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FM TEL AVIV 171030Z OCT 80

TO ROUTINE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 493 OF 17 OCTOBER

INFO DAMASCUS AMMAN CAIRO WASHINGTON UKMIS NEW YORK AND JERUSALEM

MY TEL NO 429: GOLAN

1. DESPITE EARLIER AMERICAN OPTIMISM (MY TUR AND YOUR TEL NO157) GEULA COHEN HAS THIS WEEK LAID A PRIVATE MEMBER'S BILL BEFORE THE KNESSET CALLING FOR THE ANNEXATION OF THE GOLAN HEIGHTS. SEVERAL MEMBERS OF THE COALITION HAVE SUBMITTED A SIMILAR DRAFT BILL IN ORDER TO PREVENT MRS COHEN AGAIN TRAPPING THE COALITION AND GAINING THE CREDIT. BUT MRS COHEN'S BILL HAS PRECEDENCE.

2. THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF THE KNESSET AND PF THE ISRAELI PUBLIC REGARD THE RETURN OF GOLAN TO SYRIA AS UNTHINKABLE AND MOST SEE ANNEXATION AS THE BEST MEANS OF AVOIDING IT. WITHIN THIS MAJORITY, THE ONLY DIFFERENCES ARE ON TIMING. ONLY A MINORITY OF MEMBERS ON EITHER SIDE OF THE KNESSET CAN CONTEMPLATE VOTING AGAINST THE DRAFTS, ESPECIALLY IN AN ISRAELI ELECTION YEAR. ALTHOUGH THE LABOUR POLITICAL COMMITTEE VOTED OVERWHELMINGLY AGAINST SUPPORTING ANNEXATION AT THIS TIME, THE PARTY IS UNDER PRESSURE FROM ITS GOLAN SETTLERS. MOST OF ITS MKS ARE THEREFORE LIKELY, AT BEST, TO ABSTAIN (ALTHOUGH PERES HAS SAID THAT HE WOULD PREFER A VOTE AGAINST). EVEN FEWER HERUT AND NATIONAL RELIGIOUS PARTY MEMBERS WOULD ABSTAIN.

3. THE ISRAEL FOREIGN MINISTRY RECOGNISE THAT TO PASS AN ANNEXATION BILL AT THIS TIME WOULD BE BAD FOR ISRAEL INTER-NATIONALLY, AND APPEARS TO HAVE PERSUADED SHAMIR OF THIS. BEGIN'S ATTITUDE WILL HOWEVER BE CRUCIAL. WE HAVE HEARD PRIVATELY THAT HE TOLD LABOUR SETTLER'S LOBBYISTS EARLIER THIS WEEK THAT HE SUPPORTED AN ANNEXATION BILL. IF HE WISHES TO AVOID THE APPEARANCE OF HAVING ENCOURAGED THE BILL, HE COULD USE THE KNESSET POWERS TO REQUIRE A 60 DAY DELAY BEFORE THE FIRST READING OF A PRIVATE BILL. THE TROUBLE IS THAT EVEN IF HE DOES THIS, WHEN IT COMES TO A VOTE AT THE END OF NOVEMBER, THERE MAY WELL NOT BE ENOUGH KNESSET MEMBERS PREPARED TO VOTE IT DOWN.

ROBINSON

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