

NND 961045
By SDZ/VSW Date 7/20/72

15/1/72
REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

U

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Date: October 13, 1972 5:00 p

Place: UNGA Delegates' Lounge

Subject: Tunisian/US Relations

Participants: Tunisia
Foreign Minister Mohammed Masmoudi
Tunisian Staff Member

United States
Ambassador William Witman II
US Delegation

Copies:	POLSEC	AmEmbassy Tunis
	IO/UNP	Amb. Bush
	AF	Amb. Schaufele
	AF/N	POLSEC - Mr. Grigg
	REF	NEA
		<i>NR-10</i>

This meeting was arranged at FM Masmoudi's request when Ambassador Witman telephoned to express Assistant Secretary Newsom's regret at not having been able to see the FM before returning to Washington with the Secretary.

FM Masmoudi said he would be leaving for Tunis at 10:00 p.m. and was very sorry to have missed having a further opportunity to meet with Mr. Newsom.

Speaking personally and emotionally - and at length - the FM said he did not understand American policy. It almost looked as if the US and the Soviets had agreed on a division of spheres of influence that would turn over the entire Arab east to the Russians and bring the latter to Tunisia's border. Why had the US completely written off the Palestinians and become totally wedded to the Israelis? This made it very difficult for America's friends like Tunisia. Sadat had thrown the Russians out but in the absence of any support from the US, he would have no choice but to enter into a new relationship with them. The Libyans were, like himself, very devout (*très croyants*) but they too would be driven by despair to deal with the Russians.

Mr. Witman protested, as possible, that there clearly was no agreement with the Soviets on spheres of influence, in the Mediterranean or elsewhere in the ME. Furthermore, Secretary Rogers had made a special point of emphasizing the legitimate aspirations and concerns of the Palestinian people and had, as the FM well knew, made great efforts to find a peaceful settlement in the ME.

POLSEC:Witman:ams 10/17/72

Witman

*United Nations
U.S. Delegation*
POL 7 TUN
XP POL TUN - US
XP POL 27 APR 78 - 15R
POL 23-8

4

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.4

DECLASSIFIED
PA/HO Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended,
September 6, 2007

~~NND 968045~~
By SD/USW Date 7/20/94

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

FM Masmoudi stated that he disagreed profoundly with the US position on terrorism. How was it possible for an Arab not to feel deeply about the fate of the Palestinians? Why did the US react so strongly to acts of despair by the Palestinians while passing over in silence the daily terrorism of the Israelis, who had founded their state with its use?

Mr. Witman tried unsuccessfully to persuade FM Masmoudi to draw a distinction between acts of war and indiscriminate threats to innocent non-combatants, or to reassure him that our proposed Convention clearly excluded political movements.

The FM nevertheless was obviously very pained at this seemingly insuperable difference that had arisen in the hitherto extremely close US/Tunisian relationship. He said that Tunisia was obliged for the sake of credibility to make approaches to Hanoi, but that should not interfere with the US connection. (He said nothing about going to Saigon.)

Mr. Witman in closing urged that the FM continue the dialogue with Ambassador Seelye, who would shortly be arriving in Tunis.

