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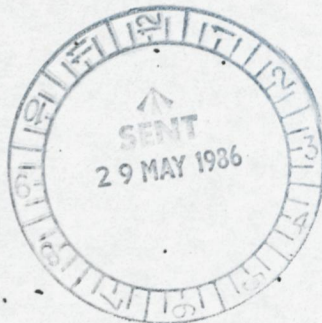
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INFO PRIORITY WASHINGTON, UKMIS NEW YORK

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NY TELNO 132: PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT: OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

SUMMARY

1. INITIAL ARABIC PRESS COVERAGE NOT UNFAVOURABLE. BUT TODAY'S EDITIONS FOCUS ON PRIME MINISTER'S REMARKS AT HER PRESS CONFERENCE ON PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION, INTERPRETING THEM AS A CALL FOR AN ALTERNATIVE LEADERSHIP TO THE PLO IN THE TERRITORIES. VIGOROUS DENUNCIATION OF SUCH AN APPROACH.

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DETAIL

2. PUBLIC REACTION HAS SO FAR BEEN LARGELY CONFINED TO PRESS COVERAGE AND EDITORIAL COMMENT. MRS THATCHER'S MEETING WITH PALESTINIANS ON 26 MAY RECEIVED PROMINENT COVERAGE IN THE ARABIC PRESS YESTERDAY. THE PRO-ARAFAT AL-QUDS AND AL-FAJR PRINTED THE FULL TEXT OF THE MEMORANDUM SUBMITTED AT THE END OF THE MEETING, NOTING THAT MAYOR FREIJ HAD REFUSED TO SIGN IT. BRIEF STATEMENTS BY SOME OF THE PARTICIPANTS GAVE A FAVOURABLE ACCOUNT OF THE MEETING. AL-FAJR REPORTED THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAD EXPRESSED UNDERSTANDING OF THE 'CATASTROPHIC' SITUATION IN WHICH PALESTINIANS WERE LIVING AND STRESSED THE NEED TO REVIVE THE PEACE PROCESS. THE REJECTIONIST AL MITHAQ VILIFIED THOSE ATTENDING.

3. DESPITE HAVING RECEIVED FROM US A FULL TEXT OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH OF 25 MAY (WITH ARABIC TRANSLATION OF RELEVANT EXTRACTS )

THE RADICAL ASH-SHAAB CHOSE TO QUOTE SELECTIVELY ISRAELI PRESS GLOSSES ON IT DRAWING THE CONCLUSION THAT SHE WAS ENCOURAGING CREATION OF AN ALTERNATIVE PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP IN THE TERRITORIES. AL-QUDS ALSO INSISTED ON MISINTERPRETING THE SPEECH, SEEING HMG'S ATTITUDE AS A CARBON COPY OF THE US'S. AL-FAJR'S EDITORIAL, HOWEVER, COMMENTED FAVOURABLY AND POSITIVELY, HIGHLIGHTING THE PRIME MINISTER'S REFERENCES TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NOT BEING A SUBSTITUTE FOR A POLICY OF PEACE.

4. PRESS COVERAGE AND COMMENT TODAY IS UNFAVOURABLE. ALL LEAD STORIES REPORT MRS THATCHER AS HAVING CALLED AT HER PRESS CONFERENCE FOR THE CREATION OF AN ALTERNATIVE LEADERSHIP IN THE TERRITORIES. THEY INTERPRET HER REMARKS AS FAVOURING MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS IN THE TERRITORIES AS A MEANS OF ENCOURAGING THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP, WITH WHICH ISRAEL AND JORDAN COULD WORK TO ACTIVATE THE PEACE PROCESS. AL-QUDS ALSO REPORTS HER AS HAVING TOLD JOURNALISTS ON THE RETURN JOURNEY TO LONDON THAT OPTIONS FOR PROGRESS INCLUDED ELECTIONS ON THE WEST BANK FOR THE JORDANIAN PARLIAMENT: THOSE ELECTED WOULD SURELY REPRESENT THE OPINIONS OF PEOPLE IN THE WEST BANK. IN EDITORIAL COMMENT AL-QUDS SAYS THAT THE PRIME MINISTER'S

POSITION WAS UNCLEAR UNTIL HER PRESS CONFERENCE. BRITAIN HAD NOW DELIVERED ANOTHER BLOW TO THE PALESTINIANS, WHO WERE BEING TREATED AS A 'COMMUNITY' (JALHYAH), RATHER THAN A PEOPLE WITH FULL NATIONAL RIGHTS. FURTHERMORE, SHE HAD REFERRED TO A 'FEDERATION' WITH JORDAN, RATHER THAN THE 'CONFEDERATION' CALLED FOR IN THE AMMAN AGREEMENT OF 11 FEBRUARY 1995. SHE HAD LAUNCHED YET ANOTHER INITIATIVE WHICH TOOK NO ACCOUNT OF THE PALESTINIANS' MINIMUM ASPIRATIONS.

5. ASH-SHAAB HEADS ITS EDITORIAL 'THE THATCHER DECLARATION' (IT USES THE SAME ARABIC WORD AS FOR THE BALFOUR DECLARATION), SAYING THAT MRS THATCHER HAD MADE VERY CLEAR HER GOVERNMENT'S 'HOSTILE ATTITUDE' TO THE PALESTINIANS. SHE HAD DECLARED WAR ON THE PLO IN THE SAME WAY AS THE US. BRITAIN NOW WANTED TO BYPASS THE PLO AND PURSUE THE JORDANIAN OPTION. PICKING UP THE REFERENCE TO 'FEDERATION', IT SAID THAT MRS THATCHER WANTED JORDAN TO TAKE OVER THE WEST BANK ONCE AGAIN.

6. AL-FAJR PRUDENTLY CHOSE A DIFFERENT SUBJECT FOR COMMENT - SINIORA TOLD US LAST NIGHT THAT HE WAS WORRIED BY WHAT HE HAD HEARD ABOUT MRS THATCHER'S PRESS CONFERENCE AND WISHED TO SEE A FULL TRANSCRIPT BEFORE CONSIDERING PUBLIC COMMENT.

7. OTHER PUBLIC REACTION INCLUDED A RALLY AT AN-NAJAH UNIVERSITY IN NABLUS, ORGANISED BY THE FEDERATION OF STUDENTS' COUNCILS IN THE TERRITORIES (MOST OF WHICH ARE CONTROLLED BY FATAH), WHICH CONDEMNED THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO ISRAEL, THE PALESTINIANS WHO HAD MET HER, AND 'ATTEMPTS TO CREATE AN ALTERNATIVE LEADERSHIP'. A RALLY AT HEBRON POLYTECHNIC, CALLED TO PROTEST THE JORDANIAN AUTHORITIES' ACTIONS AGAINST YARMOUK UNIVERSITY STUDENTS, ALSO DENOUNCED THE PRIME MINISTER ON SIMILAR LINES.