



Department of State

TELEGRAM

1974-2-15, Assad, Kissinger, Talks

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EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY, XF

SUBJECT: SOME THOUGHTS ON NEGOTIATING WITH SYRIANS

1. SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH THE GOING HAS BEEN AND WILL REMAIN DIFFICULT, I BELIEVE YOU ARE ON THE RIGHT TRACK WITH THE SYRIANS AND PARTICULARLY WITH ASAD WHO IS NOW BEGINNING TO TRUST THE USG. IN THIS PAPER I TRY TO TELL YOU WHY AND ALSO TRY TO CONVEY TO YOU MY IMPRESSIONS OF HOW THE SYRIANS AND THE ARAB-SPEAKING WORLD IN GENERAL APPROACH BARGAINING AND NEGOTIATING. IN PARTICULAR, THE ARABS MAKE A DISTINCTION BETWEEN BARGAINING FOR CARPETS OR OIL AND NEGOTIATING ON WEIGHTY MATTERS SUCH AS RESTITUTION OR REDRESS FOR INJUSTICE. IN BOTH INSTANCES, HOWEVER, THE ARABS SPEAK OUT OF SPECIFIC MENTAL SETS OR WHAT I HAVE CALLED IN THIS PAPER THE "BEDU SYNDROME" AND THE "SOUK SYNDROME." I DO NOT CLAIM THAT MY THOUGHTS ARE THE LAST WORD BUT TAKEN WITH OTHER INFORMATION AT YOUR DISPOSAL AS WELL AS YOUR OWN IMPRESSIONS THEY MAY, I HOPE, BE USEFUL IN THE CRITICAL AND ROUGH DAYS AHEAD. END SUMMARY.

2. I WAS INTRIGUED TO READ IN THE FEB. 11 ISSUE OF NEWSWEEK INTERNATIONAL A STORY ON SYRIA WHICH STARTS OFF WITH AN ALLEGED QUOTE FROM YOU: "I HAVE NO FEELING FOR THE SYRIANS." IF THE QUOTE IS CORRECT, I WOULD RESPECTFULLY SAY THAT BASED ON MY OBSERVATIONS FROM MY LIMITED VANTAGE POINT DURING YOUR RECENT VISIT TO DAMASCUS AS WELL AS ON LOCAL REPORTS PROVIDING ME WITH FEEDBACK FROM THAT VISIT, YOU ARE MISTAKEN. I BELIEVE THAT YOU IN FACT DO HAVE A "FEELING FOR THE SYRIANS." YOU MAY ALREADY KNOW THIS BY NOW EITHER BY INSTINCT OR BY INTELLECT. IN ANY EVENT, THIS OPENING PROVIDES ME WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO PASS ON TO YOU, IF I MAY, SOME THOUGHTS ON "NEGOTIATING" WITH SYRIANS. I DO NOT CLAIM THESE THOUGHTS ARE THE LAST WORD BUT RATHER THAT THEY ARE THE RESULTS OF SOME YEARS OF TRYING TO UNDERSTAND THE PEOPLE OF THIS AREA. I WOULD HOPE THAT, TAKEN WITH OTHER INFORMATION, IMPRESSIONS AND ADVICE AVAILABLE TO YOU, THESE THOUGHTS MAY BE OF SOME HELP DURING YOUR DIFFICULT NEGOTIATING DAYS AHEAD.

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