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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

August 27, 1979

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Warren Christopher, Acting *W.C.*

Lebanon. The shaky cease-fire seems to have held today, and Israeli attitudes may be beginning to change as a result of the world attention given to the death and destruction. Weizman, for example, on Sunday night asked us to do all we could to ensure that the PLO did not again break the cease-fire. We immediately conveyed this to UN representatives who talked in turn to the PLO in Beirut. In addition, the Israeli press has reported the concern of many Israeli citizens at the damage to Israel's image and their doubt that Israeli military actions like last week's are really working against the Palestinians. Bob Strauss is considering a personal message to Begin describing his own concern over Israel's image as an aggressor and suggesting that Begin consider a unilateral step such as a call for a moratorium on violence in the area.

El Salvador-Guatemala. Bill Bowdler's conversations last week with President Romero in El Salvador covered Romero's willingness to hold free congressional elections in 1980 and respect the results, to involve moderate elements in the implementation of policies to create a better atmosphere for such elections, to release political prisoners, and to crack down on violence from all quarters. Bowdler made clear that if Romero followed up on such a program, some of the inhibitions on our collaboration would be removed and we could consider help in the economic, military and security fields. Romero was receptive.

SECRET

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SECRET

In Guatemala Bowdler found the political pressures less acute but President Lucas nevertheless concerned over the longer term implications. He is skeptical of the eventual outcome in Nicaragua but willing to assist the moderates. Lucas was less specific than Romero about returning to democratic procedures.

Mountbatten. Although the cause of the blast that killed Lord Mountbatten today has not been determined, it is reported that both the IRA and the smaller, leftist Irish National Liberation Army have claimed responsibility. Embassy London reports receipt of numerous phone calls protesting support of the IRA by Irish-Americans and expects to be the target of a demonstration tomorrow. Condolence messages from you are being sent to the Queen and to Mrs. Thatcher.

Kampuchean-Chinese Developments. Relations among various anti-Vietnamese Cambodian groups continue to shift as the Havana non-aligned summit approaches. There will be a strong Vietnamese-Soviet-Cuban effort to replace Pol Pot with Heng Samrin as the internationally-recognized representative of Kampuchea. In addition, Sihanouk has gone firmly on record opposing Pol Pot. He has asked Tito and the FRG to read letters from him at the summit and at the UN calling for Kampuchea's seat to be vacated and contending that neither Pol Pot nor Heng Samrin is the legitimate representative of the people. Sihanouk is said to dislike the PRC's refusal to offer him real power instead of a titular role in a new "front" with Pol Pot.

Liberia. Indications are growing that the position of Tolbert's government is being seriously eroded by riots, continuing labor strikes and threats of further walkouts. The government's inability to handle the labor disputes has led to growing disaffection among middle-grade officials who were formerly staunch supporters of Tolbert. An unprecedented newspaper article recently called on him to attend to domestic troubles rather than go to international meetings. Public discontent over rice shortages and price increases remains strong. Tolbert has meanwhile shown little understanding of why his power and prestige are eroding.

Human Rights Complaint Against the US. A subcommission of the UN Human Rights Commission today concluded

SECRET

SECRET

that the complaint of racial discrimination against the United States by the National Conference of Black Lawyers should not be considered further. While some might seek to publicize the charges further, this matter is now effectively closed in the UN.

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