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MDHIAN 2061

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FM NICOSIA

TO DESKBY 151230Z FCO

TELNO 80

OF 151100Z MARCH 88

INFO DESKBY 151400Z ANKARA

INFO IMMEDIATE ATHENS

INFO PRIORITY WASHINGTON, UKMIS NEW YORK

ATHENS TELNO 91: VASSILIOU'S REQUEST FOR MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER

1. BOTH BEFORE AND AFTER HIS ELECTION AS PRESIDENT VASSILIOU HAD EXPRESSED TO ME HIS KEENNESS TO MEET THE PRIME MINISTER BUT WE HAD BOTH ASSUMED THAT IT WAS UNLIKELY THAT HE COULD FIT THIS IN BEFORE HER OWN VISIT TO ANKARA. HE DID NOT MENTION SUCH AN EARLY VISIT WHEN WE HAD SEVERAL MINUTES CONVERSATION BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE FOR ATHENS ON 13 MARCH, SO I CAN ONLY SUPPOSE THE IDEA HAS EMERGED AS PART OF A PLAN OF ACTION AGREED WITH PAPANDREOU.

2. I HAVE TWO RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE TIMING:

- (A) A MEETING JUST BEFORE THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO TURKEY COULD RAISE TURKISH SUSPICIONS AND MAKE THEM LESS RECEPTIVE TO WHATEVER SHE MIGHT SAY ABOUT CYPRUS DURING HER VISIT
- (B) IT COULD BE A DISTRACTION FROM WHAT I SEE AS THE PRIME NEED, FOR VASSILIOU AT LEAST TO START A DIALOGUE WITH DENKTASH BEFORE THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO TURKEY IN ORDER TO CREATE MORE HELPFUL CONDITIONS FOR HER REPRESENTATIONS OVER CYPRUS.

3. DESPITE THESE RESERVATIONS, HOWEVER, I WOULD NOT BE ALTOGETHER OPPOSED TO AN EARLY MEETING IF THE PRIME MINISTER COULD FIT THIS IN AT SUCH SHORT NOTICE. THERE IS A GOOD DEAL OF CURIOSITY ABOUT VASSILIOU ON THE TURKISH SIDE, AND THE PRIME MINISTER'S TURKISH HOSTS MIGHT BE INTERESTED TO HEAR HER JUDGEMENT OF HIM WHEN SHE GOES TO ANKARA. BUT YOU WILL WISH TO HAVE MR DAUNT'S VIEWS ON THIS.

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