

SECRET

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TO IMMEDIATE UKDEL CANCUN

TELEGRAM NUMBER 23 OF 21 OCTOBER,

INFO PRIORITY BEIRUT, DAMASCUS AND TEL AVIV

INFO ROUTINE UKMIS NEW YORK, JEDDA, AMMAN, CAIRO AND PARIS

FOR PRIVATE SECRETARY

MEETING WITH HAIG : LEBANON

1. US EMBASSY HERE HAVE GIVEN US AN ACCOUNT (IN STRICT CONFIDENCE - PLEASE PROTECT) OF A MEETING AT YORKTOWN ON 18 OCTOBER BETWEEN HAIG AND MITTERRAND/CHEYSSON IN WHICH THE LEBANON CAME UP. POINTS OF INTEREST ARE:

A) HAIG DESCRIBED THE SITUATION IN LEBANON AS STILL CRITICAL. THE ISRAELIS WERE TEMPTED TO TAKE MATTERS INTO THEIR OWN HANDS. ON THREE OCCASIONS RECENTLY THE US HAD HAD TO RESTRAIN BEGIN FROM MAKING A FURTHER INCURSION INTO LEBANON BY TELLING HIM THAT THERE WOULD BE 'GRAVE CONSEQUENCES' FOR US RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL. HAIG SAID THAT BEGIN SEEMED TO THINK IT POSSIBLE TO INVADE SOUTH LEBANON WITHOUT COMING INTO DIRECT CONFLICT WITH SYRIA.

B) MITTERRAND'S VIEW WAS THAT SYRIA HAD DECIDED NOT TO ALLOW ANY SITUATION WHICH WOULD REQUIRE THE WITHDRAWAL OF SYRIAN TROOPS AND THAT IN PARTICULAR NO ONE COULD BE ALLOWED TO BYPASS THEM TO DEAL DIRECTLY WITH THE PALESTINIANS. MITTERRAND BELIEVED THAT THIS WAS THE REASON FOR THE ASSASSINATION OF THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR IN BEIRUT, FOR WHICH MITTERRAND WAS CONVINCED THE SYRIANS WERE RESPONSIBLE. THE AMBASSADOR HAD BEEN GETTING ON TOO WELL WITH ALL SIDES. CHEYSSON THOUGHT THAT IF ISRAEL WAS ALLOWED TO TAKE OVER SOUTH LEBANON, SYRIA WOULD TAKE OVER THE REST OF THE COUNTRY. ONLY THE SOVIET UNION WOULD PROFIT FROM THIS. MITTERRAND SAID THAT THE BEST WAY FORWARD WAS TO ENABLE UNIFIL TO PROVIDE A REAL BUFFER IN SOUTHERN LEBANON.

C) HAIG SAID THAT FRANCE AND THE US SHOULD WORK HARD TOGETHER IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE ON LEBANON WHERE THINGS WERE UNRAVELLING. HE THOUGHT THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS (AUGUST 1982) COULD WELL RESULT IN A SYRIAN PUPPET REPLACING SARKIS. THIS WOULD BE SUFFICIENT EXCUSE FOR BEGIN TO INVADE. THEY SHOULD THEREFORE WORK FOR A REDEPLOYMENT OF SYRIAN FORCES OR POSTPONEMENT OF THE ELECTION. CHEYSSON'S VIEW WAS THAT FOR THE TIME BEING SAUDI ARABIA WERE CONCENTRATING ON THE ARAB SUMMIT AND FAHD'S 8 POINTS. AFTERWARDS HE THOUGHT THAT THEY WOULD BE READY TO BRING THE UN INTO SOUTHERN LEBANON WITH THE OFFICIAL BLESSING OF THE ARABS.

2. ON (A) THERE IS NO MORE EVIDENCE NOW OF AN IMMINENT ISRAELI INVASION OF SOUTH LEBANON THAN WHEN HAIG DISCUSSED THIS WITH THE SECRETARY OF STATE IN SEPTEMBER. ADMITTEDLY ISRAEL CAN MOUNT E.G. AIR ATTACKS AT SHORT NOTICE BUT WE WOULD EXPECT TO HAVE AT LEAST SOME WARNING OF PLANNED GROUND ATTACKS. ON (B), MITTERRAND'S THEORY ABOUT THE ASSASSINATION OF THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR IN BEIRUT DOES NOT SQUARE WITH THAT OF THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR IN DAMASCUS (WHO THOUGHT AN IRANIAN GROUP WAS RESPONSIBLE). BUT THERE CAN BE LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE SYRIANS DO NOT WANT TO SEE THEIR PREDOMINANT ROLE IN LEBANON WEAKENED, AND IN PARTICULAR WANT TO KEEP A FIRM HAND ON THE PALESTINIANS.

3. ON (C), WE THINK HAIG'S ANALYSIS SOMEWHAT OVER DRAMATIC. THE FORTHCOMING ELECTION WILL CERTAINLY ADD TO TENSIONS, BUT THERE IS NOT MUCH HOPE OF ACHIEVING 'REDEPLOYMENT OF SYRIAN FORCES' AND WE DOUBT IF IT IS DESIRABLE TO ENCOURAGE THE POSTPONEMENT OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. THIS WOULD ONLY ADD TO TENSIONS AND IN ANY CASE IS HARD TO RECONCILE WITH THE TEN'S POLICY OF SUPPORTING THE AUTHORITY OF THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT IN LEBANON.

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