

Iran

IRAN: ADVANCE COPIES

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FM TEHRAN 031400Z DEC 79

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 1280 OF 3 DECEMBER

INFO IMMEDIATE CABINET OFFICE (DIO) MODUK (DI4 AND DS11) CRE 5

WASHINGTON UK'S NEW YORK BAHRAIN

INFO PRIORITY ABU DHABI ANKARA BAGHDAD DOHA DUBAI ISLAMABAD JEDDA

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MY TELNO 1266: SITUATION IN IRAN

1. VOTING IN THE REFERENDUM ON THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION STARTED YESTERDAY AND IS CONTINUING TODAY. THE RESULTS SHOULD BE ANNOUNCED BY THE END OF THE WEEK. THE MEDIA HAS REPORTED A LARGE TURNOUT BUT ALTHOUGH POLLING HAS BEEN BRISK IN SOUTHER TEHRAN, WHERE SUPPORT FOR KHOMEINI HAS ALWAYS BEEN STRONG, IT HAS BEEN NOTICEABLY SLOW IN THE CENTRE OF TOWN AND IN THE RICHER NORTHERN AREAS. THE TURNOUT IS EXPECTED TO BE MARKEDLY LOWER THAN IN THE...

AREAS. THE TURNOUT IS EXPECTED TO BE MARKEDLY LOWER THAN IN THE REFERENDUM ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC IN MARCH, THOUGH VEHICLES WITH LOUD-SPEAKERS HAVE BEEN DRIVING ROUND TOWN EXHORTING PEOPLE TO VOTE AND THE OFFICIAL RADIO HAS BEEN CARRYING THE SAME MESSAGE. DURING ASHURA WEEKEND BROADCASTS WERE GIVING OUT THE NAMES OF INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANISATIONS THAT HAD PLEDGED THEIR VOTES IN FAVOUR, WITHOUT ANY MENTION OF THOSE VOICING OPPOSITION.

2. KHOMEINI ON 28 NOVEMBER CALLED ON THE PEOPLE TO FOLLOW HIS EXAMPLE BY APPROVING THE DRAFT SAYING THAT "ANY DIFFICULTY" IN THE PRESENT TEXT COULD BE AMENDED LATER. THE POSSIBILITY OF ADOPTING "SUPPLEMENTARY ARTICLES" TO RECTIFY ANOMALIES AND ERRORS HAS BEEN OFFERED. SEVERAL GROUPS HAVE EXPRESSED RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE DRAFT AS IT STANDS BUT HAVE SAID THEY WILL VOTE FOR IT TO PRESERVE THE UNITY OF THE REVOLUTION AND REAFFIRM THEIR SUPPORT FOR KHOMEINI'S LEADERSHIP. MANY OTHERS, HOWEVER, HAVE RECOMMENDED THAT PEOPLE ABSTAIN OR VOTE AGAINST THE DRAFT IN THE HOPE THAT IT WILL BE REVISED. THE MOSLEM UNITY PARTY IN BALUCHESTAN ANNOUNCED A BOYCOTT OF THE REFERENDUM AND THERE HAVE BEEN REPORTS OF VIOLENCE IN THE SOUTHERN TOWN OF CHAH BAHAR AND IN IRANSHAHR, WHERE ON 1 DECEMBER ABOUT 300 PEOPLE DESTROYED ALL THE BALLOT BOXES AND VOTING SLIPS AND TOOK THE CITY GOVERNOR HOSTAGE. KHOMEINI'S REPRESENTATIVE IN THE TOWN HAS ALLEGED THAT "COMMUNIST ELEMENTS" WERE LEADING THE ATTACKS, ALTHOUGH THE OFFICIAL COMMUNIST (TUDEH) PARTY HAS ANNOUNCED ITS SUPPORT FOR THE CONSTITUTION. THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN REPORTS, DENIED ON THE LOCAL RADIO, THAT THE TURKOMEN HAVE BEEN BOYCOTTING THE ELECTION. THE KURDS ARE CERTAINLY DOING SO, WHILE RESPECTING THEIR CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT WITH THE GOVERNMENT. IN TABRIZ, THE MOSLEM PEOPLE'S REPUBLICAN PARTY (MPRP), WHICH LOOKS TO AYATOLLAH SHARIAT MADARI AS ITS GUIDE, IS BOYCOTTING THE REFERENDUM AND THERE ARE REPORTS OF SCUFFLES AND OF THE DESTRUCTION OF A NUMBER OF BALLOT BOXES. A LARGE GROUP YESTERDAY DEMONSTRATED THERE TO DEMAND THE RELEASE OF MPRP MEMBERS ARRESTED ON 1 DECEMBER, ALLEGEDLY FOR DISTRIBUTING ANTI-CONSTITUTION LEAFLETS, AND IN PROTEST AT THE LOCAL RADIO STATION'S ALLEGED FALSE REPORTING OF THE SITUATION IN THE CITY. SHARIAT MADARI HIMSELF HAS NOT SPECIFICALLY ADVOCATED VOTING AGAINST THE PRESENT DRAFT, BUT HAS SAID THAT A CLAUSE ABOUT THE LEADERSHIP NEEDS REVISION IF IT IS TO BE SATISFACTORY. ALTERATION OF THIS CLAUSE WOULD FUNDAMENTALLY CHANGE THE NATURE OF THE CONSTITUTION (SEE MY TELNOS 1260 AND 1281, NOT TO ALL).

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3. THE REFERENDUM HAS TEMPORARILY REPLACED THE OCCUPATION OF THE US EMBASSY IN THE HEADLINES, DESPITE THE "STUDENTS" REVELATIONS AT A PRESS CONFERENCE ON 1 DECEMBER ABOUT THE PRESENCE OF ALLEGED CIA AGENTS. THE SHAH'S MOVE TO TEXAS HAS BEEN REPORTED IN THE PAPERS AND ON THE RADIO, BUT THERE HAS SO FAR BEEN NO SIGNIFICANT COMMENT ON IT IN THE PRESS. THE STUDENTS HAVE BEEN SAYING FOR SEVERAL DAYS THAT THE HOSTAGES WILL BE PUT ON TRIAL IF THE SHAH LEAVES THE US FOR ANYWHERE BUT IRAN. RUMOURS ARE CIRCULATING AMONG THE JOURNALISTS ABOUT THE DISPERSAL OF THE HOSTAGES, BUT NONE OF THESE HAVE BEEN CONFIRMED. THERE HAS BEEN SOME PUBLICITY FOR THE OFFER BY VARIOUS ORGANISATIONS OF TRAINING IN RESPONSE TO KHOMEINI'S CALL FOR ARMING OF THE NATION'S YOUTH. (MY TELNOS 1248 AND 1276 NOT TO ALL).

4. IN ETELAAT OF 1 DECEMBER, BANI SADR GAVE HIS REASONS FOR LEAVING THE FOREIGN MINISTRY: BASICALLY HIS WISH TO ATTEND THE SECURITY COUNCIL IN ORDER TO OBTAIN A HEARING FOR IRAN'S CASE FOR THE RETURN OF THE SHAH, HAD BEEN FRUSTRATED BY IRANIAN RADIO AND TV (IE QOTBZADEH) SPREADING FALSE PROPAGANDA, SLANDERING THE SECRETARY GENERAL AND CREATING THE IMPRESSION THAT THE SECURITY COUNCIL WOULD INEVITABLY PRONOUNCE AGAINST IRAN. "SO IT WAS USELESS FOR ME TO STAY AT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY." THE SAME DAY, THE RADIO BROADCAST THE TEXT OF QOTBZADEH'S LETTER TO WALDHEIM ALLEGING A CONSPIRACY TO MISREPRESENT THE IRANIAN RESOLUTION AND COVER UP THE CRIMES OF ZIONISM AND THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT IN IRAN.

GRAHAM

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