

MIDDLE EAST: ADVANCE COPIES 17

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PS/MR WCE  
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SIR J LEAHY  
MR SPERTON  
SIR J BULLARD  
ED/NEPAD  
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CONFIDENTIAL

ADVANCE COPY

DESKBY FCO 021430Z

IMMEDIATE

FROM TEL AVIV 021245Z DEC 83

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 331 OF 02 DECEMBER 1983

INFO PRIORITY BEIRUT, DAMASCUS, WASHINGTON, ATHENS, PARIS AND ROME.

EC/ISRAEL/LEBANON

SUMMARY

1. ISRAELIS BELIEVE THAT SYRIA HAS LOST THE INITIATIVE IN LEBANON AND THAT IT WOULD BE A TRAGIC MISTAKE IF THE EUROPEANS HELPED SYRIA TO RECOVER IT. IN ANY DECLARATION AT THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL THEY HOPE THE TEN WILL THEREFORE STICK TO A COMMON LINE OF SUPPORT FOR WITHDRAWAL OF ALL FOREIGN FORCES AND FOR A STRONG INDEPENDENT LEBANON, WHICH ARE OBJECTIVES SHARED BY ISRAEL.

DETAIL

2. I WAS ASKED BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY TO CALL THIS MORNING, TOGETHER WITH MY FRENCH AND ITALIAN COLLEAGUES. KIMCHE REFERRED TO THE FORTHCOMING EUROPEAN SUMMIT MEETING. HE WISHED TO MAKE THE FOLLOWING POINTS WHICH HE HOPED WOULD INFLUENCE THE ATTITUDE OF OUR GOVERNMENTS TO ANY PUBLIC STATEMENT ON LEBANON:

A) IN ISRAEL'S VIEW, THERE WAS ONLY A CHANCE OF A SOLUTION TO LEBANON'S PROBLEMS IF GEMAYEL SUCCEEDED IN STANDING FIRM AGAINST SYRIAN PRESSURE.

B) THE INITIATIVE WAS NO LONGER IN SYRIAN HANDS. IT WAS ESSENTIAL TO KEEP IT THAT WAY, AND NOT GIVE DAMASCUS ANY OPENING TO

- ~~TO KEEP IT THAT WAY, AND NOT GIVE DAMASCUS ANY OPENING TO~~  
EXPLOIT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE.  
WE SHOULD ALL WORK TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE COMMON GOALS IN LEBANON.
- C) ISRAEL HAD TOLD THE AMERICANS AND GEMAYEL THAT SHE WOULD NOT SIT IDLY BY IN THE EVENT OF A BREAKDOWN OF THE CEASEFIRE LEADING TO RENEWED FIGHTING IN WHICH SYRIA AGAIN USED HER PALESTINIAN PROXIES.
  - D) THE AMERICANS HAVE ACCEPTED AND ENDOURED ISRAEL'S ARGUMENT THAT ANY CHANGE IN THE MAY 17 AGREEMENT WOULD BE INTERPRETED BY SYRIA AS A SIGN OF WEAKNESS.
  - E) ALTHOUGH THE ISRAELIS HAD DISCUSSED AMONG THEMSELVES SOME IDEAS ABOUT FURTHER PARTIAL IDF WITHDRAWAL IN THE WESTERN PART OF SOUTHERN LEBANON, NOTHING OF THIS KIND WAS ACTUALLY ON THE CARDS FOR THE TIME BEING.
  - F) ISRAEL FAVOURED CONTINUATION OF THE GENEVA TALKS, AND WAS ENCOURAGING HER (CHRISTIAN) FRIENDS TO DO A DEAL WITH THE OTHERS (HE MENTIONED DRUSE AND SHIA) FOR THE SAKE NOT OF SYRIA BUT OF INTERNAL COHESION.
  - G) THE MNF WAS SERVING A VALUABLE PURPOSE SEMICOLON KIMCHE HOPED THERE WOULD BE NO MOVE TOWARDS PULLING OUT ANY PART OF IT AT THIS STAGE.
  - H) KIMCHE MENTIONED IN CONFIDENCE THAT THE TRIPARTITE COMMITTEE (US-ISRAEL-LEBANON) FORESEEN UNDER THE MAY 17 AGREEMENT HAS MET A FEW TIMES SEMICOLON AT LEBANESE REQUEST THIS WAS BEING KEPT VERY QUIET.

3. KIMCHE CONCLUDED BY URGING THAT THE TEN SHOULD TAKE A SIMILARLY FIRM LINE AS THE US AND ISRAEL (AND HE BELIEVED INCREASINGLY GEMAYEL) OVER STANDING UP TO THE SYRIANS. HE HOPED ANY STATEMENT BY THE TEN WOULD CALL NOT FOR UNILATERAL MOVES BY ISRAEL BUT FOR WITHDRAWAL OF ALL FOREIGN FORCES, SUPPORT FOR A STRONG INDEPENDENT LEBANON, AND CONDEMNATION OF RECENT BREACHES OF THE CEASEFIRE.

4. IT WAS CLEAR FROM KIMCHE'S REMARKS THAT THE ISRAELIS HAD HEARD OF A POSSIBLE BRITISH INITIATIVE AT ATHENS. I SEE THE PURPOSE OF HIS SUMMONING THE THREE AMBASSADORS AS BEING TO TRY AND ENSURE THAT THE TEN, AS HE PUT IT, GIVE THE RIGHT SIGNAL TO THE SYRIANS. INDEED THE STRESS HE LAID ON SHORT-TERM TACTICS LEFT IN MY MIND THE POSSIBILITY THAT ISRAEL COULD CONSIDER BEING MORE FLEXIBLE AT SOME LATER STAGE, EG OVER THE MAY 17 AGREEMENT. IN ANSWER TO MY QUESTION ON THIS POINT, KIMCHE MERELY TOOK THE LINE THAT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN IN THE FUTURE. LIKEWISE THE IMPLICATION WAS LEFT THAT A FURTHER PARTIAL PULLBACK OR THINNING OUT BY THE IDF FROM THE AWALI LINE REMAINS A FUTURE OPTION.

5. IN SEPTEMBER THE 3 EUROPEAN MNF GOVERNMENTS PRESSED ISRAEL TO WITHDRAW TOTALLY FROM LEBANON WITHOUT WAITING FOR THE SYRIANS (MY TELNO 241). KIMCHE RECALLED THIS APPROACH TODAY. I JUDGE THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY ARE ANXIOUS ABOVE ALL THAT WE SHOULD NOT REPEAT THE EARLIER CALL FOR UNILATERAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL, OR ANY SIMILAR CONCESSIONS JUST BY ISRAEL, IN A DECLARATION WITH OUR PARTNERS AT ATHENS.

MOBERLY