

Iran

PS
 PS/SIR I GILMOUR
 PS/MR HURD
 PS/PUS
 SIR D MATTLAND
 MR J C MOBERLY
 LORD BRIDGES
 LORD N G LENNOX
 MR EVANS
 MISS BROWN
 HD/MED
 HD/FRD
 HD/NEHAD
 HD/UND (2)
 HD/OID
 HD/DEF DEPT
 HD/N AM D
 HD/ES & SD (2)
 HD/PUSD (2)
 HD/NEWS DEPT
 HD/COD
 HD/CONS DEPT
 RESIDENT CLERK

PS NO 10 DOWNING ST
 SIR R ARMSTRONG)
 ASSESSMENTS STAFF)
 MR R WADE GERY) CABINET
 MR LE CHEMINANT) OFFICE
 MR W N WENBAN SMITH)
 DIO)
 PS/CHANCELLOR)
 MR F R BARRATT) TREASURY
 MR D J S HANCOCK)
 MR C W McMAHON) BANK OF
 MR P B EDGLEY) ENGLAND
 MR R WILLIAMS CRE5 DOT
 MR W KNIGHTON DEPT OF TRADE
 MR C BENJAMIN DOI
 MR D LE B JONES) DEPT OF
 MR C LUCAS) ENERGY

GR 650

S E C R E T

FM TEHRAN 130805Z FEB

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUKBER 161 OF 13 FEB 80

INFO PRIORITY WASHINGTON AND UKMIS NEW YORK.

MY TELS NOS 156 AND 157 : US/IRAN.

1. THE SWISS AMBASSADOR, WHOM I MET LAST NIGHT, IS THE SOUL OF DISCRETION, BUT PUTTING TOGETHER ONE OR TWO THINGS THAT HE SAID, I HAVE COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT CONTACTS BETWEEN THE AMERICANS AND BANI SADR ARE MORE ADVANCED THAN I HAD BEEN INCLINED TO BELIEVE (PARA 3 OF MY TELNO 132).

2. PUTTING THE BITS TOGETHER, IT SEEMS THAT BANI SADR, WITH THE ACTIVE SUPPORT OF QOTBZADEH, FOR WHICH THE LATTER IS LIKELY TO RECEIVE HIS REWARD BY BEING RETAINED AS FOREIGN MINISTER, HAS OBTAINED THE UNANIMOUS SUPPORT OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL FOR A SCENARIO TO BE SUBMITTED TO KHOMEINI WHICH WOULD INVOLVE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SOME FORM OF COMMISSION OF ENQUIRY, THE HANDING OVER OF THE HOSTAGES TO SOME MORE ACCEPTABLE AND CONTROLLABLE BODY, AND, PRESUMABLY THEIR RELEASE WHEN THE ENQUIRY REPORTS. I FORMED THE IMPRESSION THAT THE UN IS NOT INVOLVED DIRECTLY IN THESE CONTACTS BUT THAT THE SWISS AMBASSADOR IS HIMSELF THE INTERMEDIARY. GIVEN THE DIFFICULTIES OF ANY GOVERNMENT OR INTERNATIONAL BODY EITHER PARTICIPATING

AMBASSADOR IS HIMSELF THE INTERMEDIARY. GIVEN THE DIFFICULTIES OF ANY GOVERNMENT OR INTERNATIONAL BODY EITHER PARTICIPATING IN AN ENQUIRY WHILE THE HOSTAGES ARE STILL HELD OR ACCEPTING AND HOLDING THE HOSTAGES THEMSELVES, AS IN EFFECT TRUSTEES FOR THE IRANIANS, I BELIEVE THAT THE SCENARIO FAVOURED MUST INVOLVE AN ENQUIRY COMPOSED OF INDEPENDENT INTERNATIONAL FIGURES AND THE TRUSTEE FOR THE HOSTAGES MUST BE THE IRANIAN ARMED FORCES OR SOME SIMILAR ORGANISATION (PERHAPS THE SEPAH PASDARAN, THE REVOLUTIONARY GUARDS).

3. THE PROPOSALS PUT FORWARD IN THE NAME OF SEAN MCBRIDE BY ALBALA (PARAGRAPH 4 OF MY TEL NO 132) APPARENTLY INVOLVED AN OPEN-ENDED AND WIDE-RANGING COMMISSION, WITH NO TIME LIMIT, AND NO AGREED PROGRAMME FOR A RELEASE. THEY ARE REGARDED HERE AS A SOVIET PLOY FED IN THROUGH ALBALA, WHO I AM TOLD IS IN FACT A MEMBER OF THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY. THE SWISS AMBASSADOR SAYS THAT THEY HAVE BEEN SEEN THROUGH AND SCOTCHED, LARGELY THROUGH THE AGENCY OF QOTBZADEH (ONE OF THE DEBTS BANI SADR OWES HIM).
4. IF THE ABOVE IS ON THE RIGHT LINES, THERE IS A GOOD DEAL OF PUBLIC COMMENT WHICH PERHAPS FALLS INTO PLACE. FOR EXAMPLE BEHESHTI WAS REPORTED YESTERDAY TO HAVE TOLD THE PRESS THAT KHOMEINI WAS THE FINAL ARBITER OF THE FATE OF THE HOSTAGES, THAT THE STUDENTS' ACTION AGAINST THE AMERICAN EMBASSY WAS NOT "ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT OR THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL OR THE IMAM", THAT IN A SENSITIVE ISSUE SUCH AS THIS NO ONE IS EXPECTED TO MAKE A DECISION WITHOUT REFERRING IT TO THE IMAM, AND THAT THE STUDENTS WOULD FOLLOW THE IMAM'S PATH "OR WILL BE MADE TO DO SO". QOTBZADEH IN AN INTERVIEW WITH ITN MADE A SOMEWHAT SIMILAR POINT ABOUT COMPELLING THE STUDENTS IF IT BECAME NECESSARY. BANI SADR, IN THE INTERVIEW WITH LE MONDE (MY TEL NO 157), SAID THAT AN AGREED PROPOSAL HAD BEEN FORWARDED TO KHOMEINI, WHOSE DECISION HE EXPECTED IN TWO DAYS, AND THAT "WE WOULD NEVER RESORT TO VIOLENCE AGAINST YOUNG PATRIOTS, BUT IN THE EVENT OF DISAGREEMENT WOULD TRY TO PERSUADE THEM".
5. FINALLY IN A PRESS CONFERENCE YESTERDAY, THE "STUDENTS", WHO APPEAR VERY MUCH ON THE DEFENSIVE, REJECTED ANY INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OR ENQUIRY BUT SAID THAT THEY WOULD NEVER DO ANYTHING AGAINST KHOMEINI'S WISHES, AND ADDED AT ANOTHER POINT, "THE IMAM HAS NOT CHANGED HIS POSITION (NEXT WORD UNDERLINED) YET (MY UNDERLINING) ON THE RELEASE OF THE HOSTAGES. IF THE PRESIDENT HAS A DIFFERENT OPINION, THEN LET HIM TAKE IT UP WITH THE IMAM".

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6. I HAVE IDSCUSSED THESE IDEAS IN CONFIDENCE ONLY WITH THE DANISH AMBASSADOR AND IN AGREEMENT WITH HIM DO NOT PROPOSE TO AIR THEM, STILL LESS ATTRIBUTE ANY EVIDENCE FOR THEM TO THE SWISS AMBASSADOR, WITH MY COMMUNITY COLLEAGUES. EQUALLY I THINK IT WOULD BE WRONG FOR US TO INDICATE TO THE AMERICANS THAT WE HAVE HAD ANY HINT FROM THE SWISS AMBASSADOR ALONG THESE LINES. IF I AM RIGHT, THEY HAVE CHOSEN DELIBERATELY NOT TO TAKE US INTO THEIR CONFIDENCE AND I SHOULD NOT WISH TO GET HIM INTO TROUBLE.

GRAHAM

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