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MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

ACTION
34319

November 3, 1971

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MEMORANDUM FOR:

DR. HISSINGER

FROM:

HAROLD H. SAUNDERS

(for)

SUBJECT:

Mrs. Gandhi's Visit to London-- British Briefing

Attached at Tabs B, C and D are the complete reports on Mrs. Gandhi's talks in London, including those mentioned to you by the British:

Tab B: The UK briefing on the Heath-Gandhi talk as recorded by State. The UK counsellor has since briefed me, so my summary for the President reflects my notes as well.

Tab C: UK telegram on Home-Gandhi talk.

Tab D: UK telegram on advisors' talks.

Immediately following at Tab A is a summary for the President if you wish to send it on to him as background for his discussion with Mrs. Gandhi tomorrow. If not, treat it simply as a summary for your own use.

RECOMMENDATION: That you send the memo at Tab A summarizing Mrs. Gandhi's talks in London on to President as background for his talks with her.

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NSS, DOS Reviews Completed.

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INFORMATION

Tab A

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MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT

FROM: HENRY A. KISSINGER

SUBJECT: Mrs. Gandhi's Talks in London

The British have briefed us fully on Mrs. Gandhi's talks in London. Perhaps the most interesting general observation is that, at least in her meeting with Prime Minister Heath, she appears to have been quite straightforward and realistic. Most importantly, she seemed willing to explore the problem with him rather than simply stating the familiar Indian positions as she did in her other sessions. While this produces a gloomier picture of the situation, it also suggests that it may be possible for you to have a constructive dialogue with her.

The following are the main points that were covered:

--Mrs. Gandhi at some points gave the impression of feeling that events were beyond her control. She said that she did not see how she could hold back some of her cabinet members. When the Indian Parliament resumes its sessions, there will be strong demands for action and she feared that this would mean going to war. She lamented that the Indian people have no idea of what a prolonged war would mean and she voiced her opinion that if war came it would be drawn out. She said that one reason for going ahead with her foreign tour was to try to dampen some of this war feeling in India.

--The refugees are still coming across the border from East Pakistan. None are going back, although some cross and re-cross in order to exploit the ration system. They seem to be motivated only by fear rather than political considerations. She felt that as soon as conditions were safe in East Pakistan they would go back. They did not seem concerned, for the most part, with the political nature of a settlement in East Pakistan. They are, however, creating great social strains

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in India. The government is now charged with giving the refugees a better life than most Indians have.

--India has given the guerrillas the minimum help necessary to stave off the accusation that the government has let down the Bangla Desh movement. They are, however, getting a lot of assistance from elsewhere. The Bangla Desh leaders are very emotional, and this makes it very difficult for the Indian government to influence them.

--The Soviets had asked her whether Mujib's release would be an answer. She was not sure. She felt that even Mujib might be repudiated if he made a deal with Yahya for less than total Bangal independence. At the same time, she saw no realistic chance of a dialogue without Mujib. (Her advisors, in separate conversations, seemed less categorical on this point and seemed to see room for talks with other leaders if somehow they could be carried on with Mujib's blessing.)

--Prime Minister Heath asked her what result she wanted. She said she did not know. Whatever the result was, it would cause trouble for India. An independent Bangla Desh would probably be quite leftist but, even with a moderate government, an independent Bangla Desh would be in great economic difficulty. Continuation of the present situation is serious for India as the refugee total mounts.

--She doubted that Yahya knows what is really going on in East Pakistan. Yet she could not see a successor who would be better. Shutto would be worse.

--When asked for her reaction to the proposal for withdrawal of troops, she showed no resentment at the idea. She said that for military reasons, Indian troops would find it difficult to withdraw just a short way. Unless there were a major withdrawal, she did not know how this proposal could be carried through, and she doubted that there would be a major withdrawal. She did not see how the UN could help. (As you know, Yahya seems to be talking about an initial short withdrawal.)

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--She expressed concern about the new China policy of the US. After the breakthrough in relations with Peking had been announced, she had found it necessary to strengthen her position with the Soviets. That explained the timing of the Soviet-Indian friendship treaty.

--Prime Minister Heath urged her to keep in touch with him if the situation deteriorated further, and she said she would. He urged her meanwhile to explain publicly why India could not respond to certain proposals for cooling the present situation. Otherwise, he said, it would be difficult for India to get international support.

Mrs. Gandhi may well take a similar line with you. An appropriate strategy and set of talking points are included with the regular briefing materials I am sending you separately.

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HHSaunders:mtt 11/4/71