLY TIMED TO SET THE STAGE FOR YOUR MEETING WITH GROMYKO. IT IS DIFFICULT TO DISCERN AMID ITS DREARY REPETITION OF FAMILIAR SOVIET POSITIONS ANY POINTS WHICH MIGHT ENABLE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS TO BE MADE, THOUGH IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT THE STATEMENT TWICE REFERS TO THE SOVIET DESIRE FOR A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE TENSE SITUATION OVER AFGHANISTAN. THE ANSWERS TO OUR QUESTIONS, HOWEVER, SHOW LITTLE OR NO DISPOSITION TO SEEK SUCH A SOLUTION ON ANY BUT SOVIET TERMS

BROOKE TURNER

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FOLLOWING IS TRANSLATION OF THE TEXT OF THE SOVIET STATEMENT:

"THE MFA HAS THE HONOUR TO COMMUNICATE THE FOLLOWING IN CONNECTION WITH THE QUESTIONS TOUCHED ON IN THE STATEMENT BY THE BRITISH SIDE ON 11 APRIL.

1. AS HAS EARLIER BEEN STATED TO THE BRITISH SIDE THE SOVIET UNION IS IN FAVOUR OF POLITICAL MEANS IN LIQUIDATING TENSION AROUND AFGHANISTAN. IN ORDER HOWEVER THAT THESE MEANS SHOULD PRODUCE GENUINE RESULTS IT IS ESSENTIAL FIRST OF ALL THAT THE CAUSES WHICH GAVE RISE TO THE TENSION SHOULD BE REMOVED AND SPECIFICALLY THAT THERE SHOULD BE A FULL AND GUARANTEED CEASATION OF ARMED AND EVERY OTHER SORT OF INTERVENTION FROM OUTSIDE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN. ATTEMPTS TO GET ROUND THIS FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION, SUCH AS ARE MADE IN THE BRITISH STATEMENT OF 11 APRIL, CERTAINLY DO NOT DEMONSTRATE THE REALISTIC NATURE OF SUCH AN APPROACH TO THE SEARCH FOR MEANS OF LIQUIDATING TENSION CONNECTED WITH AFGHANISTAN.

2. THE OPINION OF THE SOVIET SIDE, EXPRESSED BEFOREHAND AND CONFIRMED AGAIN HERE, IN FAVOUR OF A POLITICAL REGULATION OF THE SITUATION IN CONNECTION WITH AFGHANISTAN HAS NEVER MEANT AND DOES NOT MEAN WE ARE READY TO DISCUSS AND DECIDE WITH ANY OTHER PARTY WHATSOEVER QUESTIONS RELATING TO AFGHANISTAN ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE DRA AND WITHOUT ITS PARTICIPATION. ON THE CONTRARY WE HAVE FROM THE VERY BEGINNING AND WITH ALL PRECISION UNDERLINED THE UNACCEPTABILITY AND LACK OF PROSPECTS IN ALL ATTEMPTS TO ACT IN SUCH A MANNER. SO FAR AS THE GOVERNMENT OF THE DRA IS CONCERNED IT IS WELL KNOWN THAT IT HAS REPEATEDLY ANNOUNCED ITS READINESS TO ENTER INTO NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENTS OF PAKISTAN AND IRAN ON THE NORMALISATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONS WITH THEM ON A STABLE BASIS OF EQUALITY, RESPECT FOR SOVEREIGNTY AND NON-INTERFERENCE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF EACH OTHER. THE SOVIET UNION FOR ITS PART WELCOMES THIS COURSE OF

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THE GOVERNMENT OF THE DRA. APPROPRIATE AGREEMENTS BETWEEN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN AND BETWEEN AFGHANISTAN AND IRAN COULD, IT SEEMS TO US, BE UNDERWRITTEN BY GUARANTEES FROM CERTAIN STATES EACH OF WHICH WOULD HAVE TO BE ACCEPTABLE BOTH TO AFGHANISTAN AND TO THE OTHER PARTY. IT IS ALSO WELL KNOWN THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF THE DRA HAS OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED - AND THIS IS NOW ENSHRINED IN THE CONSTITUTION OF THE DRA - THAT IT INTENDS TO UPHOLD THE POLICY OF NON-ALIGNMENT. AT THE SAME TIME IT HAS EXPRESSED WITH COMPLETE CLARITY ITS NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TO PLANS TO IMPOSE UPON AFGHANISTAN SOME SORT OF "NEUTRAL" STATUS WHOSE AIM WOULD BE TO LIMIT THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE AFGHAN STATE AND CREATE CONDITIONS FOR CONTINUING INTERFERENCE IN ITS INTERNAL AFFAIRS.

3. AS FAR AS CONCERNS THE QUESTION OF THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE LIMITED CONTINGENT OF SOVIET TROOPS AT PRESENT IN AFGHANISTAN AT THE REQUEST OF ITS GOVERNMENT, THE POSITION OF THE SOVIET UNION REMAINS ON THIS QUESTION AS WE HAVE ALREADY EXPRESSED IT BOTH PUBLICLY AND DIRECTLY TO THE BRITISH SIDE. IT IS THEREFORE HARDLY NECESSARY TO SET IT OUT ONCE AGAIN. IN THE SAME WAY SPECIAL "EXPLANATIONS" COULD HARDLY BE REALLY NECESSARY IN LONDON AS TO WHY THE SECURITY INTERESTS OF THE USSR WOULD BE THREATENED BY THE ESTABLISHMENT IN AFGHANISTAN WITH THE AID OF EXTERNAL FORCES OF A COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY REGIME AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THIS COUNTRY INTO A HOSTILE MILITARY PLACE D'ARMES ON THE SOUTHERN BORDERS OF THE SOVIET UNION.

BROOK TURNER

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