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FROM DELHI 220510Z APR

TO ROUTINE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 430 OF 22 APRIL 9131

INFO ROUTINE ISLAMABAD

MY TELNO 417: PRIME MINISTER'S TALKS WITH MRS GANDHI

1. THE PAKISTAN CHARGE D'AFFAIRES CALLED TODAY TO ASK FOR A BRIEFING. IN RESPONSE I HELD CLOSELY TO THE LINE OF PARAGRAPHS 3 TO 9, 11 TO 13 AND 15 OF THE TUR. I WARNED AFZAL MAHMOOD THAT I COULD NOT BE SURE OF ALL THAT HAD PASSED IN THE PRIVATE MEETINGS BETWEEN THE 2 PRIME MINISTERS. HOWEVER, I HAD NO REASON TO SUPPOSE THAT ANY OTHER POINTS OF INTERNATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE WERE RAISED. THERE WAS LITTLE DISCUSSION ON INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC MATTERS WHILE BILATERAL ECONOMIC MATTERS HAD LARGELY BEEN DEALT WITH IN ADVANCE OF THE VISIT. THERE WAS A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF DISCUSSION ABOUT IMMIGRATION AND RACE RELATIONS QUESTIONS, BUT MOST OF THE TIME SPENT ON THIS WAS DEVOTED TO AN EXPOSITION BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF OUR POLICY, TOGETHER WITH AN EXPLANATION OF THE 4 AMENDMENTS MADE TO THE NATIONALITY BILL.

2. IN REPLY TO QUESTIONS I SAID:

(A) BOTH PRIME MINISTERS HAD BEEN DETERMINED THAT THE VISIT SHOULD BE A SUCCESS. BOTH MADE THEIR VIEWS PLAIN, BUT THEY AVOIDED PRESSING POINTS IN A WAY THAT MIGHT HAVE LED TO ACRIMONY OR UNDUE CONTROVERSY.

(B) THE PRESS HAD BEEN LESS RESTRAINED AND TO THAT EXTENT HAD SOMEWHAT MISREPRESENTED THE TONE OF THE VISIT.

(C) THERE HAD BEEN NO REFERENCE TO PAKISTAN JOINING THE COMMONWEALTH.

(D) THERE HAD BEEN NO REFERENCE IN THE TALKS (THOUGH THERE WAS A QUESTION IN MRS THATCHER'S PRESS CONFERENCE) TO DEIGO GARCIA.

(E) MRS GANDHI HAD NOT PUT FORWARD AN APOLOGIA FOR THE SOVIET UNION, THOUGH SHE HAD REFERRED TO THEIR PERENNIAL FEAR OF ENCIRCLEMENT.

3. AFZAL MAHMOOD SAID THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WAS VERY GRATEFUL FOR THE "PRINCIPLED" STAND WHICH THE PRIME MINISTER HAD TAKEN. THIS WAS A GREAT BOOST TO PAKISTANI MORALE. HE MADE A NUMBER OF OTHER REMARKS EXPRESSIVE OF A HIGH DEGREE OF PLEASURE.

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4. AFTER THE BRIEFING WE HAD A MORE GENERAL DISCUSSION IN WHICH I TOLD AFZAL MAHMOOD THAT, IN DISCUSSION WITH ME, VERY SENIOR INDIANS HAD SAID THAT THEY WERE NOT SO MUCH PERTURBED ABOUT THE SIZE OF A PAKISTANI ARMS ORDER FROM THE US AS ABOUT ITS TIMING. IF IT WERE SPREAD OVER 10 OR 15 YEARS, AS IN THE CASE OF THE SOVIET ARMS DEAL WITH INDIA, THEY CLAIMED THAT THEY WOULD PROBABLY HAVE NO OBJECTION. IT WAS THE THOUGHT THAT THE ARMS MIGHT ALL BE DELIVERED IN A RELATIVELY SHORT SPACE OF TIME SUCH AS 3 YEARS WHICH THEY PROFESSED TO FIND MOST WORRYING. I SAID THAT THE INDIANS AND PAKISTANIS SEEMED TO HAVE AN EQUAL GENIUS FOR PUTTING THE CORRECT SENTIMENT IE. THE WISH TO IMPROVE RELATIONS, IN A FRAMEWORK WHICH WAS INEVITABLY DISOBLIGING TO THE OTHER. I HAD IN MIND AS AN EXAMPLE, BUT DID NOT MENTION, AGHA SHAHI'S STATEMENT IN ISLAMABAD TEL NO 228. I SAID THAT WE WISHED THAT BOTH COUNTRIES WOULD REALLY TRY TO IMPROVE THE RELATIONSHIP. I DID NOT BELIEVE THAT INDIA WAS COLLUDING WITH THE SOVIET UNION OR EVEN THAT SHE HAD AGGRESSIVE IDEAS OF HER OWN VIS A VIS (UNDERLINED) PAKISTAN. AFZAL MAHMOOD AGREED THAT THAT MIGHT WELL BE THE CASE. HOWEVER, HE WENT ON TO SPEAK ABOUT OLD WARS. JUST LIKE THE INDIANS HE PREFERRED TO DISCUSS THE HISTORIC PAST RATHER THAN DEALING WITH THE ACTUAL PRESENT.

THOMSON

[THIS TELEGRAM WAS NOT ADVANCED]

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