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FM UKMIS GENEVA

TO DESKBY 211615Z FCOLN

TELNO 576

OF 211544Z AUGUST 1990

INFO IMMEDIATE KUWAIT, BAGHDAD, UKMIS NEW YORK, WASHINGTON, MOSCOW,
INFO IMMEDIATE PEKING, EC POSTS, MODUK, ACTOR, ME GULF POSTSIRAQ/KUWAIT: MR WALDEGRAVE'S VISIT TO GENEVA: CALL ON SOMMARUGA
(ICRC)

1. MR WALDEGRAVE BEGAN BY CONVEYING GREETINGS FROM THE FOREIGN SECRETARY AND THE PRIME MINISTER, WHO LOOKED FORWARD TO SEEING HIM DURING HIS VISIT EARLY NEXT YEAR.
2. SOMMARUGA LOST NO TIME IN RESPONDING VIGOROUSLY TO THE REPORT HE HAD JUST RECEIVED OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S STRICTURES ON THE ICRC'S APPARENT INACTIVITY IN SPITE OF REQUESTS FOR ACTION IN KUWAIT AND IARQ. HE RECALLED THE ICRC'S FORTHRIGHT PUBLIC DECLARATIONS THAT IRAQ'S INVASION AND OCCUPATION OF KUWAIT LED TO A SITUATION OF CONFLICT IN WHICH ALL FOUR GENEVA CONVENTIONS APPLIED. THEY WERE DOING THEIR BEST TO USE THEIR PRESENCE IN IRAQ FOR THE PURPOSES OF PRISONER EXCHANGE ETC TO PERSUADE THE IRAQIS TO GIVE THEM ACCESS TO KUWAIT WHERE THEY HAVE NO REPEAT NO REPRESENTATION. THE IRAQIS HAD TWICE REFUSED THIS ACCESS. HE HAD DESPATCHED A SENIOR OFFICIAL LAST NIGHT, WHO HAS BEEN TRYING IN BAGHDAD TODAY TO GET CONTACT WITH THE IRAQI MFA AT A SUITABLY HIGH LEVEL. SOMMARUGA HIMSELF WAS PACKED AND READY TO FLY TO BAGHDAD IF HE COULD GET TO SEE TARIQ AZIZ, TO WHOM HE HAD ALREADY WRITTEN ASKING THAT THE ICRC SHOULD BE ABLE TO CARRY OUT THEIR MANDATE. HE HAD ALSO TELEPHONED ARAFAT, AS ONE OF SADDAM'S FEW INTERLOCUTORS.
3. SOMMARUGA STRESSED THE DANGER THAT PUBLICITY FOR WESTERN PRESSURE ON THE ICRC MIGHT MAKE THEIR TASK EVEN MORE DIFFICULT. THEIR OPERATIONS DEPENDED ON THEIR NEUTRALITY AND FREEDOM FROM POLITICS. SOMMARUGA ALSO EXPLAINED THEIR LATEST INITIATIVE WITH THE JORDAN RED CRESCENT SOCIETY TO HELP PEOPLE THROWN OUT OF IRAQ. SEE MIFT.
4. MR WALDEGRAVE EXPLAINED THE GREAT ANXIETY FELT BY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT AND THE FRUSTRATION THAT THE ICRC HAD BEEN UNABLE TO CARRY OUT THEIR CLEAR MANDATE. FEELINGS WERE RUNNING EXTREMELY HIGH. NOW THAT CONSULAR ACCESS WAS DENIED TO BRITISH AND OTHER FOREIGNERS IN BAGHDAD, SOME OF WHOM HAD BEEN BROUGHT OUT FROM KUWAIT, SURELY THE RED) CROSS'S MANDATE UNDER THE CONVENTIONS SHOULD ALLOW THEM TO

ACT IN IRAQ AS WELL AS KUWAIT. SOMMARUGA SAID THAT THEY WOULD NOT ALLOW LEGALISTIC DIFFICULTIES TO PREVENT THEIR OPERATING BUT MADE THE OBVIOUS POINT THAT THEY COULD DO NOTHING WITHOUT IRAQI AGREEMENT. THE ICRC'S INTENSIFIED ACTIVITY OVER THE EXCHANGE OF PRISONERS AT LEAST GAVE THEM A PRESENCE IN IRAQ BUT THEY WERE DETERMINED TO KEEP THIS HUMANITARIAN TASK SEPARATE FROM THE KUWAIT PROBLEM.

5. MR WALDEGRAVE EXPRESSED HIS THANKS FOR THIS FRANK OUTLINE OF THE ICRC'S POSITION. HE HOPED THAT THEY WOULD CONTINUE TO SPARE NO EFFORT TO NEGOTIATE ACCESS TO FOREIGNERS TRAPPED IN KUWAIT AND IRAQ. SOMMARUGA WAS EMPHATIC THEY WOULD NOT.

MORLAND

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