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INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON, PARIS, MOSCOW, PEKING, MIDDLE EAST POSTS
INFO IMMEDIATE UKMIS GENEVA

MIPT : OCCUPIED TERRITORIES : SECRETARY-GENERAL'S REPORT : FIRST REACTIONS

SUMMARY

1. INITIAL REACTIONS TO SECRETARY-GENERAL'S REPORT.

DETAIL

2. MOST DELEGATIONS IN NEW YORK ARE STILL DIGESTING THE CONTENT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S REPORT. THE SUGGESTION THAT THE HIGH CONTRACTING PARTIES TO THE FOURTH GENEVA CONVENTION MIGHT MEET TO DISCUSS POSSIBLE MEASURES HAS AROUSED CONSIDERABLE INTEREST. THE ARABS SEE THIS AS HAVING OVERTONES OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND OBVIOUSLY RELISH THE PROSPECT OF SUCH A LARGE GATHERING LAMBASTING ISRAEL. MEMBERS OF THE SAUDI MISSION HAVE COMMENTED TO US THAT SUCH A MEETING WOULD CARRY ENORMOUS MORAL AUTHORITY EVEN WITH THE ISRAELIS. ARAB LEGAL EXPERTS ARE ALREADY LOOKING INTO HOW SUCH A MEETING COULD BE ORGANISED AND HOW IT WOULD TAKE ANY DECISIONS. THEY HAVE POINTED OUT THAT IF IT WERE TO PROCEED BY CONSENSUS AND THE ISRAELIS WERE PRESENT THEY COULD BLOCK IT. THE ARABS ARE, HOWEVER, WARY OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL USING THIS IDEA TO DUMP THE PROBLEM INTO THE LAPS OF THE ICRC IN GENEVA (AS GUARDIANS OF THE FOURTH GENEVA CONVENTION) OR OF THE SWISS GOVERNMENT (AS DEPOSITARIES) FOR A PROLONGED PERIOD. MEMBERS OF THE SECRETARIAT HAVE MADE IT CLEAR TO US AND TO THE ARABS THAT THIS IS NOT THEIR INTENTION. THEY HAVE STRESSED THAT SINCE ALL MEMBERS OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL ARE HIGH CONTRACTING PARTIES, THE OBLIGATION TO ENSURE THAT THE FOURTH GENEVA CONVENTION IS EFFECTIVE IS IN A SENSE COMMON TO BOTH BODIES.

3. THE DEPUTY PLO OBSERVER COMMENTED TO US THAT THE REPORT WAS QUITE A GOOD PEICE OF WORK. THERE WERE A FEW POINTS ABOUT WHICH HE WAS NOT ENTIRELY HAPPY, BUT HE THOUGHT THE REPORT AS A WHOLE WAS SOMETHING WITH WHICH THE PLO AND THEIR ARAB COLLEAGUES COULD WORK.

4. THE ARABS ARE NOT AT PRESENT FOCUSSING ON THE SUGGESTION THAT

THERE SHOULD BE AN IMPARTIAL PRESENCE IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, PROPERLY MANDATED BY THE UNITED NATIONS. ALTHOUGH THE EGYPTIANS AND A NUMBER OF THE MODERATE ARABS REMAIN INTERESTED IN THE IDEA OF SOME SORT OF UN OMBUDSMAN IN THE TERRITORIES (AN IDEA DRAWN FROM THE GOULDING REPORT) MOST OF THE ARABS ACCEPT THAT AT PRESENT THERE IS NO REALISTIC PROSPECT OF A NEW UN PRESENCE BEING ADMITTED TO THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. THEY POINT OUT THAT EVEN BLANCHARD, THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, HAS NOT BEEN ADMITTED FOR A YEAR AND THAT THE REJECTION OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S RECENT MISSION BACKED BY THE SECURITY COUNCIL DOES NOT AUGUR WELL FOR ANYONE ELSE GOING.

5. MEMBERS OF THE U S MISSION HAVE TOLD US THAT THEY SEE SOME ATTRACTION IN THE IDEA OF A MEETING OF ALL THE HIGH CONTRACTING PARTIES TO THE FOURTH GENEVA CONVENTION BECAUSE THIS WOULD TAKE THE ISSUE OUT OF NEW YORK AND AWAY FROM THE SECURITY COUNCIL FOR A WHILE. THE COUNCIL COULD THEN CONCENTRATE ON IRAQ/KUWAIT. ON THE OTHER HAND, THEY THINK IT MOST UNLIKELY THAT THE ISRAELIS WOULD TURN UP TO SUCH A MEETING. THEY ARE PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE PROSPECTS FOR AN IMPARTIAL PRESENCE MANDATED BY THE UNITED NATIONS. IN THEIR VIEW EVEN AN EXPANSION OF UNRWA'S MANDATE WAS LIKELY TO PRESENT INSUPERABLE OBSTACLES IN WASHINGTON. WE MENTIONED TO THEM THE IDEA OF A UN OMBUDSMAN WHO WOULD WORK WITH RATHER THAN AGAINST THE ISRAELI AUTHORITIES IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. THIS SEEMED TO STRIKE THEM AS A NEW THOUGHT, WHICH THEY DID NOT REJECT OUT OF HAND.

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