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TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 178 OF 20 JANUARY

INFO CAIRO TEL AVIV AMMAN JERUSALEM

HAIG'S VISIT TO EGYPT AND ISRAEL: AUTONOMY TALKS

1. DRAPER BRIEFED REPRESENTATIVES OF WESTERN EMBASSIES TODAY. HE SAID THAT HAIG HAD WANTED TO HEAR AT FIRST HAND EGYPTIAN AND ISRAELI VIEWS ON ALL THE ISSUES IN THE AUTONOMY NEGOTIATIONS AND TO GIVE THE TALKS NEW MOMENTUM. HE HAD STRESSED THE NEED FOR PROGRESS BEFORE 26 APRIL. THE EGYPTIANS HAD INSISTED (AND THE ISRAELIS HAD AGREED) THAT THIS DATE SHOULD NOT BE REGARDED AS A DEADLINE. DRAPER ADMITTED THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO CHANGE OF SUBSTANCE IN EITHER SIDE'S POSITION.
2. DRAPER SAID THAT HAIG HAD NOT PUT FORWARD ANY IDEAS FOR RESOLVING THESE DIFFERENCES. HE HAD APPEALED TO THE ISRAELIS TO SHOW CREATIVITY IN DEVELOPING BRIDGING POSITIONS AND THE ISRAELIS HAD AGREED TO GIVE THIS SOME THOUGHT. DRAPER COMMENTED THAT THE CLIMATE IN ISRAEL WAS NOT ALTOGETHER REASSURING. THERE WAS A MOOD OF TENSENESS, ANXIETY ABOUT ISRAEL'S FUTURE AND SUSPICION OF EGYPT'S INTENTIONS. THE WITHDRAWAL OF SETTLERS FROM YAMIT WOULD BE A MAJOR NATIONAL TRAUMA FOR THE ISRAELIS.
3. DRAPER CLAIMED NEVERTHELESS THAT HAIG STILL HOPED TO BE ABLE TO SECURE A BREAKTHROUGH ON SOME ISSUES (WHICH HE DID NOT SPECIFY) WHICH WOULD ACT AS A CATALYST FOR FURTHER AGREEMENT. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE AMERICANS SEE THE KEY ISSUES ON WHICH AGREEMENT MUST BE REACHED AS THE SIZE OF THE SELF-GOVERNING AUTHORITY, VOTING RIGHTS FOR ARABS IN EAST JERUSALEM, THE RESIDUAL POWERS OF THE ISRAELIS IN THE INTERIM PERIOD AND ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS. DRAPER STRESSED THAT HAIG'S PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT WAS A MAJOR ASSET: HAIG NOW FULLY UNDERSTOOD ALL THE ISSUES AND COULD NOT BE QUOTE BLINDSIDED UNQUOTE.
4. DRAPER DOUBTED WHETHER THE AMERICANS WOULD BE READY TO PUT FORWARD SPECIFIC PROPOSALS DURING HAIG'S NEXT VISIT TO EGYPT AND ISRAEL. HE HOPED THAT THE ISRAELIS WOULD BY THEN HAVE SOME IDEAS OF THEIR OWN TO DISCUSS. HAIG WAS ALSO KEEPING AN OPEN MIND ON THE POSSIBLE APPOINTMENT OF A SPECIAL NEGOTIATOR: DRAPER SAID THAT HE WAS NOT YET CONVINCED THAT THIS WAS EITHER NECESSARY OR DESIRABLE.

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5. KEMP (NSC) HAS GIVEN US A SIMILAR ACCOUNT AND HAS CONFIRMED THAT THE AMERICANS HAVE YET TO DECIDE THEIR TACTICS FOR HAIG'S NEXT VISIT AND FOR MUBARAK'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON. HE ADDED (PLEASE PROTECT) THAT SECURITY WAS ALSO A VERY DIFFICULT ISSUE. THE ISRAELIS HAD YET TO GIVE THE EGYPTIANS A PROMISED BRIEFING ON THE AREAS THEY WISHED TO RETAIN UNDER THEIR DIRECT CONTROL AND ON THE SCOPE OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THEIR SECURITY FORCES IN THOSE AREAS. ANOTHER PROBLEM WAS THAT IT WAS AGREED IN PRINCIPLE THAT THE ISRAELIS SHOULD DEAL WITH TERRORIST OFFENCES BUT NOT HOW THESE SHOULD BE DEFINED (WAS, FOR EXAMPLE, CHANTING OF PLO SLOGANS A TERRORIST OFFENCE?).

6. KEMP SEES THE IMMEDIATE PROBLEM AS ONE OF POLITICAL WILL. HE BELIEVES THAT MOST OF THE ISSUES CAN BE RESOLVED IF MUBARAK AND BEGIN GIVE A SUFFICIENTLY CLEAR LEAD. BUT IT WILL BE ESSENTIAL FOR MUBARAK TO DISREGARD THE ADVICE HE IS RECEIVING TO CONSULT PALESTINIANS AND OTHER ARABS IN ADVANCE OF AGREEING ANY CONCESSIONS AND TO GAMBLE ON THE ACCEPTABILITY TO THEM OF ANY AGREEMENT HE REACHES. EQUALLY BEGIN WILL HAVE TO TAKE GREAT POLITICAL RISKS OVER JERUSALEM, TO WHICH THE EGYPTIANS ARE GIVING HIGH PRIORITY.

7. KEMP CONCLUDED THAT THE CHANCES OF SUCCESS WERE SLIM. HE ATTACHED GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THE NEED TO GET SERIOUS NEGOTIATIONS UNDER WAY BEFORE THE ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM SINAI. ONE FAINT GLEAM OF HOPE WAS INDICATIONS (IN VELIOTES' TALKS IN JORDAN) THAT THE JORDANIANS AND MODERATE PALESTINIANS WERE COMING TO SEE THAT IT WAS A CASE OF AN AUTONOMY AGREEMENT OR NOTHING: IF THERE WERE NO MEANINGFUL NEGOTIATIONS BY THE END OF APRIL THE ISRAELIS WOULD ANNEX THE WEST BANK AND THAT WOULD BE THAT.

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