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FM AMMAN 110855Z FEB 83

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 55 OF 11 FEB

INFO PRIORITY WASHINGTON: ROUTINE MIDDLE EAST POSTS, MOSCOW, PARIS, UKMIS NEWYORK.

MY TELNO 52: JORDAN/PLO

1. HANNA NASSER (PLO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE), WHOM I SAW ON 10 FEBRUARY, CONFIRMED THE IMPRESSION GIVEN BY JORDANIAN MINISTERS AND BY MILHEM THAT ARAFAT WOULD BE ABLE TO CARRY THE DAY AT THE FORTHCOMING MEETING OF THE PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL IN ALGIERS.
2. NASSER SAID HE WAS LEAVING FOR ALGIERS ON 12 FEBRUARY. TWO DAYS HAD BEEN SET ASIDE FOR DISCUSSIONS WITHIN THE PLO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE PRIOR TO THE FORMAL OPENING OF THE COUNCIL MEETING ON THE EVENING OF 14 FEBRUARY. NASSER WAS EXPECTING CHANGES TO BE MADE IN THE COMPOSITION OF THE PLO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND EVEN SEEMED UNCERTAIN WHETHER HE HIMSELF WOULD REMAIN A MEMBER.
3. NASSER CONFIRMED THAT ABOUT 50 NEW MEMBERS HAD BEEN APPOINTED TO THE PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL. ALTHOUGH HE CLAIMED TO HAVE HAD CLOSE CONSULTATIONS WITH ARAFAT DURING HIS RECENT VISIT TO AMMAN, NASSER SAID HE REMAINED UNCERTAIN HOW ARAFAT PROPOSED TO PLAY HIS HAND AT ALGIERS AND THOUGHT HE WOULD KEEP HIS OWN COUNSEL UNTIL THE LAST MOMENT. NASSER BELIEVED IT WOULD BE TOUGH GOING FOR ARAFAT, BUT AS THERE WAS NO CONVINCING ALTERNATIVE TO HIM AS PLO LEADER HE WOULD IN THE END PROVE ABLE TO OBTAIN THE SORT OF MANDATE HE NEEDED. NASSER DOUBTED WHETHER THE DISSIDENT FACTIONS OPPOSED TO PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE PEACE PROCESS WOULD IN THE LAST RESORT BREAK AWAY AND SEEK TO FORM A SEPARATE ORGANISATION OF THEIR OWN. OUTSIDE THE MAIN PLO BODY THEY WOULD HAVE NEITHER STANDING NOR CREDIBILITY, AND WOULD BE SEEN TO BE MERELY STOOGES OF THE SYRIANS OR LIBYANS.
4. NASSER SAID HE NOW THOUGHT IT UNLIKELY THAT AN ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION WOULD BE FOUND TO THE PROBLEM OF PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION ON THE ARAB LEAGUE DELEGATION DUE TO VISIT LONDON. DURING HIS RECENT VISIT TO AMMAN, NASSER HAD FOUND THAT ARAFAT'S OWN ATTITUDE ON THIS QUESTION SEEMED TO HAVE HARDENED, AND NASSER NOW THOUGHT THAT THE VISIT WOULD NOT TAKE PLACE AT ALL.

URWICK

**MIDDLE EAST**

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