

MIDDLE EAST: ADVANCE COPIES 17 8

PS
PS/MR HURD
PS/PUS
SIR J LEAHY
MR MOBERLY
SIR J BULLARD
HD/NENAD
HD/MED
HD/UND
HD/SEC DEPT
HD/... SFO ...

NO 10 DOWNING STREET
CABINET OFFICE D10

HD/CONSULAR DEPT

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PUSD (2)
NEWS D
RESIDENT CLERK

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CONFIDENTIAL

FROM TEL AVIV 171045Z JUN 82
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELNO 249 OF 17 JUNE 1982

ADVANCE COPY
IMMEDIATE

INFO IMMEDIATE MODUK, WASHINGTON, PRIORITY UKMIS NEW YORK,
BEIRUT, DAMASCUS, ROUTINE AMMAN AND CAIRO.

MY TELNO 241: ISRAEL/LEBANON

1. I CALLED TODAY ON THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, WHO SPOKE WARMLY ABOUT HIS RECENT VISIT TO LONDON AND HIS MEETINGS WITH MR WALKER WHOM HE HOPED TO WELCOME IN ISRAEL IN DUE COURSE. EHRLICH, WHO IS ACTING PRIME MINISTER IN BEGIN'S ABSENCE, WENT ON TO TALK ABOUT LEBANON.
2. HE CONFIRMED THAT ISRAELI FORCES WOULD NOT (NOT) ENTER BEIRUT. DESPITE PRESS REPORTS THE ISRAELIS THEMSELVES HAD NOT BEEN ENGAGED IN FIGHTING FOR THE PAST 24 HOURS OR SO. NOR DID THEY INTEND TO MOVE ANY FURTHER FORWARD. (SHARON SAID YESTERDAY THAT THEIR HAD BEEN A MAJORITY CABINET DECISION NOT TO ENTER THE CITY.)
3. I ASKED WHAT HE EXPECTED TO HAPPEN NEXT IN BEIRUT. HE REPLIED THAT SYRIAN AND PLO FORCES SHOULD LEAVE. THE ISRAELIS HAD MADE

PERSONAL WEAPONS. HE VDED THAT KNOWN PLO MURDERERS WOULD BE REGARDED AS AN EXCEPTION FOR SAFE PASSAGE.

4. I OBSERVED THAT IF ISRAELIS WERE NOT GOING TO MOVE INTO BEIRUT, COULD THEY BE SURE OF THE SYRIANS AND PLO BEING SQUEEZED OUT. EHRLICH ANSWERED "THAT IS A LEBANESE PROBLEM". WHEN PRESSED HE SAID IT WOULD BE UP TO THE LEBANESE ARMY AND THE PHALANGE.

5. AS REGARDS THE LONGER TERM, EHRLICH SPOKE OF AN INTERNATIONAL PEACEKEEPING FORCE BEING RESPONSIBLE FOR THE 40-45 KM BUFFER ZONE NORTH OF THE FRONTIER. ISRAEL DID NOT WISH THIS TO BE UNDER THE UNITED NATIONS, WHOM THEY REGARDED AS HOSTILE. THE MAIN INGREDIENTS OF AN INTERNATIONAL FORCE SHOULD BE AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN. HE REMINDED ME OF THE BRITISH CONTRIBUTION TO THE SINAI MFO. SIMILARLY, HE SAID, A BRITISH CONTRIBUTION WOULD BE WELCOME FOR THE BUFFER ZONE IN LEBANON.

6. I ENQUIRED ABOUT ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE AREA NOW UNDER IDF OCCUPATION BETWEEN THE BUFFER ZONE AND BEIRUT. EHRLICH SAID THAT THIS WOULD BE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF WHAT HE HOPED WOULD BE A STRONG CENTRAL GOVERNMENT WHICH WOULD NEED THE HELP OF WESTERN GOVERNMENTS. WHAT HELP DID HE HAVE IN MIND? HE EXPLAINED THAT THIS WOULD BE IN BUILDING UP THE LEBANESE ARMY INTO AN EFFECTIVE INTERNATIONAL FORCE THROUGH WESTERN MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND TRAINING. IF AND WHEN THE LEBANESE ARMY BECAME STRONG AND RELIABLE ENOUGH, IT COULD ULTIMATELY TAKE OVER THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL FORCE IN THE BUFFER ZONE. A LEBANESE ARMY PRESENCE IN THAT ZONE COULD BE ENVISAGED MUCH EARLIER ALONGSIDE INTERNATIONAL CONTINGENTS.

7. COMMENT: THIS IS THE clearest indication we have yet been given of ISRAELI THINKING BEHIND THE OPTIONS MENTIONED BY THE DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER IN LONDON EARLIER THIS WEEK (PARA 3 OF YOUR TELNO 194). A MULTI-NATIONAL FORCE AND A STRENGTHENED CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ARE SEEN NOT AS ALTERNATIVES BUT AS COMPLEMENTARY TO EACH OTHER. AS WE SUSPECTED, THERE IS A STRONG PREFERENCE FOR A NON-UN FORCE. EHRLICH'S COMMENT ABOUT A POSSIBLE BRITISH CONTRIBUTION WAS NOT OF COURSE A FORMAL PROPOSAL BUT WE CAN TAKE IT AS A POINTER, THOUGH THEIR ATTITUDE MAY CHANGE AS OUR REACTION TO THE INVASION SINKS IN. IT ALSO NOW SEEMS PLAIN THAT THE ISRAELIS DO NOT ENVISAGE AN INTERNATIONAL FORCE OPERATING OUTSIDE THE BUFFER ZONE, YOU WILL NOTICE THAT THIS IS NOW BEING DESCRIBED NOT JUST AS A 40 KM ZONE BUT MORE LOOSELY AS 40-45KM, THE ISRAELIS HAVING APPARENTLY REALISED THAT ONE VERY LONG-RANGE SOVIET GUN COULD REACH ISRAEL EVEN FROM 40 KM AWAY.