

MIDDLE EAST: ADVANCE COPIES

16

PS
PS/MR HURD
PS/PUS
SIR J LEAHY
MR EGERTON
SIR J BULLARD
HD/NENAD
HD/MED
HD/UND

NO 10 DOWNING STREET
CABINET OFFICE D10

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ED/CONSULAR DEPT
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CONFIDENTIAL

FM TUNIS 210905Z JANUARY 83

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 7 OF 21 JANUARY

INFO IMMEDIATE RABAT

INFO PRIORITY AMMAN ALGIERS JEDDA DAMASCU

INFO ROUTNE OTHER ME POSTS

YOUR TEL NO 61 TO RABAT: ARAB LEAGUE DELEGATION

1. EGERTON AND I SAW ARAFAT ON 20 JANUARY. EGERTON SPOKE ON THE LINES OF YOUR PARA 4, INCLUDING THE OFFER OF A MR HURD/QADDUMI MEETING IN THE REGION. ARAFAT WAS NOT (NOT) RECEPTIVE, THOUGH HE PROMISED TO STUDY OUR PROPOSAL.

2. EGERTON EMPHASISED THAT OUR STAND ON PALESTINIAN SELF-DETERMINATION AND THE NEED FOR A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT HAD NOT (NOT) CHANGED. WE WERE DOING ALL WE COULD TO MAKE THE ARAB LEAGUE DELEGATION'S VISIT POSSIBLE AND WE REGRETTED THE INITIAL MISUNDERSTANDING. WE WERE NOW IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH KING HASSAN, THE DATES OF 7/8 FEBRUARY HAD BEEN PROVISIONALLY AGREED AND KING HASSAN HAD SUGGESTED MILHEM AS THE PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVE IN THE DELEGATION. PROVIDED THAT THE REPRESENTATIVE WAS NOT AN OFFICIAL OF THE PLO, AND THAT WE COULD BE CONSULTED ABOUT HIS NOMINATION, WE DID NOT MIND WHO WAS CHOSEN, AND HE WOULD BE RECEIVED BY THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE QUEEN WITH THE REST OF THE DELEGATION.

n. member

3. EGERTON WENT ON TO STRESS THAT WE HAD NOT GONE BACK ON THE EARLIER MR HURD/QADDUMI MEETING: HE WAS AUTHORISED TO SAY THAT, AS A SPECIAL AND UNPRECEDENTED GESTURE, MR HURD WAS PREPARED TO COME TO THE AREA TO MEET QADDUMI ONCE THE ARAB LEAGUE DELEGATION'S VISIT HAD SUCCESSFULLY TAKEN PLACE.

... ATTENTIVELY AND PROMISED

4. ARAFAT, WHO WAS MOST AMIABLE, LISTENED ATTENTIVELY AND PROMISED TO STUDY THE PROPOSAL. HE SAID, HOWEVER, THAT HE WAS ASTONISHED BY THE BRITISH ATTITUDE. BRITAIN WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PALESTINIANS' PLIGHT AND THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WAS NOW ESCALATING A VERY SIMPLE MATTER INTO A MAJOR PROBLEM. IT SEEMED TO HAVE FORGOTTEN THAT DAJANI HAD ALREADY LED AN ARAB DELEGATION IN THE EURO-ARAB DIALOGUE (EGERTON POINTED OUT THAT THIS WAS AT OFFICIAL LEVEL). THE AMERICANS HAD INDEED REFUSED TO RECEIVE A PALESTINIAN WITH THE COMMITTEE OF SEVEN, BUT THEY AT LEAST HAD THE EXCUSE OF A FORMAL COMMITMENT TO CONGRESS NOT TO DEAL WITH THE PLO BEFORE THE LATTER RECOGNISED ISRAEL. (ARAFAT ADDED THAT EVEN THEN THEY WERE LIARS BECAUSE KISSINGER HAD BEEN IN TOUCH WITH HIM THREE TIMES). MITTERRAND HAD MADE NO DIFFICULTY ABOUT RECEIVING A PLO REPRESENTATIVE. THE FRENCH NO DOUBT HAD COMMERCIAL REASONS FOR THEIR ATTITUDE, BUT THE BRITISH SHOULD HAVE EVEN STRONGER MORAL REASONS FOR BEING AT LEAST AS FORTHCOMING. HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND THE REASONS FOR THE PRIME MINISTER'S ATTITUDE.

5. EGERTON SAID THAT HE WOULD SPEAK FRANKLY. OUR POLICY ON CONTACTS WITH THE PLO HAD BEEN FORMULATED SOME YEARS AGO BY LORD CARRINGTON, A FIRM FRIEND OF THE ARABS. CONTACTS AT OFFICIAL LEVEL WERE FREQUENT AS WE NEEDED TO KEEP IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH THE MOVEMENT. HOWEVER WE STRONGLY BELIEVED THAT CONTACT AT SENIOR MINISTERIAL LEVEL MUST BE MARKED BY A POSITIVE STEP TOWARDS PEACE. THIS HAD REPEATEDLY BEEN MADE CLEAR. WHEN THE ARAB LEAGUE DELEGATION'S VISIT HAD FIRST BEEN PROPOSED, THE MOROCCANS HAD SAID THERE WAS NO QUESTION OF A PLO REPRESENTATIVE BEING INCLUDED. THIS HAD CHANGED AT THE LAST MOMENT AND OUR RESPONSE HAD BEEN AN INEVITABLY HASTY ATTEMPT TO FIND A FORMULA WHICH WOULD MEET THE WISHES OF BOTH SIDES. WE NOW WISHED TO FIND A WAY FORWARD. WE HOPED THAT THE INCLUSION OF A PROMINENT NON-OFFICIAL PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVE IN THE DELEGATION AND THE SPECIAL GESTURE OF A SUBSEQUENT MR HURD/QADDUMI MEETING WOULD PROVIDE THE ANSWER.

6. ARAFAT SAID THAT HE WAS NOT CONVINCED. IT LOOKED TO HIM AS THOUGH BRITAIN WAS NOT INTERESTED IN PLAYING A ROLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS. HE THEN WENT INTO RAMBLING ACCUSATIONS ABOUT BRITAIN'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CRISIS AND REPEATED THAT BRITAIN HAD BEEN READY TO FIGHT SO THAT 1800 FALKLANDERS COULD HAVE SELF-DETERMINATION BUT WOULD NOT LIFT A FINGER FOR 4 MILLION PALESTINIANS.

7. EGERTON REPEATED THAT OUR PROPOSAL, WITH THE OFFER OF A MR HURD/QADDUMI MEETING WAS AN UNPRECEDENTED GESTURE AND THAT IT PROVIDED THE WAY FORWARD. IT WAS WRONG TO SAY BRITAIN WAS NOT (NOT) INTERESTED IN PLAYING A ROLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST: WE HAD BEEN THE AUTHORS OF RESOLUTION 242 AND OF THE VENICE DECLARATION, BOTH OF WHICH WERE CORNERSTONES OF WESTERN, INDEED WORLD POLICY ON THE DISPUTE. LATTERLY MR PYM HAD ROUNDLY CONDEMNED THE INVASION OF LEBANON AND THE TREATMENT OF PALESTINIANS THERE. HE WAS NOW PRESSING FOR A HALT TO NEW ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS.

8. IN LEAD-IN CONVERSATION, ARAFAT SAID THAT THE JORDANIAN/PLO DISCUSSIONS WERE GOING WELL. HE AND KING HUSSEIN HAD AGREED ON AN EVENTUAL CONFEDERAL AS OPPOSED TO FEDERAL SYSTEM. THE PALESTINIANS WOULD HAVE PREFERRED TO BE ENTIRELY INDEPENDENT, BUT HAD ACCEPTED THIS FORMULA IN ORDER TO REASSURE THE AMERICANS

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9. VERY SOON AFTER OUR MEETING ARAFAT LEFT FOR THE AL-QUDS (JERUSALEM) MEETING IN RABAT, WHICH HE CLAIMS TO CO-CHAIR WITH KING HASSAN.

STIRLING

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SENT/RECD AT 211116Z SP/GEH