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TO PRIORITY FCO

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INFO ROUTINE CAIRO AMMAN BEIRUT DAMASCUS JERUSALEM WASHINGTON
UKMIS NEW YORK

CALL ON ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER

MR BEGIN RECEIVED ME FOR 35 MINUTES AT HIS OFFICE THIS MORNING. 2. HE SEEMED FIT AND RELAXED AND WAS AT HIS MOST AFFABLE. HE WAS ALSO IN DISCURSIVE MOOD, TALKING A GOOD DEAL ABOUT SUCH MATTERS AS THE RECENT ELECTIONS HERE, OPINION POLLS, AND THE ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER'S RECENTLY ACQUIRED CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT TO DISMISS INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF HIS GOVERNMENT. ONE OR TWICE I THOUGHT HE DELIBERATELY STEERED THE TALKS AWAY FROM CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES. WHEN I STARTED TO BRING UP THE SUBJECT OF THE PEACE TREATY WITH EGYPT, HE INTERRUPTED TO MAKE A POINT ABOUT THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY CONFERENCE. (HE QUOTED THE TIMES DESCRIPTION OF MR HEATH'S SPEECH, AND WAS CLEARLY STRUCK BY THE WAY THE CONFERENCE HAD RALLIED AGAINST CRITICS OF THE GOVERNMENT LINE.)

3. MR BEGIN REFERRED TO HIS BRIEF MEETING WITH YOU TWO WEEKS AGO IN CAIRO AND SAID HE KNEW THAT YOU HAD EARLIER EXPRESSED INTEREST TO MR SHAMIR IN VISITING ISRAEL. WERE THERE SOME DATES IN MIND? I SAID I WAS NOT AWARE OF ANY, ALTHOUGH I FELT SURE THAT YOU WOULD BE GLAD TO KNOW WHEN A VISIT MIGHT SUIT THE ISRAEL GOVERNMENT AND I RECALLED YOUR MENTIONING THE NEW YEAR TO MR SHAMIR. MR BEGIN NOTED THAT A VISIT IN 1982 MEANT YOU WOULD NO LONGER BE ACTING ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY.

4. THE TALK THEN TURNED TO NEXT STEPS IN THE CAMP DAVID PROCESS. I ASKED MR BEGIN IF WE COULD EXPECT ANY SURPRISES OVER THE AUTONOMY TALKS. HE REPLIED THAT AN AGREEMENT SHOULD NOT SURPRISE ANYONE, BUT IF THERE WERE NO AGREEMENT THAT SHOULD EQUALLY NOT COME AS A SURPRISE. ISRAEL WANTED AN AGREEMENT AND WAS GOING HARD FOR IT. SADAT'S DEATH HAD BEEN A GREAT BLOW. BUT THE REGIME IN EGYPT WAS FIRM AND STRONG. AT HIS LAST MEETING WITH SADAT THEY HAD AGREED TO AIM AT REACHING AGREEMENT IF POSSIBLE BY ABOUT THE TURN OF THE YEAR. MUBARAK HAD REPEATED THIS IN CAIRO THE OTHER DAY. BUT THERE WAS NO SELF-IMPOSED DEADLINE FOR RESOLVING THE AUTONOMY TALKS. THEY WOULD GO ON AS LONG AS NEEDED - IF NECESSARY PAST THE APRIL DEADLINE FOR WITHDRAWAL FROM SINAI.

5. IN HIS VIEW THE KEY TO PROGRESS OVER AUTONOMY LAY IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL CALLED FOR IN THE CAMP DAVID DOCUMENTS. MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL SHOULD BE ELECTED. AS TO NUMBERS, THE SOLUTION SHOULD BE TO AGREE UPON A LIST OF FUNCTIONS SUCH AS HEALTH, AGRICULTURE, SCHOOLS AND SO ON - PERHAPS 15 IN ALL - AND THEN HAVE AS MANY ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES AS THERE WERE FUNCTIONS.

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6. THERE WRE OF COURSE ISSUES WHICH COULD STILL BLOCK AGREEMENT. JERUSALEM FOR INSTANCE. THE EGYPTIANS HAD ARGUED THAT EAST JERUSALEM SHOULD BE UNDER ARAB SOVEREIGNTY. BUT THERE WERE MANY ARAB STATES: WHICH OF THEM WAS MEANT TO BE SOVEREIGN IN THIS CASE? IN ANY EVENT ISRAEL WAS ADAMANT IN REFUSING TO SHARE SOVEREIGNTY OVER JERUSALEM WITH ANYONE.

7. ON THE WEST BANK ISRAEL WAS NOW REPLACING MILITARY BY CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT. THIS WOULD BE A MAJOR DEVELOPMENT AFTER 15 YEARS. ISRAEL WAS ALSO PREPARED TO WITHDRAW (HE MUST HAVE MEANT AS PART OF AN AGREED INTERIM REGIME) HER SECURITY FORCES IN JUDEA, SAMARIA AND GAZA OTHER THAN THOSE FORESEEN IN THE CAMP DAVID AGREEMENT AS BEING ALLOWED TO REMAIN AT DESIGNATED POINTS. ALTOGETHER, SAID MR BEGIN, IT WAS A REASONABLE PACKAGE AND HE HOPED THE EGYPTIANS AND AMERICANS WOULD SEE IT AS SUCH.

8 TAKING UP HIS REFERENCE TO WITHDRAWAL FROM SINAI, I SAID I HOPED THE UK WOULD BE ABLE TO CONTRIBUTE TO IMPLEMENTING THE PEACE TREATY IN A PRACTICAL WAY. A DECISION NOW SEEMED LIKELY TO BE TAKEN SHORTLY IN LONDON OVER A BRITISH CONTRIBUTION TO THE SINAI MULTI-NATIONAL FORCE. I ADDED THAT I KNEW THERE WAS A WISH IN LONDON FOR A BETTER DIALOGUE BETWEEN US ON THESE AND OTHER ISSUED.

9. FOR THE LAST FEW MINUTES OF OUR TALK IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTER HAD ARRIVED NEXT DOOR. MR BEGIN NONETHELESS CONTINUED TALKING ABOUT THE AUTONOMY QUESTION AS IF HE HAD ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD. AS I STOOD UP TO LEAVE, MR BEGIN MENTIONED THE WORDS VENCICE DECLARATION. HE HOPED I WOULD REPORT TO YOU THAT ISRAEL DID NOT ACCEPT ITS CONTENTS AND NEVER WOULD. A SEPARATE PALESTINIAN STATE WOULD BE A MORTAL DANGER TO ISRAEL (HE REPEATED THE PHRASE FOR EMPHASIS). HE GAVE ME NO CHANCE TO RESPOND BUT CONCLUDED WITH A SMILE THAT WE WOULD NEED TO CONTINUE THE DISCUSSION ANOTHER TIME.

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