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DEKSBY 231000Z DEC 82

FROM AMMAN 230800Z DEC 82

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 580 OF 23 DEC 82

AND TO INFO IMMEDIATE TUNIS, PRIORITY DAMASCUS AND WASHINGTON  
AND ROUTINE MOSCOW, PARIS, ROME, UKMIS NEW YORK AND OTHER  
MIDDLE EAST POSTS.

MY TELNO 573 PARAGRAPH 4 AND TUNIS TELNO 278:

JORDAN/PLO.

1. I SAW DR HANNA NASSER TODAY AT MY HOUSE ON HIS RETURN FROM ATTENDING THE PLO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING IN TUNIS (HANI EL HASSAN IS IN DAMASCUS). NASSER SAID THAT THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING HAD GONE WELL: ARAFAT HAD WON A LARGE MEASURE OF AGREEMENT FOR PURSUING THE POSSIBILITY OF NEGOTIATIONS, ALTHOUGH EVERYTHING WOULD DEPEND ON WHAT KING HUSSEIN BROUGHT BACK FROM WASHINGTON. THE FACT THAT KHALED EL FAHOM HAD BEEN ABLE TO ANNOUNCE THAT THE PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL WOULD MEET IN ALGIERS IN THE FIRST HALF OF FEBRUARY (NASSER THOUGHT 14 FEBRUARY THE MOST LIKELY DATE) WAS AN INDICATION OF ARAFAT'S CONFIDENCE THAT HE COULD NOW CARRY THE DAY WITHIN THE PLO.

2. NASSER SAID THAT OPINION WITHIN THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HAD COME DOWN FIRMLY IN FAVOUR OF AN ARAB NEGOTIATING TEAM TO FOLLOW UP THE REAGAN INITIATIVE, BUT THAT THE DETAILS OF WHAT FORM THIS WOULD TAKE AND WHETHER IT SHOULD BE ON THE SAME LINES AS THE POST-FEZ COMMISSION OR A REVERSION TO THE KIND OF FORMULA AGREED FOR PLO PARTICIPATION IN 1978 HAD NOT BEEN MUCH DISCUSSED. NOR HAD THERE BEEN ANY FIRM IDEAS ABOUT WHO MIGHT REPRESENT THE PLO IN SUCH A DELEGATION, ALTHOUGH IT WAS ESSENTIAL THAT WHOEVER DID SO SHOULD BE PLO NOMINEES (YOUR TELNO 341 TO AMMAN REFERS).

3. NASSER SAID THAT , SUBJECT TO THE ALL-IMPORTANT PROVISIO THAT KING HUSSEIN BROUGHT BACK THE RIGHT ANSWERS FROM WASHINGTON, HE BELIEVED THE PLO SHOULD AND WOULD AGREE TO MOVE FORWARD INTO NEGOTIATIONS. ARAFAT WOULD OF COURSE FACE DIFFICULTIES WITHIN THE PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT, BUT THESE COULD BE SURMOUNTED.

4. NASSER THOUGHT IT WOULD BE PARTICULARLY VALUABLE IF THE EUROPEANS AT THIS TIME COULD PUBLICLY REAFFIRM THEIR COMMITMENT TO PALESTINIAN SELF-DETERMINATION AND THEIR OPPOSITION TO SETTLEMENTS AND THE FORCIBLE ANNEXATION OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES BY ISRAEL. THE PALESTINIANS REQUIRED ENCOURAGEMENT,

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AND NASSER SAW NO NEED FOR THE EUROPEANS TO GET INTO THE CONTROVERSIAL AREA OF WHETHER OR NOT THERE SHOULD BE AN INDEPENDANT PALESTINIAN STATE. SIMILARLY NASSER CLAIMED TO HAVE ARGUED WITHIN THE PLO COUNCILS AGAINST BEING DEMUSED BY THE QUESTION OF FORMAL RECOGNITION OF THE PLO AND THAT IT WAS SURELY ENOUGH FOR THEIR RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE NEGOTIATIONS TO BE RECOGNISED SEMICOLON FORMAL RECOGNITION COULD COME LATER.

5. THIS LED NASSER TO ENQUIRE WHETHER A FORMULA HAD YET BEEN FOUND TO MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR THE ARAB LEAGUE DELEGATION TO VISIT LONDON. HE SAID THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE IRRITATION WITHIN THE PLO OVER THE BRITISH ATTITUDE, HE PERSONALLY MUCH REGRETTED THAT THE PRESENT SITUATION HAD BEEN ALLOWED TO ARISE. WHEN I MENTIONED THAT OUR AMBASSADOR IN TUNIS MIGHT SHORTLY BE SEEING ARAFAT ON ANOTHER MATTER, NASSER SAID HE HOPED HE WOULD ALSO BE ABLE TO PUT A FORMULA TO HIM FOR THE SOLUTION OF THIS PROBLEM. I EMPHASISED THAT THE WHOLE QUESTION OF THE VISIT OF THE ARAB LEAGUE DELEGATION TO LONDON WAS UNDER DISCUSSION WITH THE MOROCCANS, THAT THEY MUST REMAIN THE PRIMARY CHANNEL AND THAT I WAS NOT AUTHORISED TO DISCUSS FORMULAE. NASSER REPLIED THAT THE PLO WERE THE PARTY ON WHOM THE DISPUTE CENTRED AND REITERATED THAT IT OUGHT SURELY TO BE POSSIBLE TO FIND A SATISFACTORY SOLUTION. THE ESSENTIAL THING WAS THAT THE PLO'S RIGHT TO BE INVOLVED IN THE SEARCH FOR A PEACEFUL SOLUTION OF THE MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM SHOULD BE RECOGNISED IN WHATEVER FORMULA WE PROPOSED. IT WAS THIS RATHER THAN RECOGNITION WHICH WAS THE KEY ISSUE, AND HE SEEMED TO THINK THAT THE PLO WOULD SETTLE FOR SOMETHING SHORT OF WHAT THE FRENCH HAD DONE PROVIDED THAT WE COULD MEET THEM ON WHAT THEY REGARDED AS THIS CENTRAL POINT. I TOLD HIM THAT I DID NOT KNOW WHAT THE LATEST STATE OF PLAY WAS.

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