

June 17, 1980

Confidential Note from M.G. Roberts (Joint Nuclear Unit) to Sir A. Acland, 'Panorama Documentary on Pakistan Nuclear Programme'

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Summary:

The FCO's Joint Nuclear Unit (JNU) assessed the Panorama documentary as correct in broad terms, but speculative and inaccurate in most details. Analysts contended that the most significant allegation was that of the Libyan/'Islamic' bomb, but that there was still no substantive evidence that Libya had provided finance or that Pakistan had agreed to proliferate. Anonymous allegations in the documentary were said to be 'sensational' but carried 'little conviction'.

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Sir A Acland

PANORAMA DOCUMENTARY ON PAKISTAN NUCLEAR PROGRAMME

1. I attach a short commentary on last night's Panorama programme, which may be read in conjunction with the briefing prepared for No. 10 which has already been circulated.
2. The commentary inevitably reflects a quick reaction to the main elements of the programme. More considered interdepartmental consideration is planned.

M. G. Roberts.

M G Roberts
Joint Nuclear Unit

17 June 1980

- cc: PS/SofS
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PANORAMA DOCUMENTARY ON PAKISTAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAMME:
16 JUNE 1990

1. The Panorama documentary gave a substantially accurate report of Pakistan's efforts to acquire a nuclear explosive capability using technology and equipment acquired from Western countries. It described the history of her acquisition of a Candu reactor from Canada, of her frustrated order for a reprocessing plant from France and her clandestine efforts to develop a centrifuge enrichment plant at Kahuta outside Islamabad. There was little in the programme that has not been the subject of earlier Press reports but some points were given undue emphasis, or were misleadingly presented.

Libya

2. By far the most important allegation made in the programme was that of cooperation between Pakistan and Libya in the production of an Islamic bomb. While there has been continuous speculation about Middle East and Libyan involvement we have no evidence that Libya has provided finance or that Pakistan has agreed to pass nuclear weapons technology to Libya. The latter has been implicitly denied by the Pakistan authorities who have held us that they will not pass nuclear technology to third countries. The uncorroborated evidence presented in the programme including reports by anonymous individuals (said to have been aides to President Shutto) about meetings between Pakistanis and Libyans in Paris in the early 1970's and of clandestine movements of large amounts of money - up to £100k at a time - was sensational but carried little conviction.

Niger

3. The programme also alleged involvement on the part of Niger who supplies uranium ore concentrate (yellow cake) both to Pakistan and to Libya. However, we understand that Niger, while not an IAEA member, has undertaken not to export uranium except under international safeguards, and has notified all its sales to those two countries to the IAEA.

Acquisition of Supplies in Europe

4. The programme speaks of a "network of buying agents" in European countries but showed little awareness of the detailed

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procurement routes being used at present or of international efforts to block these. One allegation, that components for a reprocessing plant are being supplied by an Italian company Alcon, is new to us and will require investigation. For the rest the programme concentrated on the part played at an earlier stage by Bussman Electric Limited, who supplied inverters to Pakistan before these were brought under control in November 1975 and by the French company SOG who had earlier agreed to supply a reprocessing plant. Connections between Pakistan and the Swiss company, Kora Engineering, are well known to us and have been drawn to the attention of the Swiss Government.

Implications for Non-Proliferation Policy

5. International discussion of non-proliferation questions became controversial in the mid-1970's primarily as a result of the Indian nuclear test in 1974. Suppliers, particularly Canada, the US and Australia, introduced additional controls which were deeply resented by the non industrialised countries. Confidence in the Non Proliferation Treaty as the mainstay of the international system was dangerously eroded.

6. The International Nuclear Fuel Cycle Evaluation which was set up in response to this situation, while it produced no easy answers to proliferation problems, led to a considerably improved atmosphere. Following its report earlier this year we are working through the IAEA and in bilateral exchanges to sustain confidence in the Non Proliferation Treaty, to simplify the basis on which nuclear trade takes place and to secure the widest possible acceptance of it. Publicity for Pakistan's unsecured programmes and the suggestion that the international non-proliferation regime is unable to prevent supplies reaching Pakistan makes this task more difficult. A nuclear test by Pakistan would seriously undermine the whole process.

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