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TO IMMEDIATE F C O

TELEGRAM NUMBER 586 OF 13 DECEMBER 1983

REPEATED IMMEDIATE TO MODUK, PARIS AND TUNIS.

REPEATED ROUTINE TO MOSCOW, ROME, UKDEL STRASBOURG,

UKMIS NEW YORK AND WASHINGTON AND ALL OTHER MIDDLE EAST POSTS.

PARIS TELNO 1147: PLO

SUMMARY

1. ACCORDING TO ARAFAT'S CHIEF POLITICAL ADVISER, THE PLO ARE NOW ACTIVELY CONSIDERING HOW A FRESH IMPETUS CAN BE GIVEN TO THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS ONCE ARAFAT IS OUT OF TRIPOLI. THEY ARE SEEKING FRENCH HELP, AND WOULD ALSO WELCOME BRITISH INVOLVEMENT, IN LAUNCHING A NEW MIDDLE EAST PEACE INITIATIVE. THE PLO APPARENTLY STILL HOPE THEY CAN SOMEHOW MAKE POLITICAL PROGRESS WITHOUT PUBLICLY ACCEPTING ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST.

DETAIL

2. IN THE COURSE OF A WIDE-RANGING DISCUSSION THIS MORNING HANI AL HASSAN (ARAFAT'S CHIEF POLITICAL ADVISER) TOLD ME THAT HIS BROTHER KHALID AL HASSAN AND QADDOUMI HAD BEEN TALKING TO FRENCH OFFICIALS IN PARIS IN THE LAST FEW DAYS ABOUT THE TERMS OF A POSSIBLE FRENCH/PLO STATEMENT WHICH MIGHT BE ISSUED AFTER A MEETING BETWEEN PRESIDENT MITTERRAND AND ARAFAT. ACCORDING TO AL HASSAN THE FRENCH WERE INSISTING THAT MITTERRAND WOULD ONLY RECEIVE ARAFAT IF THE PLO WERE PREPARED TO ANNOUNCE PUBLICLY THEIR CONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL. AL HASSAN SAID THAT ARAFAT WAS NOT AT PRESENT PREPARED TO AGREE TO THIS, BUT THE PLO WERE INTERESTED IN MAINTAINING THEIR DIALOGUE WITH THE FRENCH. THE SAUDIS HAD OFFERED TO HELP BY HOLDING OUT ECONOMIC INCENTIVES TO THE FRENCH IF THE PLO WISHED.

3. AL HASSAN CLAIMED THAT, WITH ARAFAT ABOUT TO LEAVE TRIPOLI (I AM REPORTING IN MIFT WHAT HE HAD TO SAY ABOUT THE DEPARTURE ARRANGEMENTS FOR ARAFAT AND HIS FIGHTERS), THE PLO HAD REGAINED THE POLITICAL INITIATIVE AND WERE NOW THINKING HOW BEST TO EXPLOIT IT. HE SAID THAT THE ARAFAT LOYALISTS HAD MANAGED TO PUT THEIR HOUSE IN ORDER, WHEREAS THE REBELS FACED INTERNAL DIFFICULTIES AND WERE DISCREDITED AS A POLITICAL FORCE; HE CLAIMED THAT THE SYRIANS NOW WISHED TO GET RID OF THOSE DISSIDENTS SUCH AS ABU MUSA WHO HAD FOUGHT AGAINST THEM IN 1976. AL HASSAN SAID THAT HE DID NOT BELIEVE THE SOVIET UNION WOULD DO MUCH TO HELP ARAFAT. SOVIET STATEMENTS SUPPORTING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE WERE ISSUED ONLY FOR PROPAGANDA PURPOSES. THE PLO KNEW FROM THEIR CONTACTS WITH SOVIET REPRESENTATIVES IN TUNIS THAT THE RUSSIANS IN FACT REGARDED THE ATTAINMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT STATE AS A PIPE DREAM. SEMI COLON THEY ALSO KNEW THAT A LEADING SOVIET OFFICIAL HAD SAID

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AS MUCH TO THE JORDANIANS DURING HIS RECENT VISIT HERE (MY TELELETTER TO NIXON IN NENAD OF 7 DECEMBER REFERS).

4. AL HASSAN SAID HE BELIEVED THE EUROPEANS, PARTICULARLY THE FRENCH AND THE BRITISH, COULD PROVE MORE PROMISING POLITICAL PARTNERS FOR THE PLO. HE RECALLED THAT, WHEN THE AMERICANS AND THE RUSSIANS HAD STATED THEIR INTENTION IN 1977 TO WORK TOGETHER FOR A MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT, QADDOUMI HAD ANNOUNCED PLO SUPPORT WITHIN 15 MINUTES AND HAD BEEN CRITICISED BY THE SAUDIS FOR HIS IMPETUOSITY. AL HASSAN ASKED HOW BRITAIN WOULD REACT TO A PLO SUGGESTION THAT A SIMILAR APPROACH SHOULD BE TRIED NOW, ZKIO WITH THE EUROPEANS CAST IN THE FORMER US/ SOVIET ROLE AND ISSUING A NEW STATEMENT ON THE MIDDLE EAST SEMI COLON THEREAFTER THE PLO COULD IMMEDIATELY ANNOUNCE THAT THEY "UNDERSTOOD THAT ALL PARTIES WOULD RECOGNISE EACH OTHER AT THE CONCLUSION OF A SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATION". EMPHASISING THAT I WAS SPEAKING PERSONALLY, I REMARKED THAT WE HAD SURELY ALL BEEN ROUND THIS TRACK MANY TIMES BEFORE. IF THE PLO WISHED THE EUROPEANS TO PERFORM A USEFUL ROLE, THEY MUST ALSO PLAY THEIR PART. IT WOULD MAKE A CONSIDERABLE IMPACT ON WORLD OPINION IF THE PLO WERE WILLING TO STATE NOW, WITHOUT FURTHER EQUIVOCATION, THAT THEY WERE PREPARED TO ACCEPT ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST IN RETURN FOR THE FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF RESOLUTION 242 AND RECOGNITION OF THE PALESTINIAN RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION. IN MY VIEW THE PLO HAD ALREADY WAITED FAR TOO LONG TO DO THIS SEMI COLON BUT IT WAS NOT TOO LATE, AND THE TRAGIC EVENTS OF RECENT MONTHS ALSO OFFERED THEM A NEW OPPORTUNITY.

5. AL HASSAN, WHO SAID HE HAD SEEN KING HUSSEIN SHORTLY BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE YESTERDAY FOR FRANCE AND BRITAIN, CLAIMED THAT THE JORDANIANS NOW HAD A MUCH BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE PLO'S POSITION AND HAD THEMSELVES MOVED CLOSER TO IT AS A RESULT OF THE US/ISRAEL STRATEGIC AGREEMENT WHICH HAD ACUTELY EMBARRASSED JORDAN AND THE OTHER MODERATE ARABS. AL HASSAN DID NOT BELIEVE KING HUSSEIN WOULD NOW WISH TO EMBARRASS THE PLO BY GOING AHEAD WITH THE RECALL OF THE JORDANIAN PARLIAMENT. THE KING HAD ORIGINALLY PROPOSED RECALLING PARLIAMENT WHEN THE PLO SEEMED ABOUT TO PASS UNDER SYRIAN CONTROL SEMI COLON BUT THE NEED FOR THIS MOVE WAS NOW LESS URGENT, AND AL HASSAN THOUGHT THE KING WOULD KEEP IT IN RESERVE AS A CARD TO PLAY IF HIS TALKS WITH ARAFAT BROKE DOWN. AL HASSAN SEEMED TO THINK KING HUSSEIN WAS GOING TO EUROPE PRIMARILY TO SEEK EUROPEAN SUPPORT FOR A NEW MIDDLE EAST PEACE INITIATIVE, IN WHICH HE HOPED THE EUROPEANS WOULD TAKE THE LEAD.

6. AL HASSAN SAID HE PERSONALLY WAS VERY HOPEFUL THAT, IF AS HE EXPECTED ARAFAT CAME TO AMMAN SHORTLY, A JOINT JORDANIAN/ PLO POSITION MIGHT EMERGE WHICH COULD BE PRESENTED TO AN ARAB SUMMIT. HE CLAIMED THAT THE SAUDIS HAD NOW CHANGED THEIR MINDS AND FAVOURED AN EARLY SUMMIT MEETING. THE SYRIANS HAD OVER-PLAYED THEIR HAND AND WERE NO LONGER WELL PLACED TO BLOCK ACCEPTANCE OF JORDANIAN/PLO IDEAS AT AN ARAB SUMMIT.

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7. AGAIN SPEAKING PERSONALLY, I SUGGESTED TO AL HASSAN THAT THE PLO MIGHT BE WISER TO CONCENTRATE IN THE FIRST INSTANCE ON ACHIEVING ARAB SUPPORT FOR WHATEVER JOINT POSITION JORDAN AND THE PLO COULD AGREE BEFORE TRYING TO DRAW THE EUROPEANS INTO REACTIVATION OF THE PEACE PROCESS, AND THAT PLO RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST WAS THE ESSENTIAL FIRST STEP. AL HASSAN ASSURED ME THAT THIS WAS ONE OF MANY APPROACHES BEING DEBATED WITHIN THE PLO. WE AGREED TO KEEP IN TOUCH.

COMMENT

8. AL HASSAN IS IN DAILY CONTACT WITH ARAFAT AND I AM FAIRLY SURE THAT HIS VIEWS AND THOSE OF BRIGADIER YAHYA (THE PLO REPRESENTATIVE IN AMMAN WHO WAS ALSO PRESENT AND INTERVENED IN THE DISCUSSION FROM TIME TO TIME SEMI COLON CHARLTON ACCOMPANIED ME) REFLECT THE THINKING OF THE PLO LEADERSHIP. AL HASSAN WAS SCEPTICAL ABOUT THE CHANCES OF GETTING THE AMERICANS TO RE-ENGAGE IN THE PEACE PROCESS PRIOR TO THE US ELECTIONS. BUT SEEMED TO SEE ADVANTAGE IN TRYING TO PREPARE THE GROUND FOR THE FUTURE, HE WAS ALSO ANXIOUS TO FIND OUT HOW MUCH THE PLO STOOD TO GAIN BY MOVING TOWARDS CONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE OF ISRAEL AND SEEMED TO BE LOOKING FOR ENCOURAGEMENT FROM THE FRENCH AND OURSELVES SEMI COLON BUT THE OLD PREVARICATIONS AND EVASIONS IN PLO ATTITUDES REMAIN AND AL HASSAN HIMSELF DOES NOT INSPIRE A GREAT DEAL OF CONFIDENCE, I WOULD

EXPECT HIM TO CONTACT ME AGAIN BEFORE LONG. SHOULD ARAFAT COME HERE SOON FOR TALKS WITH KING HUSSEIN, WOULD YOU WISH ME TO SEE HIM? ASSUMING THAT PLO ATTITUDES CONTINUE TO EVOLVE CONSTRUCTIVELY, COULD I BE AUTHORISED TO OFFER A MEETING BETWEEN MR LUCE AND QADDOUMI OR SOME OTHER LEADING PLO OFFICIAL, IN TUNIS OR ELSEWHERE?

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