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OO BEIRUT

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FM FCO 271040 JULY 82

TO IMMEDIATE BEIRUT

TELEGRAM NUMBER 299 OF 27 JULY

INFO PRIORITY: WASHINGTON, TEL AVIV, CAIRO, UKMIS NEW YORK

DAMASCUS, JEDDA, AMMAN, BAGHDAD

INFO SAVING OTHER MIDDLE EAST POSTS.

CALL BY HABIB : 26 JULY.

1. HABIB CALLED ON ME ON 26 JULY. HE HAD SEEN HUSSEIN EARLIER AND INTENDED TO FLY TO JERUSALEM IN THE EVENING. HE SAID HIS PRIORITY TASK WAS TO LIFT THE SIEGE OF BEIRUT AND GET THE PLO OUT. A SECOND STAGE WOULD BE THE WITHDRAWAL OF ALL 'EXTERNAL' FORCES (HE USED THE TERM IN DEFERENCE TO SYRIAN INSISTENCE THAT THE ADF WAS NOT 'FOREIGN') AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A LEBANESE GOVERNMENT WITH ACTUAL AUTHORITY EXTENDING THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY.
2. THE PLO HAD BEEN PREPARED TO LEAVE FOR SOME WEEKS, BUT THE QUESTION OF WHERE THEY SHOULD GO TO REMAINED. HABIB HAD PREPARED PLANS FOR THE EVACUATION OF 8000 USING A MULTINATIONAL FORCE, OBSERVERS AND THE RED CROSS.

THE FORMATION OF THE TAIF COMMITTEE AND THE VISIT OF KHADDAM AND PRINCE SAUD TO WASHINGTON HAD DEMONSTRATED ARAB WILLINGNESS TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY. 8000 COULD NOT GO TO ONE PLACE. WORK HAD BEGUN ON DIVIDING THEM UP. LEBANESE AND ISRAELIS HAD VETOED PLO'S PREFERENCE FOR A JOURNEY THROUGH BEQAA. THE SYRIANS HAD RULED OUT SYRIA AS A STAGING POST AND WANTED THE PALESTINIANS TO GO DIRECT FROM BEIRUT. ASSAD HAD AGREED TO TAKE 2600 TO 3000, THE HEADQUARTERS, SENIOR PLO OFFICERS AND THE WHOLE OF THE PLA, BUT NOT SAIQA.

3. THE SAUDIS HAD FLATLY REFUSED TO TAKE A CONTINGENT BUT KING FAHD AND PRINCE SAUD HAD AGREED TO USE THEIR INFLUENCE TO PERSUADE OTHER ARAB STATES TO ACCEPT THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES. THE TAIF COMMITTEE WAS TO MEET ON 27 JULY.
4. HABIB HAD SEEN MUBARAK, KAMAL HASSAN ALI AND BOUTROS GHALI IN

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CAIRO. EGYPTIANS STUCK TO THE POSITION THAT THE PLO MUST GET A POLITICAL BONUS IN RETURN FOR AN AGREEMENT TO LEAVE BEIRUT: A NEW APPROACH TO THE PEACE PROCESS, ACCEPTANCE OF SELF-DETERMINATION. HABIB HAD MADE IT CLEAR THAT AMERICANS CONSIDERED THE EGYPTIAN/FRENCH WORKING PAPER AS IRRELEVANT AND ULTIMATELY UNACCEPTABLE TO THE UNITED STATES. MUBARAK HAD ARGUED THAT IT WAS NECESSARY TO STOP THE PALESTINIANS BEING RADICALISED HABIB HAD BEEN DISAPPOINTED BY AN EGYPTIAN OFFER TO TAKE 500 TO 1000 MEN: THE AIN JALUT BRIGADE: THEIR FAIR SHARE WOULD BE AROUND 4000. MUBARAK HAD INSISTED THAT THE AMERICANS TACKLE THE POLITICAL PROBLEM FIRST. KAMAL HASSAN ALI WAS GOING TO WASHINGTON FOR TALKS (I HAVE INVITED HIM TO CALL WHEN HE STAGES THROUGH LONDON ON 27 JULY).

5. HIS LONDON MEETING WITH HUSSEIN HAD CONFIRMED THE KING'S WILLINGNESS TO TAKE THE BRIGADE WHICH HAD COME FROM JORDAN, IN ADDITION TO PASSPORT HOLDERS (TOTAL AROUND 3000). HUSSEIN HAD SAID THAT THE IRAQIS WOULD TAKE THE BRIGADE WHICH CAME FROM IRAQ.

6. I ASKED ABOUT CONTINUING ISRAELI PRESSURE. HABIB SAID THAT THE BOMBARDMENT REMAINED HEAVY BUT IT WAS HARDLY AFFECTING THE PLO: A MEDICAL SOURCES IN BEIRUT HAD TOLD HIM THAT ONLY 10 PER CENT OF CASUALTIES WERE PLO. HE CONFIRMED THAT THE PLO WERE NOT ASKING TO TAKE THEIR FAMILIES OUT (IF THEY DID NUMBERS WOULD INCREASE BY A FACTOR OF 8 TO 10).

7. DURING HIS TALKS IN JERUSALEM HE WOULD BE GIVING THE ISRAELIS A ROUGH IDEA OF PROGRESS BUT WITHOUT FIGURES. IF THE PLO AGREED TO LEAVE THE WAY WOULD BE OPEN FOR STAGE TWO WHICH THE AMERICANS SAW AS THE TOTAL WITHDRAWAL OF AL EXTERNAL FORCES. ASSAD WAS ONLY PREPARED TO DISCUSS WITHDRAWAL OF THE ADF ON THE STANDARD BASIS OF A REQUEST FROM LEBANON AND THE ARAB LEAGUE. ISRAELI POSITION WAS THAT THEY WOULD NOT WITHDRAW ONE INCH UNTIL THE PLO WERE GONE AND THEN INTENDED TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE HYPOTHETICAL NEW LEBANESE GOVERNMENT.

8. AFTER JERUSALEM HE WOULD BE RETURNING TO BEIRUT TO CONTINUE HIS ATTEMPTS TO PIN THE LEBANESE DOWN AND THROUGH THEM THE PALESTINIANS ON DETAILS OF THE NEGOTIATION. THE GAP REMAINED WIDE, FOR EXAMPLE SHARON HAD SAID THAT THE MULTI-

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NATIONAL FORCE SHOULD NOT ENTER BEIRUT UNTIL THE LAST PALESTINIAN
HAD LEFT: THE PLO TOOK THE REVERSE VIEW.

9. HABIB SAID HE WAS SPEAKING FREELY TO US BECAUSE HE KNEW WHAT HE
SAID TO US WOULD REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL.

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