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AMB 10/28/85

AMB:JGDEAN

AMB:JGDEAN:LEN

1. ADCM:GKENNEY, 2. POL:SESCUDERO

AMB:DCM AMB/X, POL CHRON

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

SECSTATE WASHDC, IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

DOS REVIEWED 18-Apr-2007: DECLASSIFIED IN FULL

FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TAGS: PREL, MNUC, AF, PK, UR, US, IN

SUBJECT: GANDHI'S VISIT TO MOSCOW

1. C - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 27, RAJIV GANDHI RETURNED TO NEW DELHI AND I WENT TO THE AIRPORT TO WELCOME HIM BACK. FROM BRIEF CONVERSATIONS WITH INDIAN OFFICIALS AND DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES, I HAVE PIECED TOGETHER MY INTERPRETATION WHY GANDHI WENT TO MOSCOW, WHEN THE DECISION WAS TAKEN, AND WHAT CAME OUT OF THE MEETING.

3. WHEN THE DECISION WAS TAKEN TO GO TO MOSCOW:

- A. THE POSSIBILITY OF GANDHI STOPPING IN MOSCOW HAD BEEN RAISED WITH THE SOVIETS WELL BEFORE GANDHI'S TRAVEL TO NEW YORK. RAJIV CONFIRMED THIS IN HIS HOMECOMING PRESS CONFERENCE. I NOTE THAT MRS. SONIA GANDHI HAD A FUR COAT AND FUR HAT WHEN SHE VISITED MOSCOW, PERHAPS SOMETHING SHE HAD PACKED BEFORE LEAVING, KEEPING IN MIND THAT A STOPOVER IN MOSCOW WAS NOT EXCLUDED.

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- B. PRECISE TIMING ONLY FELL INTO PLACE AT THE LAST MOMENT WHEN GANDHI WAS VISITING THE NETHERLANDS. APPARENTLY THE INDIANS HAD NOTIFIED THE SOVIETS THAT GANDHI COULD STOP IN MOSCOW ON THE WAY HOME AND WHEN GORBACHEV SHORTENED HIS STAY IN SOFIA BY 24 HOURS, IT MADE THE GANDHI STOPOVER IN MOSCOW POSSIBLE. BUT WORD THAT THE MOSCOW STOPOVER WAS ON ONLY CAME ONE HOUR BEFORE GANDHI WAS SCHEDULED TO LEAVE THE NETHERLANDS (ACCORDING TO THE DUTCH AMBASSADOR) WHICH EXPLAINED THE MANY CHANGES WE RECEIVED HERE ON WHEN WE SHOULD BE AT THE AIRPORT TO WELCOME BACK THE INDIAN PRIME MINISTER.

- C. MOST OBSERVERS FEEL THAT THE INITIATIVE FOR THE MOSCOW STOPOVER CAME FROM RAJIV GANDHI.

4. WHY DID RAJIV WANT THE MOSCOW STOPOVER?

- A. THE MOST LIKELY REASON IS THAT RAJIV WANTED THE ADDITIONAL PRESTIGE AS A LEADER WHO WAS NOT ONLY EFFECTIVE ON DOMESTIC POLITICS BUT ALSO HAD BECOME AN INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL FIGURE. A TELEVISION COMMENTARY WHICH I WATCHED LAST NIGHT, OCTOBER 27, STRESSED THE ROLE OF GANDHI AS A WORTHY SUCCESSOR OF HIS GRANDFATHER AND MOTHER AS AN INTERNATIONAL LEADER AND NOT ONLY AS AN EFFECTIVE HEAD OF THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT.

- B. NEXT YEAR INDIA GIVES UP THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT. HIS STOPOVER IN MOSCOW AGAIN HIGHLIGHTED RAJIV'S CURRENT POSITION AS THE HEAD OF THE NAM AND REMINDS THE WORLD THAT INDIA IS THE LEADING NON-ALIGNED COUNTRY. INDIA MAY WANT TO USE GANDHI'S GROWING INTERNATIONAL PRESTIGE TO SUSTAIN THE INFLUENCE AND PRETIGE IT WOULD OTHERWISE LOSE WHEN IT PASSES THE NAM BATON TO ZIMBABWE.

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- C. IT ALSO PERMITTED RAJIV TO BALANCE HIS WELL-PUBLICIZED ROLE AT THE COMMONWEALTH CONFERENCE IN NASSAU AND HIS MEETING WITH PRESIDENT REAGAN IN NEW YORK. STOPPING IN MOSCOW TO MEET WITH GORBACHEV HELPED TO CREATE AN IMAGE OF BALANCE.

- D. PERHAPS RAJIV WISHED TO BRIEF GORBACHEV ABOUT HIS MEETING WITH PRESIDENT REAGAN AND THE PRIME MINISTER OF CHINA IN ORDER TO ASSUAGE CONTINUING SOVIET DOUBTS ABOUT RAJIV'S CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO TRADITIONAL INDIAN POLICIES.

- E. WHILE RAJIV CERTAINLY GOT WORLD ATTENTION BY HIS STOPOVER IN MOSCOW, GORBACHEV ALSO PROBABLY LIKED THE IDEA SINCE IT REINFORCED HIS POSITION WITH THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT AND WITH THE INDIAN PUBLIC.

4. WHAT CAME OUT OF THE MEETING?

- A. AT THIS STAGE WITHOUT THE BENEFIT OF ANY PRECISE READOUT, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT RAJIV USED HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH GORBACHEV TO FOCUS ATTENTION ON DISARMAMENT. IN HIS PRESS CONFERENCE HE STRESSED THE NEED FOR THE REAGAN/GORBACHEV MEETING TO FOCUS ON DISARMAMENT AND NUCLEAR MATTERS RATHER THAN ON REGIONAL POLITICAL/MILITARY PROBLEMS.

- B. RAJIV ALSO FOCUSED ATTENTION ON HIS CURRENT FIXATION, I.E., PAKISTAN MAKING A NUCLEAR BOMB, DESPITE PRESIDENT ZIA'S ASSERTION TO THE CONTRARY.

- C. WHILE GANDHI UNDOUBTEDLY WISHED TO BE SEEN AS BEING EVENHANDED, I FEAR THAT THE PRESS CONFERENCE HE GAVE UPON HIS RETURN TO DELHI AND THE GENERAL TONE AND TREATMENT BY THE LOCAL MEDIA OF THE MOSCOW STOPOVER PICTURES GORBACHEV'S POLICIES TO BE CLOSER TO THAT OF INDIA THAN THOSE OF PRESIDENT REAGAN. I CANNOT HELP BUT COME AWAY WITH THE IMPRESSION THAT GORBACHEV IS PICTURED BY GANDHI AS BEING MORE UNDERSTANDING OF INDIAN AND NAM CONCERNS THAN PRESIDENT REAGAN.

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- D. GANDHI STRESSED PUBLICLY THAT THE SOVIET OFFER FOR A 50 PERCENT CUT IN ARMS TO BE DISCUSSED IN THE FORTHCOMING GENEVA TALKS WITH THE UNITED STATES "NEEDS MOST SERIOUS CONSIDERATION." AGAIN, SUPPORT FOR THE SOVIET POSITION.

- E. EXPRESSING HIS "CERTAINTY" THAT PAKISTAN WAS MAKING A NUCLEAR BOMB, GANDHI HAD CITED PRESIDENT REAGAN'S PLEA TO HIM TO SPEEDILY START BILATERAL TALKS WITH PAKISTAN "BEFORE A POINT OF NO RETURN IS REACHED" AS FURTHER EVIDENCE THAT PAKISTAN WAS WORKING ON THE PRODUCTION OF A NUCLEAR BOMB. MUCH IS ALSO MADE BY THE MEDIA OF THE FACT THAT AT NO TIME DURING HIS RECENT MEETING WITH MR. REAGAN HAD THE PRESIDENT TOLD GANDHI THAT PAKISTAN HAD NO NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAM. ON THE OTHER HAND, GORBACHEV IS ALLEGED TO HAVE EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT PAKISTAN'S NUCLEAR DESIGNS TO RAJIV IN THE COURSE OF THE MOSCOW DISCUSSIONS.

- F. APPARENTLY AFGHANISTAN WAS DISCUSSED BY RAJIV WITH GORBACHEV. RAJIV IS QUOTED AS HAVING TOLD THE PRESS THAT "UNFORTUNATELY THE UNITED STATES IS NOT WILLING TO TALK ABOUT ANY GUARANTEE (AFTER THE SOVIET WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN). UNLESS THERE IS SOME GUARANTEE, POSITIVE RESULTS ARE DIFFICULT TO COME." (COMMENT: CLEARLY RAJIV HAS MISUNDERSTOOD THE US POSITION ON THE ROLE OF GUARANTEES WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF AN OVERALL AFGHANISTAN SETTLEMENT.)

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6. COMMENT: IT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO HAVE A READOUT ON*** RAJIV'S MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT IN NEW YORK LAST*** THIS MAY SHED ADDITIONAL LIGHT ON RAJIV'S VISIT TO*** MOSCOW. DEAN#***

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- 6. IN COMPARING NOTES WITH MY BRITISH COLLEAGUE, HE THOUGHT THAT THE PUBLIC DECLARATIONS ONLY PRESENT PART OF THE PICTURE. HE THOUGHT THAT AT LEAST FIVE SUBJECTS WERE DISCUSSED BETWEEN GORBACHEV AND GANDHI: 1. FORTHCOMING SOVIET/US SUMMIT; 2. SPECIFIC DISARMAMENT ITEMS; 3. CHINA; 4. PAKISTAN; AND 5. AFGHANISTAN. ON THE US/SOVIET SUMMIT, THE PUBLIC STATEMENT BY RAJIV PROBABLY REFLECTED THE DISCUSSION. ON SPECIFIC DISARMAMENT ISSUES, THE BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER THOUGHT THAT SECRETARY WEINBERGER'S DISCLOSURE OF THE SOVIET PRODUCTION OF THE SS25 MAY HAVE BEEN RAISED BY RAJIV. ON CHINA, WHERE THE INDIAN PRIME MINISTER HAD MADE SOME VERY POSITIVE AND OPTIMISTIC STATEMENTS, THE INDIAN PRIME MINISTER PROBABLY WISHED ALSO TO GAUGE THE SOVIET CURRENT ATTITUDE TOWARDS CHINA. ON PAKISTAN, THE PUBLIC STATEMENTS PROBABLY REFLECTED THE STATE OF THE DISCUSSION. ON AFGHANISTAN, THE HIGH COMMISSIONER THOUGHT THAT RAJIV IS MORE CONCERNED ABOUT THE SOVIET STAND THAN HIS PUBLIC STATEMENTS WOULD MAKE US BELIEVE. THE HIGH COMMISSIONER THOUGHT, HOWEVER, THAT THIS MATTER WAS NOT DISCUSSED IN DEPTH AND IN THIS CONNECTION NOTED THAT FOREIGN SECRETARY BHANDARI HAD REMAINED BEHIND IN NEW YORK. IT WILL BE RECALLED THAT IT WAS BHANDARI WHO HELD MEETINGS WITH THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP LAST JUNE FOLLOWING RAJIV'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON. THE ONLY SENIOR SUPPORT STAFF WHO ACCOMPANIED RAJIV TO MOSCOW WERE REPORTEDLY ADDITIONAL SECRETARY C. R. GHAREKHAN AND INFORMATION SECRETARY SHARADA PRASAD, NEITHER OF WHOM ARE FOREIGN AFFAIRS EXPERTS ON AFGHANISTAN.

6. COMMENT: IT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO HAVE A READOUT ON RAJIV'S MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT IN NEW YORK LAST WEEK. THIS MAY SHED ADDITIONAL LIGHT ON RAJIV'S VISIT TO MOSCOW. DEAN##

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