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SIN D. MIRAS.

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CABINET OFFICE DIO

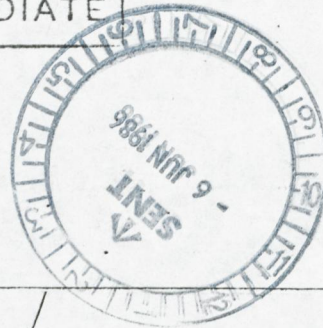
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1.10.85

CONFIDENTIAL

FM TUNIS

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 142

OF 050815Z JUNE 86

INFO PRIORITY MIDDLE EAST POSTS, EC POSTS, WASHINGTON, MOSCOW

INFO PRIORITY UKMIS NEW YORK

FCO TELNO 176 TO CAIRO :

PLO REACTION TO PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO ISRAEL

SUMMARY

1. PLO OFFICIALS BITTERLY CRITICAL OF PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENTS DURING ISRAEL VISIT.

DETAIL

2. HEAD OF CHANCERY CALLED TODAY ON HAEI FAHOM, OF THE PLO POLITICAL BUREAU FOR A DISCUSSION IN THE WAKE OF THE PM'S VISIT TO ISRAEL. FAHOM, NORMALLY A SENSIBLE AND RESTRAINED INDIVIDUAL, WAS FIERCELY CRITICAL, AND SAID EXPLICITLY THAT HIS COMMENTS REFLECTED THE GENERAL VIEW OF THE SENIOR PLO LEADERSHIP. THE MAJOR ELEMENTS OF A LENGTHY EXPOSITION WERE AS FOLLOWS.

3. THE PLO MADE NO CRITICISM OF THE FACT THAT A BRITISH PRIME MINISTER HAD VISITED ISRAEL. THEY ACCEPTED THAT A GOOD UK - ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP WAS DESIRABLE. BUT THE EMOTIONAL ATMOSPHERE OF THE VISIT, COUPLED WITH THE HOSTILE STATEMENTS OF THE PM AGAINST THE PLO HAD EVOKED A STRONG EMOTIONAL RESPONSE AMONG PALESTINIANS AND RESURRECTED OLD GHOSTS AND SUSPICIONS ABOUT BRITAIN, DATING BACK TO BALFOUR. ARAFAT WAS "ANGRY, UPSET AND DISAPPOINTED". HENCE THE UNTYPICALLY PERSONAL ATTACK ON THE PM BY ARAFAT ON 1 JUNE (MY TELNO 141). FAHOM DREW A DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT'S APPROACH AND THE "POSITIVE" ATTITUDE OF THE OTHER BRITISH POLITICAL PARTIES WITH WHOM THE PLO HAD A GOOD RELATIONSHIP.

4. THE PLO CHALLENGED THE "RIGHT" OF THE PM AT HER PRESS CONFERENCE TO SUGGEST OR PRESCRIBE HOW THE PALESTINIANS SHOULD BE REPRESENTED. EVEN THE WEST BANK PALESTINIANS WHOM THE PM HAD MET IN JERUSALEM HAD MADE CLEAR TO HER THAT THE PLO WAS THEIR SOLE LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVE.

*What a shower they are!  
I fear that our Ambassador does not come well out of this exchange.*

*MS*



SOLE LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVE.

5. IN RESPONSE TO A REMINDER THAT THE PM DURING HER VISIT HAD SPOKEN IN BLUNT TERMS TO THE ISRAELIS ABOUT THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND HAD REITERATED PUBLICLY THE NEED FOR RECOGNITION OF THE LEGITIMATE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIANS, FAHOUM SAID THAT HER SUBSEQUENT PRESS CONFERENCE COMMENTS NEGATED ALL THIS. THE PLO NOW SAW THE BRITISH POSITION AS BEING NO LONGER IN CONFORMITY WITH THE VENICE DECLARATION NOR WITH THE POLICY OF THE REST OF THE EC. FAHOUM ADDED THAT EVEN THE OTHER EC COUNTRIES HAD COMMENTED TO THE PLO IN SUCH TERMS AND THE PLO WAS NOW FORCED TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN THE UK AND THE REST OF THE EC. FAR FROM BUILDING ON THE PRESENT UK/EC POSITION, BRITAIN HAD ALIGNED ITSELF UNEQUIVOCALLY WITH THE US AND JORDAN AND SET ITS FACE AGAINST THE PLO AND ALL PALESTINIANS.

6. TO THE SUGGESTION THAT THE PM'S REMARKS SHOULD BE SEEN IN THE CONTEXT OF A PRAGMATIC BRITISH SEARCH FOR POSSIBLE WAYS FORWARD, FAHOUM REPEATED ARAFAT'S LINE THAT THE PM HAD DEMONSTRATED BRITISH PARTIALITY. TO PLAY A USEFUL ROLE BRITAIN HAD TO BE AN CREDIBLE INTERLOCUTOR WITH SOUND RELATIONSHIPS WITH BOTH PRINCIPAL PARTIES, ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS (IE THE PLO). YET WHILE CONDUCTING A LOVE AFFAIR WITH ISRAEL, BRITAIN HAD AT EVERY STAGE RAISED OBSTACLES TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PLO. HE REFERRED BACK TO THE PROBLEMS WHICH LED TO THE ABANDONING OF THE JORDAN/PLO DELEGATION VISIT TO LONDON IN 1985. LIKE THE US, BRITAIN APPEARED FREQUENTLY TO ACCEPT OR AGREE, ONLY THEN TO GO BACK ON ITS WORD.

7. FAHOUM DISAGREED CATEGORICALLY WITH THE ASSERTION THAT THE PM HAD NOT RULED OUT THE POSSIBILITY OF THE PLO BEING ASSOCIATED WITH NEGOTIATIONS (PARA 3 OF TUR). THE PLO HAD GONE AS FAR AS IT COULD TO MEET BRITISH CONCERNS (EG THE CAIRO DECLARATION ON TERRORISM). BUT BY CALLING FOR ALTERNATIVE PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVES SHE HAD QUITE DELIBERATELY SOUGHT TO EXCLUDE THE PLO FROM ANY NEGOTIATING PROCESS.

8. AT THE END OF THE DISCUSSION, FAHOUM COMMENTED THAT, THOUGH THEIR PICTURE OF CURRENT BRITISH POLICY WAS VERY DARK, THE PLO WAS NEVERTHELESS WATCHING AND WAITING FOR SIGNS THAT THERE WOULD BE A SHIFT FOR THE BETTER.

COMMENT

9. THE PLO CLEARLY WISHED TO MAKE THE MOST OF THIS FIRST 'OFFICIAL' ENCOUNTER SINCE THE VISIT, TO BERATE BRITAIN. QADDOUMI IS HERE AND HAS INDICATED HE IS AVAILABLE TO SEE ME. I HAVE IT IN MIND TO CALL ON HIM OR ABU JAAFAR, AFTER THE EID. PLEASE LET ME KNOW BY MORNING OF 11 JUNE IF THERE ARE ANY SPECIFIC POINTS YOU WISH ME TO MAKE.

ADAMS

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TKLNAN 0368

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