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TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 448 OF 27 OCTOBER

INFO PARIS, ROME, AMMAN, DAMASCUS, BEIRUT, JEDDA, BAGHDAD, TEL AVIV,
WASHINGTON, UKMS NEW YORK, MODUK.

YOUR TELNO 534 TO PARIS: LEBANON

1. THE EGYPTIANS ARE MOUNTING AN AMBITIOUS DIPLOMATIC EFFORT TO CAPITALISE ON THE EMOTIONS AROUSED BY THE BEIRUT BOMBINGS WITH A VIEW TO REACTIVATING THE PEACE PROCESS THROUGH THE REAGAN INITIATIVE OR SOME VARIANT OF IT. AS A FIRST STEP PRESIDENT MUBARAK IS SENDING MESSAGES TO THE HEADS OF GOVERNMENT OF THE MNF CONTRIBUTORS. TEST OF MESSAGE TO MRS THATCHER IS IN MIFT (NOT REPEATED). HE IS ALSO SENDING EMISSARIES TO OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES. KAMAL HASSAN ALI LEFT YESTERDAY FOR BAGHDAD AND AMMAN, AND BOUTROS GHALIB GOES TO LEBANON TOMORROW TO SEE GEMAYEL. THE SUDANESE VICE PRESIDENT OMAR AL TAIB AND SULTAN QABOOS' ENVOY OMAR ZAWAWY ARE ALSO VISITING CAIRO, ACCORDING TO THE PRESS IN THE SAME CONNECTION. THE WHOLE STORY IS PUBLICISED IN TODAY'S NEWSPAPERS.

2. IN HANDLING ME MUBARAK'S MESSAGE TODAY BOUTROS GHALIH EXPLAINED THAT THIS EGYPTIAN INITIATIVE HAD ORIGINALLY BEEN MOTIVATED BY CONCERN THAT THE ISRAELIS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS IN THE US WOULD MANAGE TO EXPLOIT THE BEIRUT BOMBINGS TO BRING ABOUT A CLOSER ALIGNMENT BETWEEN US POLICIES AND ISRAEL'S (HE CITED THE ISRAELIS' PROPOGANDA USE OF THEIR OFFER TO TREAT THE AMERICAN CASUALTIES IN ISRAELI HOSPITALS), WHICH WOULD FINALLY EXTINGUISH ANY HOPE OF REVIVING THE PEACE PROCESS. THEY WERE ALSO EXTREMELY APPREHENSIVE LEST THE US SHOULD BE TEMPTED TO RETALIATE AGAINST WHOEVER THEY DEEMED RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ATTACKS. MORE POSITIVELY, EGYPT BELIEVED THAT INTERNATIONAL SHOCK AT THE BOMBINGS MIGHT BRING IT HOME TO PEOPLE THAT THE WIDER MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM COULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO CONTINUE TO FESTER SIMPLY ON ACCOUD OF THE US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. IN RELATION TO THE GULF WAR, AS DISTINCT FROM THE PALESTINE QUESTION, IT MIGHT ALSO BRING ABOUT A RALLYING OF SUPPORT FOR IRAQ, OUT OF FEAR THAT THE BEIRUT ATROCITIES MIGHT BECOME THE PATTERN FOR A SERIES OF IRANIAN-SPONSORED ATTEMPTS TO CREATE DISORDER WORLDWIDE.

3. BOUTROS GHALIH SAID THE EGYPTIANS HAD NO SPECIFIC IDEAS ABOUT HOW THE AMERICANS MIGHT GO ABOUT REACTIVATING REAGAN, BUT HE SUGGESTED THAT ARAFAT IN HIS PRESENT POSITION OF WEAKNESS MIGHT NOW BE MORE READY TO CONSIDER JOINING IN WITH KING HUSSEIN. HE QUESTIONED WHETHER ARAFAT WOULD BE ABLE TO BRING THE PLO ALONG WITH HIM, BUT BOUTROS THOUGHT HE AT LEAST STILL HAD SUBSTANTIAL SUPPORT ON THE WEST BANK. ANOTHER POSSIBILITY COULD BE FOR THE AMERICANS TO APPOINT AS MACFARLANE'S SUCCESSOR A FIGURE OF INTERNATIONAL REPUTE, SUCH AS CY VANCE, WHOSE MERE APPEARANCE ON THE SCENE MIGHT IMPART A NEW MOMENTUM (CF THE KISSINGER ASSIGNMENT IN CENTRAL AMERICA). BOUTROS ADMITTED THAT THE SYRIANS WERE LIKELY TO BE AS OBSUTRUCTIVE AS BEFORE, BUT DID NOT SEE WHY THEY SHOULD BE HANDED A VETO IN ADVANCE. HE ASKED WHETHER THE EGYPTIANS WOULD REGARD THE ABONDONMENT OF THE ISRAEL/LEBANON AGREEMENT AS A LIKELY CONDITION FOR PROGRESS ON EITHER LEBANON OR THE PEACE PROCESS, AND HE REPLIED THAT EGYPT WOULD SUPPORT WHATEVER DECISION THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT ~~WAS~~ BEING MIGHT TAKE

ON THE SUBJECT. THE MAIN OBJECT OF HIS OWN VISIT TO LEBANON WOULD BE TO URGE GEMAYEL TO SHOW GREATER FLEXIBILITY IN THE RUN UP TO THE NATIONAL RECONCILIATION TALKS. AS REGARDS IRAQ, BOUTROS SAID THE EGYPTIANS WOULD BE URGING BOTH THE IRAQIS AND THE AMERICANS TO CONSIDER AN EARLY RESUMPTION OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS.

4. ON THE BASIS OF YOUR TUR, HE SAID THAT EGYPTIAN VIEWS ON LEBANON APPEARED TO BE VERY CLOSE TO OUR OWN THOUGH HE

VIEWS ON LEBANON APPEARED TO BE VERY CLOSE TO OUR OWN, THOUGH HE WAS MORE SCEPTICAL ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF REACTIVATING THE REAGAN INITIATIVE, ESPECIALLY GIVEN THE OTHER CURRENT PREOCCUPATIONS OF THE US ADMINISTRATION. BOUTROS STRESSED THAT EGYPT WOULD BE VERY INTERESTED TO HAVE OUR EARLY REACTIONS, AND HE HIMSELF WOULD APPRECIATE IT IF WE COULD TELL HIM ANYTHING ABOUT TODAY'S MEETING OF THE 4 FOREIGN MINISTERS IN PARIS, BEFORE HIS OWN DEPARTURE FOR BEIRUT FIRST THING TOMORROW.

5. HE WOULD GUESS THAT THE MAIN EGYPTIAN MOTIVE IN ALL THIS IS INDEED AS STATED (WITH SURPRISING FRANKNESS) BY BOUTROS GHALIB, NAMELY FEAR THAT THE AMERICANS MAY BE TEMPTED TO JOIN FORCES WITH THE ISRAELIS IN SOME FORM OF RETALIATION IN LEBANON. THE LIKELY ARAB REACTION WOULD PLACE EGYPT IN AN EVEN MORE ACUTE DILEMMA THAN THOSE SHE HAS HAD TO FACE SO FAR. A SECONDARY MOTIVE WILL BE TO USE THE OCCASION TO DRAW CLOSER TO THE OTHER MODERATE ARABS.

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THAT EGYPT WOULD SUPPORT WHATEVER DECISION THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT MIGHT TAKE ON THE SUBJECT. THE MAIN OBJECT OF HIS OWN VISIT TO LEBANON