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Authority **NND 969049**  
By **Cm NARA** Date **6-12-03**

Department of State

TELEGRAM

*SS*

CONFIDENTIAL 098

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14  
ACTION: NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-20 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-06 H-02 INR-06 L-03  
NSAE-00 NSC-10 P-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12 NIC-01  
SA-03 IO-12 E-11 OMB-01 AID-20 **(RSR) 01** /139 W  
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R 291415Z MAR 72  
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6820  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
AMEMBASSY ROME  
AMEMBASSY TELAVIV  
**1972-3-24, Assad, Cabinet, U.S.**  
CONFIDENTIAL BEIRUT 3457

*Beirut 3457  
3/29/72*

DEPT PLEASE PASS USINT CAIRO.

SUBJ: SYRIA: TOUR D'HORIZON WITH USINT DAMASCUS

REF: BEIRUT 2353 *Page 1 SW*

SUMMARY: MAJORITY SYRIAN LEADERS IN ASSAD REGIME REMAIN OPPOSED TO SYRIAN-SOVIET TREATY ALTHOUGH DEBATE UNDERWAY. SOVIETS, WHILE MAKING IT KNOWN THEY WOULD WELCOME TREATY, HAVE PLAYED IT COOL. PRESS ATTACKS OVER ALLEGED US ROLE IN CYPRUS AND EAST MEDITERRANEAN CONTINUE REFLECT OPPOSITION TO US, ALTHOUGH MAJORITY GROUP OPPOSING SOVIET TREATY RECOGNIZES SHOULD NOT FURTHER ANTAGONIZE US. RECENT CABINET CHANGES AND PROVINCIAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS BOTH WENT AGAINST BATH AND APPEAR TO BE DELIBERATE MOVES BY ASSAD TO WEAKEN PARTY'S CIVILIAN WING. END SUMMARY.

1. AS RESULT RECENT VISITS MAIOLINI AND OTHER INFO ON RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN SYRIA, WE HAVE FOLLOWING COMMENTS UPDATING THOSE REPORTED REFTEL.

2. SYRIAN-SOVIET RELATIONS: MAIOLINI REPORTED CHEF DE CABINET OF FOREIGN MINISTER TOLD HIM MAZUROV DID NOT ACTUALLY

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PROPOSE FYRIAN-SOVIET TREATY DURING RECENT VISIT. MAZUROV REASSURED SARG OFFICIALS USSR NOT RPT NOT TRYING TO PRESSURE SYRIA INTO SIGNING TREATY OF FRIENDSHIP LIKE THAT SIGNED WITH INDIA AND EGYPT. HOWEVER, HE INDICATED SOVIETS BADLY WANT SUCH TREATY WITH SYRIA AND THAT SUCH TREATY COULD FACILITATE FAVORABLE SOVIET RESPONSE TO VARIOUS SARG REQUESTS.

3. CHEF DE CABINET MAINTAINED THAT WHILE MAJORITY OF PRESENT SYRIAN LEADERS OPPOSE SUCH TREATY, A MINORITY GROUP, PRINCIPALLY COMMUNISTS AND LEFT-WING BATH, SUPPORTS IT ON GROUNDS IT COMBATS SOVIETS FORMALLY AND MORALLY TO SYRIA. THIS GROUP POINTS TO RECENT THREATS BY ISRAEL AND NEED FOR SOME FORMAL SOVIET LINK AS INSURANCE AGAINST ISRAELI ATTACK. GROUP ALSO MAINTAINS TREATY WOULD SIMPLY NORMALIZE SITUATION WHICH ALREADY EXISTS.

4. MAJORITY ARGUES SYRIA SHOULD STICK TO ITS NON-ALIGNMENT POLICY. THEY FEAR RISKS OF STIMULATING REACTIONS IN AREA WHICH WOULD ULTIMATELY BE HARMFUL TO SYRIAN INTERESTS, CITING US PRESENCE IN CYPRUS AND GREECE, RISK OF BEING SURROUNDED BY AMERICAN MILITARY FORCES, AND EVEN FURTHER US SHIFT TOWARD SUPPORT OF ISRAEL AND HOSTILITY TO ARABS. CHEF DE CABINET SAID IN ANY EVENT TREATY WOULD NOT BE SIGNED "TOMORROW". SOVIET AMBASSADOR TOLD ITALIAN AMBASSADOR SYRIA WOULD EVENTUALLY SIGN TREATY WITH USSR.

5. MAIOLINI NOTED RECENT CYPRUS SITUATION HAS REVIVED WAVE OF ATTACKS IN SYRIAN MEDIA ON US AND UK. HOWEVER, THE ATTACKS, WHILE SHARP, LACK THE OLD VIRULENCE. MAIOLINI ALSO QUOTED NOW UN RES REP HABIB AHMED, PAK NATIONAL, AS STATING FAVORABLE PRO-WESTERN ATTITUDE OF SARG OF SUMMER 1971 HAD ENDED AND ANY NEW OVERTURES UNLIKELY BE SUCCESSFUL. AHMED DESCRIBED PRIMIN KHEIFAWI ADAMANT IN OPPOSING ANY SYRIAN MOVES TO WEST, FOR EXAMPLE, HE TOLD BELGIAN AMBASSADOR "WESTERN COUNTRIES FAILED RESPOND SYRIAN INITIATIVES". ACCORDING RES REP, HE ALSO IS OPPOSING APPOINTMENT US EXPERT TO UN STAFF NEEDED ON EUPHRATES PROJECT AS WELL AS PURCHASE US WHEAT DESPITE ITS LOWER PRICE.

6. MAIOLINI SAID SARG RECEIVED SIDDAM TAKRITI WITH FULL HONORS BUT WITHOUT CORDIALITY. HE EVALUATED VISIT AS REMINDER GOI STILL CAN PLAY ROLE IN SYRIAN POLITICS,

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ESPECIALLY AS GOI NOW COMING OUT OF SHELL. GOI COULD EMBARRASS THEM WITH FEDAYEEN, FOR EXAMPLE, BY RECOGNIZING PALESTINE GOVERNMENT IN EXILE. HE ALSO SPECULATED BECAUSE OF VAGUENESS IRAQI PLAN THAT IT MIGHT BE ONLY PLOT TO LOOSEN CAR TIES. NONETHELESS VISIT ACCORDING ROME'S 1802 APPEARS TO HAVE HAD SOME SUCCESS RE SETTLEMENT BILATERAL PROBLEMS.

7. DURING MARCH 3-11, ELECTIONS HELD FOR POPULAR COUNCILS FOR EACH OF SYRIA'S 14 PROVINCES. THERE WERE REPORTEDLY 6,897 CANDIDATES FOR 644 SEATS. AMONG WINNERS WE ARE TOLD THAT SURPRISINGLY HIGH PERCENTAGE OF KNOWN ANTI-BAATHIST SYRIAN NATIONALISTS (E.G., TEACHERS, MERCHANTS, ETC.) SUDDENLY REEMERGED ON SYRIAN POLITICAL SCENE HOWEVER, THESE WERE NOT MEMBERS OF LEADING SYRIAN POLITICAL FAMILIES SUCH AS THE AZEMS, BARAZIS, ETC., MOST OF WHOM ARE NOW IN BEIRUT. ELECTION OF THIS TYPE OF NATIONALIST PARTICULARLY TRUE IN DAMASCUS AND HOMS WHERE THEY CONSTITUTED ALMOST 100 PERCENT OF THOSE ELECTED. NUMBER OF CANDIDATES FROM BAATH AND OTHER POLITICAL GROUPS WHICH MAKE UP NATIONAL FRONT NOT VERY HIGH ACCORDING MOST SOURCES.

8. MAIOLINI AND OTHER RELIABLE SYRIAN SOURCES MAINTAINED THERE WAS LITTLE MANIPULATION AIMED AT ELECTING BAATHIS DESPITE DEMANDS FROM SYRIAN BAATHIS. MAIOLINI SAW LOCAL COUNCILS SERVING TO GIVE ASSAD BOTH SOME INDICATION OF GENUINELY POPULAR OPINION, AND TO SOME EXTENT SERVING AS BALANCING DEVICE AGAINST BAATH PARTY, ESPECIALLY ASSAD'S CONTINUING INTERNAL OPPOSITION FROM OLD ATASSI-DEDID WING.

9. FORMATION OF PROGRESSIVE NATIONAL FRONT IN EARLY MARCH BROUGHT FOUR OTHER POLITICAL GROUPS INTO POWER WITH BAATH TO SHARE SUPREME POLITICAL AUTHORITY. WHILE BAATH HOLDS TEN OF THE EIGHTEEN SEATS, REMAINDER DIVIDED EQUALLY BETWEEN ARAB SOCIALIST UNION (PRO-CAIRO), SOCIALIST UNIONISTS (CLOSE TO ASSAD BAATH), ARAB SOCIALIST MOVEMENT, AND SYRIAN COMMUNIST PARTY. INTERESTING FEATURE OF CHARTER OF NATIONAL FRONT IS PROVISION RESERVING POLITICAL ACTION WITHIN ARMY AND WITH STUDENTS EXCLUSIVELY TO BAATH. NEW CABINET BECAME

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THEN INEVITABLE AND ITS FORMATION WAS ANNOUNCED MARCH 23 (SEE BEIRUT 32191). ONE SIGNIFICANT ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN ADDITION NOTED REFTEL HAS BEEN DROPPING OF SEVERAL PROMINENT BAATH CIVILIANS FROM CABINET, NOTABLY, HILAL, RADDAMI, AND HADDADI. ALL WERE REPLACED BY NON-BAATHIS. MOREOVER, THOSE BAATHIS WHO REMAINED IN CABINET WERE BY COMPARISON SECOND RATERS IN PARTY STRUCTURE. NO NEW BAATHIS ENTERED CABINET, EXCEPT GENERAL TLASS, AND OF NEWCOMERS, NAMELY, TWO -- ABBARA AT PETROLEUM AND IMADI AT PLANNING -- ARE TECHNICIANS. LATTER HAS BEEN AT LEAST TEN YEARS CONTINUOUSLY IN THAT MINISTRY.

10. COMMENT: IN ECONOMIC FIELD, OVER PAST YEAR ASSAD'S REGIME HAD EDGED GRADUALLY AWAY FROM OLD BAATHI SOCIALIST DOGMA. HE HAS SOUGHT TO PURSUE SOMEWHAT MORE INDEPENDENT FOREIGN POLICY WITH SOME GESTURES TOWARD WEST. NOW, WITH FORMATION NATIONAL FRONT, PROVINCIAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS, AND NEW CABINET, IT APPEARS THAT ASSAD IS MOVING MORE AND MORE TO WEAKEN POWER MONOPOLY OF THE CIVILIAN SIDE OF THE BAATH PARTY APPARATUS, OR AT LEAST TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR DEPENDENCE ON BAATH MILITARY.

1. MAIOLINI'S OBSERVATIONS ON ASSAD'S MARCH 8 SPEECH ABOUT SC 242 ARE REPORTED IN BEIRUT 3248. GP-3.  
BUFUM

NOTE BY OC/T; NOT PASSED CAIRO.

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