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TOMKYS'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON: PEACE PROCESS

SUMMARY

1. ADMINISTRATION SEARCHING FOR WAYS TO KEEP THE PALESTINIANS ON BOARD UNTIL PEACE PROCESS CAN RESUME. UPGRADING OF US/PLO DIALOGUE UNLIKELY, BUT PRESSURE ON ISRAEL OVER PALESTINIAN FAMILY REUNIFICATION, AND MORE TOUGH TALKING ON SETTLEMENT ACTIVITY IN PROSPECT.

DETAIL

2. TOMKYS DISCUSSED THE PROSPECTS FOR THE PEACE PROCESS WITH ROSS AND BURNS OF PLANNING STAFF, STATE. ROSS BEGAN BY SURVEYING THE PROSPECTS FOR A GOVERNMENT IN ISRAEL. HE DISCOUNTED THE CHANCES OF PERES MAKING A LAST MINUTE BREAKTHROUGH. BUT, EQUALLY, HE THOUGHT IT UNLIKELY THAT SHAMIR WOULD BE ABLE TO FORM A GOVERNMENT: IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THE SUPPORT OF SHAS, HE WOULD HAVE TO AGREE TO MOVE ON THE BAKER PROPOSALS. A FURTHER POSSIBILITY WAS A NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT LED BY RABIN AND SHAMIR. THIS WAS A CONCEIVABLE OUTCOME, BUT WOULD NOT BE ACHIEVED QUICKLY. IT WOULD PROBABLY INVOLVE ACCEPTANCE OF THE BAKER PROPOSALS, ROTATION OF THE PRIME-MINISTERSHIP AND CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM. A FURTHER POSSIBILITY WAS A GOVERNMENT LED BY RABIN, WHOM ROSS DESCRIBED AS THE MOST POPULAR POLITICIAN IN ISRAEL, UNTOUCHED BY THE STIGMA OF RECENT MANOEUVRINGS. IF NONE OF THESE POSSIBILITIES CAME TO PASS, THERE WOULD HAVE TO BE ELECTIONS, CONTESTED, IN ROSS'S VIEW, BY RABIN AND LEVY.

3. ROSS'S CONCLUSION WAS THAT THERE WOULD BE A HALT IN THE PEACE PROCESS OF BETWEEN 2 AND 6 MONTHS. THE QUESTION WAS HOW TO KEEP THE PALESTINIANS ON BOARD IN THE MEANTIME. ROSS SAID THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WERE CURRENTLY LOOKING AT WAYS IN WHICH THEY COULD ENCOURAGE THE PALESTINIANS, BOTH IN TUNIS AND THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, TO STAY CALM AND NOT TO GIVE UP HOPE. ROSS FLOATED THE FOLLOWING IDEAS:

- I) A BAKER SPEECH, IN WHICH HE WOULD REVIEW WHAT THE ADMINISTRATION HAD ACHIEVED AND WHY IT HAD FOLLOWED THE ROUTE IT HAD. IT WOULD MAKE CLEAR THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WAS PREPARED TO STAY ENGAGED, AND THE NEED FOR BOTH ISRAELI AND ARAB CONCERNS TO BE ADDRESSED IF PROGRESS WAS TO BE MADE.
- II) USE OF THE US/PLO DIALOGUE TO REASSURE THE PLO THAT THE ADMINISTRATION UNDERSTOOD THEIR PROBLEMS AND TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO STAY ON TRACK.
- III) URGE ON THE ISRAELIS TO SPEED UP PALESTINIAN FAMILY REUNIFICATION. ROSS DESCRIBED THIS AS A SYMBOLIC POINT, BUT ONE WHICH WOULD BE WELL UNDERSTOOD BY PALESTINIANS.
- IV) TAKING THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT TO TASK FOR THEIR RECENT ACTION ON SETTLEMENTS. ROSS SAID THAT THERE HAD BEEN CONSIDERABLE DISMAY IN CONGRESS OVER THIS, A FACT WHICH WOULD NOT BE LOST ON THE ISRAELIS.

4. IN SUBSEQUENT DISCUSSION, BURNS ADMITTED THAT THE ABOVE LIST WAS NOT SUFFICIENT: THE ADMINISTRATION WERE CASTING AROUND FOR FURTHER IDEAS ON HOW TO SUSTAIN PALESTINIAN INTEREST IN THE DIALOGUE. HE THOUGHT THAT ACTION ON FAMILY REUNIFICATION WOULD BE HELPFUL. FREIJ, WHO HAD CALLED ON ROSS EARLIER IN THE MORNING, WAS MUCH EXERCISED ABOUT IT. BURNS THOUGHT THERE MIGHT BE AS MANY AS 20,000 REQUESTS OUTSTANDING WHICH THE ISRAELI MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR HAD HELD UP FOR POLITICAL REASONS. HE SAID THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD PURSUE THIS BILATERALLY AT FIRST. THEY WANTED TO AVOID ANY SUGGESTION OF GANGING-UP.

5. BURNS WAS GENERALLY PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE DIRECTION OF EVENTS IN THE TERRITORIES. HE WAS DOUBTFUL ABOUT HOW LONG THE UNIFIED LEADERSHIP WOULD HOLD THE LINE. HE NOTED THE INDICATIONS OF PFLP/HAMAS COOPERATION AS A WORRYING SIGN. HE THOUGHT THAT, IF THE MOOD IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES WERE TO BECOME MORE REJECTIONIST, ARAFAT WOULD START TO SHIFT HIS OWN POSITION.

6. TOMKYS ASKED WHETHER THE ADMINISTRATION WERE CONSIDERING UPGRADING THEIR CONTACTS WITH THE PLO. BURNS THOUGHT THIS UNLIKELY. HE CLAIMED THAT BECAUSE OF DOMESTIC PRESSURE, THE ADMINISTRATION WERE HARD PRESSED TO SUSTAIN THE DIALOGUE AT ITS CURRENT LEVEL. (ASSISTANT SECRETARY, KELLY SEPARATELY TOLD TOMKYS THAT HE WAS VISITING TUNIS NEXT WEEK BUT WOULD

NOT BE MEETING PLO OFFICIALS.) TOMKYS SAID THAT HMG HAD SOMEWHAT MORE ROOM FOR MANOEUVRE IN CONTACTS WITH THE PLO, AND MIGHT BE WILLING IN PRINCIPLE TO UPGRADE CONTACTS IF THIS WOULD HELP TO KEEP THE PLO ON BOARD FOR THE DIALOGUE. BUT IT WOULD BE EASIER TO JUSTIFY HIGH PROFILE EXCHANGES WITH THE PLO IF ONE COULD POINT TO A GREATER DIRECT INVOLVEMENT IN THE PROCESS, EG THROUGH FIVE POWER CONSULTATIONS. BURNS WAS NON-COMMITTAL BUT TOOK THE POINT. HE NOTED THAT SHEVARDNAZE HAD PROPOSED TO BAKER AT THEIR LAST MEETING THAT THERE SHOULD BE WIDER CONSULTATIONS ON THE PEACE PROCESS. BAKER HAD SAID THAT FIVE POWER CONSULTATIONS WOULD NOT BE PRODUCTIVE RIGHT NOW. TOMKYS MADE THE SAME POINT TO HAASS (NSC), WHO SAID THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD NOT WANT TO LOOK AT OTHER OPTIONS UNTIL THE CURRENT PEACE PROCESS WAS PLAYED OUT.

7. TOMKYS PUT TO BURNS THE SUGGESTION THAT, IF A DIALOGUE WERE TO START IN CAIRO, IT MIGHT BE BETTER TO SKIP THE DISCUSSION OF ELECTIONS AND GO STRAIGHT TO DISCUSSION OF AN OVERALL SOLUTION. BURNS SAW THE BENEFIT OF THIS, BUT THOUGHT THAT A BID TO CHANGE THE RULES OF THE GAME AT THIS STAGE WOULD RISK FRIGHTENING OFF THE ISRAELIS. HE ALSO THOUGHT THAT THE ISRAELIS WOULD PREFER TO TALK TO THOSE PALESTINIANS WHO HAD THE LEGITIMACY OF ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES (PARTLY, NO DOUBT, BECAUSE THEY HOPED THEY WOULD BE LESS CLOSELY CONNECTED WITH THE PLO). NEVERTHELESS, BURNS AGREED THAT THE IDEA WAS WORTH THINKING ABOUT.

COMMENT

8. FOR WHAT IT IS WORTH, INR, STATE DEPARTMENT - WHO BRIEFED SIR P CRADDOCK ON PROSPECTS FOR THE PEACE PROCESS ON 23 APRIL - SAID THAT THEY THOUGHT STATE DEPARTMENT POLICY MAKERS WERE TOO OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE CHANCES THAT A NEW ISRAELI GOVERNMENT WOULD PICK UP THE BAKER INITIATIVE WHERE THE PREVIOUS COALITION HAD LEFT OFF. INR THOUGHT THAT IT WAS LIKELY THAT THE NEW ISRAELI OPENING BID WOULD BE TO GO BACK TO THE SHAMIR 4 POINT PLAN OF LAST MAY. INR THOUGHT THE PROSPECTS FOR THE BAKER INITIATIVE WERE NOW VERY POOR.

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