

CONFIDENTIAL

FM TUNIS

TO DESKBY 031400Z FCO

TELNO 450

OF 031220Z DECEMBER 89

INFO DESKBY 031400Z WASHINGTON

INFO IMMEDIATE TEL AVIV, JERUSALEM, CAIRO, PARIS, AMMAN, UKMIS NEW YK

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TELECON WITH RESIDENT CLERK : PEACE PROCESS

## SUMMARY

1. ARAFAT STATES HE HAS ACCEPTED THE BAKER PLAN AND THAT THE EGYPTIANS AGREE. RESPONSE AWAITED FROM WASHINGTON : HE WILL DELAY AN ANNOUNCEMENT UNTIL THEN. HE APPEALS TO BRITISH MINISTERS TO USE THEIR INFLUENCE IN WASHINGTON AND TEL AVIV TO KEEP UP PROGRESS TOWARDS PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST. AMERICAN REACTION IN DOUBT.

## DETAIL

2. ARAFAT ASKED ME TO CALL AT 2115 ON 2 DECEMBER. I STAYED FOR ALMOST AN HOUR. HE WAS ALONE WITH BELAWI.

3. OPENING A FILE HE SHOWED ME A THREE PAGE PAPER IN ARABIC (BY FAX AND HAND TO NENAD) WHICH HE WISHED ME TO TRANSMIT TO LONDON. IT CONTAINED TWO PAPERS WHICH SET OUT "OUR ANSWERS AND OUR POINTS OF VIEW CONCERNING ENQUIRIES BETWEEN US AND THE AMERICANS." THE THIRD PAPER, HE SAID, GAVE THE FINAL OPINION ON THE BAKER PROPOSALS. HE THEN MADE A ROUGH TRANSLATION (IN MIFT, NOT TO ALL).

4. AFTER TRANSLATING THE KEY OPENING PASSAGE HE COMMENTED - "WE ACCEPT, THEN, TO DEAL AND TO PARTICIPATE WITH THE ISRAELI/PALESTINIAN DIALOGUE." HE SAID THE TEXT HAD BEEN ACCEPTED BY ABDUL-MEGID AND GIVEN TO PELLETREAU LATE THE NIGHT BEFORE. HE BELIEVED THE EGYPTIANS WERE HAPPY WITH THE TEXT AND SAW IT AS A MEETING THE REQUIREMENTS. PELLETREAU, HE BELIEVED, WAS ALSO CONTENT. HE HAD BRIEFED THE TROIKA AMBASSADORS.

5. HE WAS IN A CALM, THOUGHTFUL MOOD, AND OBVIOUSLY WANTED TO CHAT. HE EXPLAINED THAT THIS HAD BEEN A MOST DIFFICULT STEP. HE WAS NOT A DICTATOR. IT HAD TAKEN WEEKS OF ARGUMENT AND DEBATE IN BAGHDAD, CAIRO AND TUNIS. THE PNC HAD ONLY GIVEN A MANDATE TO ATTEND THE

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE. IT HAD BEEN A DIFFICULT TASK TO PERSUADE THE CENTRAL COUNCIL IN BAGHDAD TO GIVE HIM FREEDOM TO CONSIDER THE ISRAELI/PALESTINIAN DIALOGUE. HE HAD FINALLY DECIDED THIS WEEK TO USE THE WORD 'ACCEPT', COMMENTING THAT HE RECALLED OUR DISCUSSION ON THIS SIMPLE WORD. HE HAD TIMED THE REPLY TO COINCIDE WITH THE SUMMIT.

6. I SAID I WAS SURE BRITISH MINISTERS WOULD BE PLEASED TO READ OF HIS DECISION. WE KNEW IT WAS BUT A STEP AND THAT THE GOAL REMAINED THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE. THE ESSENTIAL THING WAS FOR HIM TO RETAIN THE INITIATIVE AND KEEP THE DIFFICULT QUESTIONS DIRECTED AT THE ISRAELIS. HE STILL HAD TO WIN THE SUPPORT OF ORDINARY AMERICANS AND ISRAELIS.

7. WE ENGLISH, I OBSERVED, WERE SIMPLE PEOPLE. OUR MINISTERS WOULD BE ASKED WHAT THE PLO HAD SAID. HAD THE PLO ACCEPTED THE BAKER PLAN? HE REPLIED: 'YES, WE HAVE ACCEPTED IT.' I THANKED HIM FOR THIS REPLY AND ASKED WHEN IT WOULD BECOME PUBLIC. HE SAID HE WOULD LEAVE THAT TO THE AMERICANS, MAYBE ON MONDAY. I SAID I WAS CONFIDENT WE WOULD WISH TO SUPPORT AN AMERICAN ACCEPTANCE.

8. HE WENT ON TO STRESS HIS PARAMOUNT CONCERN TO KEEP THE PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT UNITED. THIS IMPORTANT STEP MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO OPEN UP DIVISIONS AMONG HIS PEOPLE. I REPEATED A REMARK I HAD MADE TO HIM A WEEK OR SO AGO, THAT IT WAS FOR THE STRONG TO MAKE CONCESSIONS: HE MUST CONTINUE TO DEMONSTRATE HIS STRENGTH, EG. AS SHOWN AT THE RECENT ARAB LEAGUE COUNCIL. THIS REMARK DID NOT GO DOWN TOO WELL. WHATEVER THE APPEARANCE, HIS LIFE WAS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT: ISRAELIS, LIBYANS, SYRIANS AND SOME PALESTINIANS WERE AGAINST HIM. HIS LIFE WAS IN CONSTANT DANGER. HE NEEDED BRITISH SUPPORT.

9. HE THOUGHT CAREFULLY AND SAID HE WISHED ME TO PASS A MESSAGE TO THE PRIME MINISTER, THE FOREIGN SECRETARY AND TO 'MY FRIEND WILLIAM WALDEGRAVE' - IT WAS NOW THEIR DUTY TO WORK WITH THOSE SEEKING PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND TO PRESSURE WASHINGTON AND SHAMIR NOT TO LET THE PALESTINIANS DOWN.

10. HE THEN WENT INTO A LONG (AND FAMILIAR) ANALYSIS OF THE TIMES HE HAD BEEN LET DOWN BY WASHINGTON. WAS KISSINGER 'STILL PLAYING HIS DIRTY GAMES BEHIND THE CURTAINS?' HE MENTIONED HIS DOUBTS AGAIN ABOUT CERTAIN US OFFICIALS, BUT HE HAD NO SUCH DOUBTS ABOUT THE PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY BAKER, WHOM HE TRUSTED.

11. WE THEN TALKED AGAIN ABOUT THE NATURE OF AMERICAN AND BRITISH DEMOCRACIES. POINTING TO THE TV IN THE CORNER (PLAYING A GYRATING, FORTUNATELY SOUNDLESS TINA TURNER) I URGED HIM TO HAVE A SATELLITE INSTALLED SO HE COULD SEE OUR PARLIAMENT IN ACTION. IT WOULD HELP HIM UNDERSTAND THE NEED OF AMERICAN AND BRITISH LEADERS TO EXPLAIN, INFORM AND LEAD. HE SHOULD ALWAYS BEAR THAT AUDIENCE IN MIND. THEY HAD TO BE WON OVER CONSTANTLY.

12. I ASKED IF HE HAD ANY IDEA OF THE TIME-SCALE FOR THE NEXT MOVES. HE SAID HE DID NOT. RATHER ANGRILY HE SAID HE SAW NO POINT IN A MEETING OF THE THREE FOREIGN MINISTERS. THAT WAS QUITE UNNECESSARY. I ADVISED HIM NOT TO TRY AND PLAN TOO MANY STEPS AHEAD. HE SHOULD LET THE AMERICANS ASK THE ISRAELI QUESTIONS. THE MORE THEY WERE ASKED THE MORE THE INTERNAL DIVISIONS WITHIN THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT WOULD OPEN UP. FOR EXAMPLE, HE SHOULD LET THE ISRAELIS ARGUE ABOUT THE INVOLVEMENT OF JERUSALEM VOTERS. ARAFAT OFFERED AN UP-BEAT ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT ISRAELI POLITICAL SCENE, QUOTING THE HISTADRUT ELECTIONS AND SUGGESTING THAT THE LABOUR PARTY COULD WIN AN ELECTION. I SAID OUR ANALYSIS WAS MUCH LESS OPTIMISTIC. IF AN ELECTION WERE TO BE CALLED, IT HAD TO BE ON THE RIGHT ISSUE, THAT IS ONE WHICH WOULD BRING MAXIMUM SUPPORT FOR THOSE WHO WISHED TO TALK TO THE PALESTINIANS. AN ELECTION ON WHETHER TO TALK TO THE PLO WOULD RESULT IN A MAJOR SET-BACK.

13. I SPOKE THE NEXT MORNING TO PELLETREAU AND ASKED IF HE THOUGHT WASHINGTON WOULD REGARD THE PLO REPLY AS AN ACCEPTANCE. HE SAID HE HAD SOME DOUBTS. IT WAS ''TOO CUTE''. I TOLD HIM OF ARAFAT'S STATEMENTS TO ME AND HE SAID HE THOUGHT THESE WOULD BE HELPFUL. THE AMERICANS WERE IMPEDED BY NOT BEING ABLE TO TALK TO HIM.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

14. SUBJECT TO ANALYSIS OF THE PLO TEXT I HOPE WE CAN CONSIDER ADVISING THE AMERICANS TO TAKE THE PLO REPLY AS AN ACCEPTANCE.

15. IF THE AMERICANS ACCEPT IT, I HOPE WE CAN MAKE AN EARLY STATEMENT IN SUPPORT. A STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER IN THE HOUSE WOULD BE OF GREAT IMPORTANCE IN HELPING ARAFAT KEEP THE PLO BEHIND HIM. HE IS BOUND TO COME UNDER ATTACK FROM THE EXTREMISTS.

16. I ALSO RECOMMEND THAT THE BBC BE CAREFULLY BRIEFED TO EXPLAIN AND EDUCATE ARAB AND PALESTINIAN OPINION ON THE WIDER ARGUMENTS.

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