

PP CAIRO

PP DAMASCUS

PP AMMAN

PP BEIRUT

MIDDLE EAST: ADVANCE COPIES

15

NO 10 DOWNING STREET  
CABINET OFFICE DIO

PS  
PS/~~SECRET~~ LPS  
PS/MR HURD  
PS/PUS  
SIR J GRAHAM  
MR J C MOBERLY

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**CONFIDENTIAL**

FROM TEL AVIV 210940Z DEC 81

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 496 OF 21 DECEMBER 1981

INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON, PRIORITY CAIRO, DAMASCUS, AMMAN,  
BEIRUT, UKMIS NEW YORK AND MODUK(FOR DIA).

MY TELNO 494: GOLAN

1. BEGIN SUMMONED THE US AMBASSADOR HERE IMMEDIATELY BEFORE THE REGULAR ISRAELI SUNDAY CABINET MEETING YESTERDAY TO GIVE HIM THE ISRAELI RESPONSE TO WASHINGTON'S DECISION TO SUSPEND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE US/ISRAELI STRATEGIC CO-OPERATION AGREEMENT. THE PRIME MINISTER DESCRIBED THE AMERICAN ACTION AS CONSTITUTING ABROGATION OF THE AGREEMENT.

2. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, THE CABINET RAISED NO OBJECTIONS TO WHAT BEGIN HAD ALREADY TOLD LEWIS. HIS REMARKS (TEXT BY BAG) WERE SUBSEQUENTLY READ OUT IN FULL TO REPORTERS BY THE CABINET SECRETARY, WHO SAID THAT THEY CARRIED THE VALIDITY OF A CABINET DECISION.

3. EVEN BY HIS USUAL STANDARDS BEGIN'S RESPONSE WAS EXTREMELY OUTSPOKEN. IT MARKS A SEVERE DETERIORATION IN US/ISRAELI RELATIONS WHICH ARE NOW GOING THROUGH ONE OF THEIR WORST PATCHES FOR YEARS.

4. ONE CANNOT, NEVERTHELESS, AVOID THE SUSPICION THAT MUCH OF WHAT BEGIN HAD TO SAY WAS FOR EFFECT: HE OBVIOUSLY NEEDED TO DEMONSTRATE TO HIS POLITICAL CLIEPENE, AND TO ISRAELI PUBLIC OPINION AT LARGE, THAT THE US DECISION TO SUSPEND THE AGREEMENT IS MATCHED BY AN EQUALLY TOUGH ISRAELI REPLY. HIS CHARACTERISTIC ANXIETY TO HAVE THE LAST WORD WAS ALSO OBVIOUSLY AT PLAY. INDEED THE FACT THAT HIS REMARKS TO LEWIS WERE PASSED ON SO QUICKLY AND COMPREHENSIVELY TO THE WORLD'S PRESS INDICATES THAT THE PUBLIC RELATIONS ASPECT OF THE ISSUE WAS PROBABLY DOMINANT.

5. ALTHOUGH WE CAN EXPECT THE ISRAELIS TO SUSTAIN A HARD ANTI-AMERICAN LINE FOR THE MOMENT, I DOUBT IF BEGIN AND HIS IMMEDIATE SUPPORTERS EXPECT THE PRESENT DIFFICULTIES IN US/ISRAELI RELATIONS TO LAST FOR LONG. THE JUDGEMENT HERE STILL SEEMS TO BE THAT, WHEN THE DUST HAS CLEARED, THINGS WILL GO ON VERY MUCH AS BEFORE AND MINISTERS ARE CLEARLY TAKING COMFORT FROM HAIG'S TEMPERATE PUBLIC RESPONSE YESTERDAY TO BEGIN'S STATEMENT. US/ISRAELI STRATEGIC CO-OPERATION WILL ALSO REMAIN A MAJOR OBJECTIVE. BEGIN AND SHARON WOULD NOT HAVE WORKED SO HARD TO ACHIEVE AND TO JUSTIFY THE RECENT CO-OPERATION AGREEMENT IF THEY HAD NOT REALLY WANTED IT TO CONTINUE WHEN CIRCUMSTANCES ALLOW.

MOBERLY  
BT

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