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FROM UKMIS NEW YORK 270011Z NOV 80

TO PRIORITY F C O

TELEGRAM NUMBER 1879 OF 26 NOVEMBER

INFO PRIORITY BAGHDAD WASHINGTON MOSCOW PARIS AMMAN STOCKHOLM

UKMIS GENEVA

*Read in full*

*MA*

MY TELNO 1865: IRAN/IRAQ: PALME MISSION

1. PALME CALLED ON ME THIS MORNING (26 NOVEMBER) IN MY CAPACITY AS PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL.

2. HE SAID THAT HIS VISIT TO THE AREA HAD CONFIRMED THAT THE CONFLICT WAS DEEPLY ROOTED IN HISTORY. THE ONLY NEW INGREDIENT WAS THE ATTEMPTED EXPORT OF THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION. HE NOW SAW CLEARLY THAT THERE COULD BE NO QUICK SOLUTION. THE WAR WOULD NOT BE STOPPED BY ECONOMIC OR RESUPPLY FACTORS. WHAT HAD STRUCK HIM MOST WAS THE MILITARY EUPHORIA ON BOTH SIDES. BOTH WERE CONVINCED THAT THEY COULD STILL MAKE MAJOR MILITARY GAINS (THE IRANIANS HAD TALKED OF REACHING BAGHDAD) AND HAD MADE TOTALLY CONTRADICTORY CLAIMS ABOUT THE MILITARY SITUATION. HE THOUGHT THAT BOTH ACCEPTED THAT A DIPLOMATIC SOLUTION WOULD BE NECESSARY IN THE END BUT BECAUSE OF THIS MILITARY EUPHORIA NEITHER WAS READY FOR IT YET, THOUGH THE IRAQI ATTITUDE WAS LESS NEGATIVE THAN THE IRANIAN. THE PROBLEM WAS THUS ONE OF TIMING: WHEN WAS THE MOMENT TO LAUNCH DIPLOMATIC PROPOSALS? THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION DEPENDED ON THE MILITARY SITUATION AND HE HAD FOUND IT IMPOSSIBLE TO OBTAIN RELIABLE INFORMATION ON THAT. HE HAD BEEN TAKEN TO THE "FRONT" AT DEZFUL AND KERMANSHAH BUT HAD FOUND LIFE IN BOTH TOWNS TO BE ENTIRELY NORMAL. THE ONLY EVIDENCE OF THE WAR HAD BEEN SOME DAMAGE CAUSED BY THE ROCKET ATTACKS IN DEZFUL AND THE DISTANT SOUND OF ARTILLERY FIRE.

3. IN IRAQ HE HAD BEEN IMPRESSED BY SADDAM. THE IRAQIS HAD PRESENTED THEIR ARGUMENTS SKILFULLY. THEY HAD EXPRESSED READINESS TO NEGOTIATE BUT THEY WERE SHARPENING THEIR TERMS ALL THE TIME, ESPECIALLY ON THE SHATT. SADDAM AND TARIQ AZIZ HAD MADE VEILED THREATS ABOUT THE ETHNIC FRAGILITY OF IRAN, APPARENTLY IN AN ATTEMPT TO PUT PRESSURE ON PALME TO GET THE IRANIANS TO MOVE TOWARDS ACCEPTANCE OF THE IRAQI TERMS.

4. IN IRAN, HE HAD SEEN RAJAIE AND BANI SADR. BEHESHTI HAD BEEN EVASIVE BUT HE HAD SPOKEN TO HIM ON THE TELEPHONE. RAJAIE HAD NOT BEEN INTERESTED IN THE PRACTICALITIES OF A PEACEFUL SOLUTION. HE SAW THE WAR AS A STRAIGHT FIGHT BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL. WHEN PALME HAD ASKED HIM HOW THE IRAQIS COULD WITHDRAW WITHOUT A CEASEFIRE, RAJAIE HAD MERELY REPLIED THAT THE PROPHET HAD SAID THAT MUSLIMS SHOULD NEVER ATTACK AN ENEMY WHO HAD TURNED HIS BACK.

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/ BANI SADR,



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BANI SADR, PALME SAID, NOW LIVES PERMANENTLY IN DEZFUL, SURROUNDED BY REGULAR ARMY OFFICERS. PALME BELIEVED THAT HE WAS TRYING TO MAKE THE REGULAR ARMY HIS POWER BASE, CAPITALISING ON THE REGULAR OFFICERS' DISAFFECTION WITH THE AYATOLLAHS. BANI SADR HAD BEEN VERY TOUGH, SAYING THAT HIS OBJECTIVE WAS TO BRING DOWN SADDAM EITHER BY MAKING HIM LOSE THE WAR OR BY FORCING HIM TO ACCEPT TERMS SUFFICIENTLY HUMILIATING TO ENSURE HIS OVERTHROW BY HIS RIVALS IN IRAQ. BANI SADR WAS STILL LOOKING FOR INTERNATIONAL "CONDEMNATION" OF IRAQ AND TALKED OF HAVING SADDAM EVENTUALLY CONDEMNED AS A CRIMINAL BY SOME NUREMBERG-TYPE TRIBUNAL.

5. PALME SAID THAT THE IRAQIS HAD BEEN VERY FORTHCOMING ABOUT THE SHIPS TRAPPED IN THE SHATT. BOTH SIDES HAD AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO AN INFORMAL CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES (NOT TO BE CALLED A "CEASEFIRE") OVER THE WATERWAY WHILE THE SHIPS WERE EVACUATED FLYING THE RED CROSS FLAG. THE IRAQIS WOULD HAVE TO DO SOME DREDGING FIRST. PALME HAD ASKED FOR CONFIRMATION OF THESE ARRANGEMENTS IN WRITING AND WAS HOPING FOR THE IRANIAN RESPONSE TODAY. (WALDHEIM SUBSEQUENTLY TOLD ME THAT THIS HAD NOT BEEN FORTHCOMING BUT THAT HE HAD URGED PALME NEVERTHELESS TO PROCEED WITH HIS PLAN). PALME SAID THAT HE HOPED THAT THIS OPERATION MIGHT TAKE PLACE AT THE BEGINNING OF DECEMBER THOUGH THE IRAQIS COULD STILL MAKE DIFFICULTIES OVER DREDGING, THE CLEARING OF ORDNANCE AND GUARANTEES THAT IRAN WOULD NOT TAKE MILITARY ADVANTAGE OF THE CEASEFIRE. HE WAS EXPLORING WITH IMCO WHETHER THEY COULD HELP WITH PILOTS AND PROVIDE SOME KIND OF UN OBSERVATION OF THE OPERATION WHICH MIGHT REASSURE BOTH SIDES. PALME ATTACHES GREAT IMPORTANCE TO EVACUATION OF THE SHIPS BOTH FOR COMMERCIAL AND HUMANITARIAN REASONS AND AS A FIRST STEP TOWARDS AN EVENTUAL NEGOTIATION.

6. WALDHEIM ADDED LATER THAT NONE OF PALME'S IRANIAN INTERLOCUTORS HAD MENTIONED THE CAPTIVE OIL MINISTER. PALME HAD EVENTUALLY RAISED THIS HIMSELF WITH BANI SADR WHO HAD DISMISSIVELY SAID THAT THE MINISTER HAD BEEN WARNED NOT TO GO SO NEAR THE FRONT AND THAT THE IRANIANS ATTACHED NO IMPORTANCE TO HIS EARLY RELEASE. ONE OF BANI SADR'S GENERALS HAD ADDED "HE IS ONLY ONE OF THOSE REVOLUTIONARIES ANYWAY".

7. PALME STRESSED THAT HE WAS BEING VERY CAUTIOUS NOT TO SAY ANYTHING IN PUBLIC WHICH COULD BE REPRESENTED AS A VALUE JUDGEMENT ABOUT THE RIGHTS AND WRONGS OF THE CONFLICT, AS THIS WOULD WRECK HIS CHANCES OF MAKING FURTHER PROGRESS. HE AGREED WITH ME THEREFORE THAT IT WAS UNDESIRABLE FOR WALDHEIM TO BRIEF THE COUNCIL ORALLY IN INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS. THE UN HAS TODAY ISSUED AN ANODYNE PRESS STATEMENT BUT AS SOME MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL HAVE BEGUN TO ASK FOR FULLER BRIEFING WALDHEIM HAS DECIDED TO CIRCULATE A BRIEF WRITTEN REPORT, HOPING THAT HE WILL BE ABLE TO LEAVE IT AT THAT FOR THE TIME BEING.



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8. ASSUMING THAT THE EVACUATION OF THE SHIPS GOES AHEAD IN EARLY DECEMBER AS PLANNED, PALME IS THINKING IN TERMS OF RETURNING TO THE AREA SOME TIME IN THE SECOND HALF OF DECEMBER. HE DOES NOT WANT TO LOSE THE PERSONAL CONTACTS HE HAS MADE THIS TIME, BUT SEES NO POINT IN RUSHING BACK UNTIL HE HAS SOME MORE SPECIFIC IDEAS TO FLOAT. TO THIS END HE PLANS TO USE THE NEXT FEW WEEKS STUDYING THE MILITARY SITUATION, THE LEGAL ASPECTS OF THE SHATT DISPUTE, THE ELEMENTS THAT MIGHT GO INTO A NON-INTERFERENCE AGREEMENT AND POSSIBLE ROLES FOR THE UN. HE RETURNS TO STOCKHOLM TODAY BUT WILL BE BACK IN THE UNITED STATES ON A PRIVATE SPEAKING ENGAGEMENT NEXT WEEK.

9. I THINK THAT PALME HAS MADE AN EXCELLENT START. HE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN VERY WELL RECEIVED BY THE VARIOUS PERSONALITIES IN BOTH COUNTRIES, WHICH, AS I ADVISED HIM ON 14 NOVEMBER (MY TELNO 1786), SHOULD BE HIS FIRST OBJECTIVE. SO FAR HE IS DOING MUCH BETTER THAN PRESIDENT ZIA, HABIB CHATTY OR THE CUBAN FOREIGN MINISTER. BUT HE MENTIONED MORE THAN ONCE THAT HE FELT HAMPERED BY HIS IGNORANCE OF THE MILITARY SITUATION AND ASKED WHETHER WE COULD HELP. I SAID THAT OUR INFORMATION SUGGESTED THAT THIS WAS A LOW-INTENSITY WAR, CERTAINLY MUCH LOWER THAN THE COMBATANTS OR THE PRESS WOULD LEAD US TO BELIEVE. I ADDED THAT IF HE COULD STOP OVER IN LONDON ON ONE OF HIS FORTHCOMING JOURNEYS, I WAS SURE THAT YOU WOULD BE ABLE TO ARRANGE A BRIEFING FOR HIM AND THAT I WOULD ASK FOR A MESSAGE ON THIS TO BE PASSED TO HIM VIA H M AMBASSADOR IN STOCKHOLM. I VERY MUCH HOPE THAT IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO SET UP SOMETHING ON THESE LINES AND THAT STOCKHOLM CAN BE INSTRUCTED TO KEEP PALME INFORMED OF SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENTS ON THE MILITARY FRONT.

PARSONS

[THIS TELEGRAM WAS NOT ADVANCED]

IRAQ/IRAN STANDARD  
MED MAED  
NENAD TRED  
NAD ERD  
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ADDITIONAL DISTR.  
IRAQ/IRAN