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TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 874 OF 21 SEPTEMBER

INFO WASHINGTON, CAIRO TEL AVIV BEIRUT JEDDA BONN ROME.

FOLLOWING FROM PRIVATE SECRETARY

SECRETARY OF STATE'S MEETING WITH HAIG ON 21 SEPTEMBER: MIDDLE EAST.

1. THE SECRETARY OF STATE EXPLAINED THAT THE AMERICAN REQUEST TO US TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SINAI FORCE CAUSED US CONSIDERABLE DIFFICULTY. WE WERE STILL WEIGHING THE MATTER BUT IT WAS CLEAR (NOT LEAST FROM FAHD'S RECENT VISIT TO LONDON) THAT IF WE WERE TO PARTICIPATE WE WOULD PUT AT RISK OUR INFLUENCE WITH THE ARABS AND OUR ABILITY TO PLAY A HELPFUL ROLE IF (AS THE SECRETARY OF STATE THOUGHT LIKELY), THE AUTONOMY TALKS DID NOT SUCCEED AND NEW IDEAS PROVED NECESSARY. NEITHER COULD WE ACT WITHOUT CONSULTATION WITH OUR PARTNERS ON A QUESTION OF SUCH CLEAR RELEVANCE TO EUROPEAN POLICY. WAS OUR PARTICIPATION REALLY ESSENTIAL?

2. HAIG GAVE NO DIRECT ANSWER, AND WENT ON TO MAKE A NUMBER OF RATHER DISJOINTED POINTS:

- I. THE SAUDIS WERE WORRIED ABOUT WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO SADAT IF CAMP DAVID FAILED AND THEREFORE WANTED THE US TO GO AHEAD WITH IT:
- II. BEGIN WAS FINALLY PREPARED TO GET DOWN TO BUSINESS, AND WAS WORRIED ABOUT THE INTERNAL DIFFICULTIES HE WOULD FACE OVER GIVING BACK SINAI IN APRIL IF THE AUTONOMY TALKS HAD NOT BY THEN REACHED RESULTS:
- III. BEGIN WAS INCREASINGLY INCLINED TO QUOTE CLEAN OUT UNQUOTE SOUTH LEBANON, AND HIS FEELING OF ISOLATION (THE CHANGING MOOD IN THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE) CONTRIBUTED TO THIS - AS DID HIS ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES AND DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS IN ISRAEL:
- IV. HAIG HAD TOLD BEGIN VERY FIRMLY DURING HIS VISIT TO WASHINGTON THAT THE AMERICANS WOULD NOT TOLERATE SUCH AN ISRAELI INTERVENTION UNLESS IT TOOK PLACE IN CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH WOULD BE WIDELY REGARDED AS JUSTIFIED: PRETEXTS SUCH AS ACTIONS BY SPLINTER GROUPS OF THE PLO WOULD NOT DO:
- V. THE ONLY HOPE OF AVOIDING TROUBLE IN THE LEBANON WAS TO PRESS ON WITH CURRENT EFFORTS TO STRENGTHEN THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT. ACTIVE SAUDI SUPPORT WAS ESSENTIAL FOR THIS AND IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT THEIR LIMITED DIPLOMATIC ENERGIES SHOULD NOT BE DIVERTED INTO CHANNELS THEY MIGHT FIND MORE CONGENIAL (EG THE WIDER ARAB-ISRAEL QUESTION).

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3. IN FURTHER CONVERSATION HAIG CLAIMED THAT NEGOTIATIONS OVER THE LEBANON WERE GOING WELL AND THAT SUCCESS THERE, GIVEN THE DEGREE OF DE FACTO PLO INVOLVEMENT, COULD LATER PROVE HELPFUL IN A WIDER CONTEXT. THE SECRETARY OF STATE MADE CLEAR OUR SUPPORT FOR THE AMERICAN PLAN BUT SAID THAT HE UNDERSTOOD BEGIN WAS MAKING DIFFICULTIES. HAIG SAID THAT THESE WOULD BE GOT AROUND ONE WAY OR ANOTHER.

4. IN CONCLUSION, THE SECRETARY OF STATE ASKED WHETHER OUR PARTICIPATION IN THE SINAI FORCE WAS ESSENTIAL. HAIG SAID ONLY THAT HE WAS WORRIED ABOUT THE CREDIBILITY OF THE FORCE IF WE DID NOT, AND CLAIMED THAT THE CANADIANS AS WELL AS THE AUSTRALIANS HAD MADE THEIR PARTICIPATION CONDITIONAL ON OURS.

5. A MEMBER OF HAIG'S STAFF SUBSEQUENTLY GAVE ME ORALLY A MESSAGE FROM HAIG TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE TO THE EFFECT THAT HAIG HAD NOT WISHED TO PRESS TO HARD IN FRONT OF OTHERS AT LUNCH (A STRICTLY BILATERAL OCCASION), BUT THAT THE AMERICANS DID INDEED WANT US TO PARTICIPATE AND THE PRESIDENT MIGHT BE PHONING THE PRIME MINISTER.

PARSONS

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