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TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 24 OF 17/1/80

AND PRIORITY TO WASHINGTON, MOSCOW AND UKDEL NATO

MY TEL NO 23: THE SUCCESSION TO TITO.

1. CHAIRMAN OF THE FEDERAL ASSEMBLY'S LEGAL COMMISSION MIODRAG ZECEVIC HELD A MEETING ON 16 JANUARY FOR FOREIGN JOURNALISTS TO EXPLAIN THE CONSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE SUCCESSION TO PRESIDENT TITO. THE MEETING WAS ARRANGED AT SHORT NOTICE ON THE INITIATIVE OF THE YUGOSLAV AUTHORITIES AND WAS CLEARLY DESIGNED TO QUENCH SPECULATION ON THIS ISSUE. MY INFORMATION OFFICER WAS THE ONLY OFFICIAL FOREIGN REPRESENTATIVE PRESENT, AND THE MEETING RESISTED A CHALLENGE THAT SHE SHOULD WITHDRAW. FOLLOWING IS HER SUMMARY OF THE MAIN POINTS OF INTEREST.
2. ZECEVIC CONFIRMED THAT ON TITO'S DEATH THE OFFICE OF PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC, CONFERRED ON TITO FOR 'AN UNLIMITED TERM OF OFFICE' WOULD CEASE TO EXIST AND ITS RIGHTS AND DUTIES WOULD BE TAKEN OVER BY THE FEDERAL PRESIDENCY. IN FUTURE, THE PRESIDENT OF THE PRESIDENCY WOULD BE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE ARMED FORCES AND HEAD OF STATE FOR REPRESENTATIONAL DUTIES ALTHOUGH THE PRESIDENCY WOULD ACT AS A JOINT BODY WHENEVER POSSIBLE.
3. ZECEVIC SAID THAT AS PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC, TITO HAD ALSO HELD THE OFFICE OF PRESIDENT OF THE SFRY PRESIDENCY. WITH HIS DEATH THE CONSTITUTION DETERMINED THAT THE VICE PRESIDENT SHOULD BECOME PRESIDENT 'UNTIL THE EXPIRY OF THE TERM FOR WHICH HE WAS ELECTED VICE-PRESIDENT'. IF TITO DIED NOW, KOLISEVSKI WOULD AUTOMATICALLY BECOME PRESIDENT UNTIL MAY 1980. HE WOULD BE FOLLOWED BY MIJATOVIC (BOSNIA AND HERCEGOVINA). THE ORDER OF ROTATION FOR THE PRESIDENCY WAS REGULATED BY LAW IN 1975. ZECEVIC POINTED OUT THAT IN THE ABSENCE OR PROLONGED INABILITY OF THE PRESIDENT TO PERFORM HIS OFFICE, THE VICE-PRESIDENT COULD DEPUTISE FOR HIM AND 'REPRESENT HIM IN THE CONDUCT OF AFFAIRS ENTRUSTED TO HIM BY THE PRESIDENT'. THERE ARE SEVERAL RUMOURS

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HERE THAT KOLISEVSKI HAS BEEN SO DESIGNATED BUT ZECEVIC DENIED THAT ANY 'COORDINATING BODY OR INSTITUTION HAD TAKEN OVER THE PRESIDENT'S DUTIES' AND ADDED THAT OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS "SEVERAL FUNCTIONS HAD IN PRACTICE ALREADY BEEN DEVOLVED".

4. SOME INTERESTING OBSERVATIONS WERE MADE BY ZECEVIC ON THE SUCCESSION TO THE OFFICE OF PRESIDENT OF THE LCY. ASKED WHETHER A DEFINITE PROCEDURE TO ELECT A NEW LCY PRESIDENT WOULD BE LAID DOWN, HE SAID THAT THE OFFICE OF PRESIDENT, WHEN TITO DIED, WOULD NOT PASS TO ONE MAN BUT WOULD BE SUBSUMED WITHIN THE COLLEGIATE BODY OF THE LCY PRESIDUM. THE LEADING REPRESENTATIVE OF THAT BODY WOULD BE, AS NOW, THE PRESIDING MEMBER WHO WOULD ROTATE ON A ONE-YEAR BASIS. IN REPLY TO THE QUESTION WHETHER AN ORDER OF ROTATION FOR THE PRESIDING MEMBER WOULD BE ESTABLISHED, HE CONFIRMED THAT NO SUCH ORDER PRESENTLY EXISTED BUT EXPECTED THAT ONE WOULD BE WORKED OUT IN CONSULTATION WITH PRESIDENT TITO. HE ALSO CONFIRMED THAT, ON TITO'S DEATH, THE EX-OFFICIO REPRESENTATIVE OF THE LCY PRESIDUM ON THE STATE PRESIDENCY WOULD BE THE PRESIDING MEMBER OF THE DAY.

5. ZECEVIC'S REMARKS MAKE IT CLEAR THAT THE WAY IS PAVED FOR THE TWO PRESIDENCIES, OF STATE AND PARTY, TO TAKE OVER COLLECTIVELY THE FUNCTIONS FOR SO LONG HELD BY TITO AS AN INDIVIDUAL. THIS DOES NOT RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT E.G. A FUTURE LCY CONGRESS COULD ELECT A NEW PRESIDENT OR CHANGE THE EXISTING RULES OF PROCEDURE. EQUALLY THE CONSTITUTION, NOW UNDER AMENDMENT FOLLOWING TITO'S INITIATIVE ON COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP, COULD BE DRASTICALLY ALTERED. BUT FOR THE TIME BEING THE CHANCES OF ONE INDIVIDUAL CONSTITUTIONALLY EXERCISING MORE POWER THAN HIS PARTNERS MUST BE ASSESSED AS SLIGHT.

FARQUHARSON

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