Minute for the Private Secretary by T.S. Tull discussing Russo-Pakistan Relations, 2 March 1948

PRIVATE SECRETARY

RUSSO-PAKISTAN RELATIONS

 The question of Russo-Pakistan relations may arise in the course of Zafrullah Khan’s interview with the Secretary of State tomorrow.

2. A report was received early in January that Russia had approached the Pakistan delegation with a proposal for the formation of a Russo-Pakistan pact. This report was passed on to New York but was never substantiated.

3. Zafrullah Khan, however, in a long conversation with Mr. Noel-Baker (reported in telegram No. 139 from New York) referred to the considerable volume of criticism being levelled inside Pakistan against Lord Mountbatten and the United Kingdom as a result of the tragedies which attended the partition of the Punjab. If Pakistan received no satisfaction over the Kashmir issue, her present government might well be swept away and the new Ministers might look to Russia rather than to the British Commonwealth for support. Although, doubtless, the Pakistan Government are inclined to raise the Russian bogey in order to get our help, the main basis of Zafrullah Khan’s contentions is correct and unless Pakistan is given sufficient breathing space by India to set her house in order, conditions might exist in which the present government might be overthrown.

4. Subsequently, our own policy before the Security Council has gone a long way towards restoring Zafrullah Khan’s confidence in us. In the meantime, moreover, the Russian delegation, which had previously been sitting on the fence, has come down in favour of India in the Kashmir dispute and propaganda from Moscow is now for the most part directed against Pakistan, who is represented as the tool of Anglo-American imperialism.

5. Another point which Zafrullah Khan may raise concerns the position of the states of Hunza and Nagar, formerly feudatories of Kashmir in the north-western part of Gilgit. These wish to accede to Paksitan and have threatened that if their accession is not accepted they will “look elsewhere”. Pakistan, of course, cannot accept their accession while the Kashmir dispute is still sub judice, and Liaqat Ali Khan, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, informed Mr. Gordon Walker in strict confidence that these states had threatened to link up with Russia if their wishes were not granted. There is, in fact, not much danger of them joining Russia, and if they do look elsewhere it will probably be towards Sinkiang, with whom they have considerable affinity and who are not yet under complete Russian domination.

6. If Zafrullah raises the problem of Hunza and Nagar or in any other way refers to the Russian menace, in an evident desire to make our flesh creep, the only answer that can be made is that however much we should regret such a development, Pakistan herself would regret it infinitely more.

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