

MIDDLE EAST

PS
 PS/MR RENTON
 PS/PUS
 MR DEREK THOMAS
 MR FERGUSSON

NO. 10 DOWNING STREET
 CABINET OFFICE DIO

SIR D. MIFAL
 HD/NENAD
 HD/MED

IMMEDIATE

PUSD (2)
 NEWS DEPT

RESIDENT CLERK

1.10.85

CONFIDENTIAL

FM AMMAN

TO DESKBY 100930Z FCO

TELNO 123

OF 091145Z MARCH 86

INFO DESKBY 100900Z UKREP BRUSSELS

INFO PRIORITY DAMASCUS, TEL AVIV, CAIRO, RIYADH, BAGHDAD, PARIS

INFO PRIORITY ROME, BONN, THE HAGUE, WASHINGTON, MOSCOW

INFO ROUTINE ATHENS, BRUSSELS EMBASSY, COPENHAGEN, DUBLIN

INFO ROUTINE LUXEMBOURG

MIPT: ARAB/ISRAEL: CALL ON JORDANIAN PRIME MINISTER

SUMMARY

1. ZEID RIFAI ARGUES THAT IT WILL BE MONTHS BEFORE THE AUTHENTIC PALESTINIAN REACTION TO THE KING'S SPEECH EMERGES (SEMICLN) AND THAT AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT IN THIS PROCESS IS THE CONTINUED ISOLATION AND WEAKENING OF ARAFAT. MURPHY ASKED NOT TO COME TO JORDAN DURING HIS PRESENT VISIT TO THE AREA.

DETAIL

2. WHEN CALLING ON THE JORDANIAN PRIME MINISTER TODAY ON OTHER BUSINESS HE ASKED FOR HIS CURRENT VIEWS ON THE ARAB/ISRAEL ISSUE. HE SAID THAT THERE WAS LITTLE NEW. HE WOULD HAVE SEEN THE PLO'S STATEMENT OF 8 MARCH IN REPLY TO THE KING'S SPEECH OF 19 FEBRUARY. JORDAN HAD DECIDED TO GIVE THIS FULL PUBLICITY (IT WAS PUBLISHED IN TOTO IN TODAY'S PRESS), BECAUSE THEY THOUGHT IT DID LITTLE CREDIT TO THE CURRENT PLO LEADERSHIP. THE PLO'S ATTEMPTS IN THE STATEMENT TO CLAIM THAT THE PLO AND THE PALESTINIANS, OR THE PLO AND THE WEST BANKERS, WERE IDENTICAL AND THAT THERE WAS NO SCOPE FOR PALESTINIAN EXPRESSION OUTSIDE THE PLO WOULD IN THE LONG RUN DO THE ORGANISATION HARM.

3. IT WOULD BE MONTHS BEFORE THE AUTHENTIC PALESTINIAN REACTION TO THE KING'S SPEECH EMERGED. WE WERE STILL IN THE STAGE OF INITIAL EMOTIONAL REACTIONS. AS TIME PASSED IT WOULD BECOME CLEAR TO PALESTINIANS LIVING UNDER OCCUPATION THAT THE PLO COULD NOT BRING ABOUT A SETTLEMENT. BUT FIRST IT WAS NECESSARY FOR ARAFAT'S WEAKNESS TO BE FULLY EXPOSED. HE WOULD NOT FIND AN ESCAPE ROUTE IN SYRIA OR IN IRAQ. SADDAM HUSSEIN FULLY UNDERSTOOD THE POSITION AFTER THE KING'S VISIT TO BAGHDAD ON 5 MARCH (THOUGH THE IRAQIS MIGHT TRY TO USE THE PLO AGAINST SYRIA). IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION, RIFAI CLAIMED THAT EGYPT COULD ALSO BE BROUGHT TO ENDORSE JORDAN'S CURRENT POLICY. BUT EVEN IF IT DID NOT IT WAS

MY QUESTION, RIFAN CLAIMED THAT EGYPT COULD ALSO BE BROUGHT TO
ENDORSE JORDAN'S CURRENT POLICY. BUT EVEN IF IT DID NOT IT WAS
NOT OF GREAT SIGNIFICANCE BECAUSE EGYPT REMAINED RELATIVELY
ISOLATED FROM THE ARAB WORLD AND WAS NOW NOT A MAIN PLAYER ON
THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION. SOON ARAFAT WOULD BE REDUCED TO FLYING
BETWEEN TUNIS, KHARTOUM AND ADEN.

4. MURPHY (US STATE DEPARTMENT) HAD SUGGESTED THAT HE SHOULD VISIT
JORDAN, AS WELL AS EGYPT AND ISRAEL, ON HIS CURRENT TRIP TO THE
MIDDLE EAST. BUT JORDAN HAD REPLIED THAT IT WOULD BE BETTER IF
HE DID NOT DO SO. THEY DID NOT WANT TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE
KING'S SPEECH WAS JUST A COVER FOR SOME DEVICE INVOLVING THE
AMERICANS AND THE ISRAELIS.

COMMENT

5. RIFAN WAS HIS USUAL EBULLIENT AND OVER-CONFIDENT SELF. THERE
WERE SEVERAL POINTS IN HIS EXPOSITION WHICH HE WAS INCLINED TO
CONTEST BUT DECIDED AGAINST DOING SO. HE REMAINS UNREPENTEDLY
BENT ON A POLICY OF STRONG RELATIONS WITH SYRIA AND DESTRUCTION
OF ARAFAT. THE TIME MAY BE COMING WHEN IT WILL BE DESIRABLE FOR
US TO GIVE SOME CLEAR ADVICE TO KING HUSSEIN BUT I THINK THERE
ARE TOO MANY UNCERTAINTIES IN THE PRESENT SITUATION TO JUDGE WITH
CONFIDENCE WHAT THAT ADVICE SHOULD BE.

COLES

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