

June 11, 1971

Telex (coded) No. 2941: Visit by the Indian Foreign Minister to Bonn

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Summary:

Speaking with the West German Foreign Minister, Minister Swaran Singh thanked him for German assistance in dealing with refugees from East Pakistan while highlighting the threat of radicalization and Vietnamization if a long-term political solution is not found. India asked West Germany to apply pressure on Pakistan to stop the refugee stream, but Germany stressed that achieving a reasonable political solution is an internal Pakistani matter, though he pledged to discuss the issue in an upcoming meeting with President Nixon.

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RE: Visit by the Indian Foreign Minister to Bonn

1. In the context of his visit to many capitals, the Indian Foreign Minister stayed in Bonn on 9 and 10 June just coming from Moscow. He wanted to convey to the Federal Government the position of the Indian government on questions of East Pakistan and the refugees, and he asked for the Federal Government's support to solve the problem. During his stay, the Indian Foreign Minister met leading German public figures, such as the Federal President, parliamentarians, and representatives from churches and humanitarian organizations. On 10 June, he was welcomed for a longer talk by the foreign minister [Walter Scheel] and the federal chancellor [Willy Brandt]. Also, on the evening of 9 June he had an extensive exchange of opinions with [Foreign Ministry] State Secretary [Paul] Frank.

2. Swaran Singh outlined in strong words to the federal chancellor, as well as to the foreign minister, the causes and developments in the current crisis [massive refugee streams into India brought about by Pakistani military operations against the Bengali nationalist movement in East Pakistan in the spring 1971]. He thanked them for German understanding of the refugee issue, and for the aid provided by Germany.

Very insistently, the foreign minister highlighted the dangers resulting from large refugee streams ("civil invasion by our neighbor") for the Indian border areas in political, economic and social terms. Moreover, he outlined the threat of radicalization and Vietnamization if there isn't any political solution to the East Pakistan problem. According to Swaran Singh's words, the refugee problem has internationalized an initially intra-Pakistani conflict. It imposes unbearable burdens on the Indian state. Ultimately, it can only head towards a solution if the refugee stream is stopped and a return of the refugees is facilitated. In the last four days alone, 300,000 new refugees arrived; thus their overall number is now exceeding 5 million. Most of them are Hindus. Now there are estimates of 300 million German marks already needed in India's budget over the next 6 months, just for providing minimal care to the refugees.

3. Swaran Singh reported the following requests of the Indian government:

More important than financial and material aid to cope with the refugee problem is the political solution. The Indian government is asking for international pressure on the Pakistani government in order to stop the refugee stream. The Pakistani government has to create such political conditions in East Pakistan that a return of the refugees is facilitated. India can house the refugees only on a temporary basis. What is needed here is an unambiguous statement by the community of nations. Keeping silent ultimately does not even serve Pakistani interests: It sends a message to the Pakistani leaders that the world is complacent about the development in East Pakistan. Moreover, one must exert pressure on the Pakistani government through a suspension of aid; this is the only way to make them relent. He [Singh] has no concerns about humanitarian aid for Pakistan; yet he objects to any aid that ultimately serves to strengthen Pakistan's military might. In principle, India is interested in a strong Pakistan to maintain the stability of the region.

4. In his response, the federal foreign minister stressed that nobody has more understanding for refugee problems than us. This explains the spontaneous help by the German population and the aid by the Federal Government. The core of the problem, however, is the need to normalize political conditions in East Pakistan. A reasonable political solution has to be achieved including all parties involved in Pakistan. This is an internal matter of the Pakistanis.

The minister hinted at the special role played by the World Bank and the Pakistan Consortium [created in 1960 by the World Bank to facilitate coordination among the major providers of international assistance]. Both can have influence without exerting political pressure. He is assuming that economic investments only make sense if future prospects of a receiving country are actually encouraging. In his opinion, political pressure on Pakistan from the outside will be rather counterproductive. What is needed here is positive collaboration with the goal to have an influence. The Federal Government will do all that it can do to contribute to a solution as soon as possible.

Referring especially to the international prestige of Federal Chancellor Willy Brandt, Swaran Singh asked for the chancellor to discuss the East Pakistan problem with [US] President [Richard] Nixon. The federal foreign minister confirmed that he would do so.

5. The federal minister gave an overview of results from the [1-6 June 1971] NATO Minister Council meeting in Lisbon. He outlined the inner-German and détente policy of the Federal Government with a special emphasis on the current stage. An elevation of the GDR's international status will be detrimental to détente efforts. The Indian foreign minister expressed this and his prime minister's and the Indian government's admiration for the policy of the Federal Government. He assured the Federal Government of India's understanding and stated India will not impair or delay this policy.

6. Foreign Minister Singh also had a talk with the federal chancellor where he repeated his efforts to gain support for the Indian position. He reported on the development of his country after the Indian parliamentary elections and submitted special requests from Prime Minister Gandhi. The federal chancellor confirmed the willingness of the Federal Government to contribute towards a solution within the limit of our abilities. He confirmed the will to discuss the Pakistan problem with President Nixon, as well as in the context of the consortium and the Western European Union [WEU]. He will make sure to have the Indian government informed about the results.

[signed] Müller