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FROM TEL AVIV 081200Z MAR 82

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELNO 69 OF 8 MARCH 1982

INFO PRIORITY PARIS, WASHINGTON, AMMAN, BEIRUT, CAIRO, DAMASCUS
AND UKMIS NEW YORK.

INFO SAVING OTHER MIDDLE EAST POSTS.

PRESIDENT MITTERRAND'S VISIT TO ISRAEL: 3-5 MARCH

1. THIS VISIT, THE FIRST BY A EUROPEAN HEAD OF STATE, HAS BEEN EXTENSIVELY REPORTED IN THE PRESS. MY FRENCH COLLEAGUE GAVE COMMUNITY AMBASSADORS YESTERDAY THE FOLLOWING PERSONAL IMPRESSIONS.

2. THE MOST POSITIVE FEATURE OF THE VISIT WAS TO SET A NEW STYLE IN RELATIONS BETWEEN FRANCE AND ISRAEL. THERE WAS NOW GENUINE CORDIALITY AFTER YEARS OF FORMALITY. MITTERRAND HAD COME AS AN OPENLY DECLARED FRIEND OF ISRAEL. AT THE KNESSET HE HAD SPOKEN NOT JUST OF ISRAEL BUT OF WORLD PROBLEMS THEREBY SHOWING THAT HE REGARDED ISRAEL "AS ADULT".

3. FRENCH CRITICISMS OF ISRAELI POLICY HAD BEEN MADE DELICATELY AND IN LOW KEY. THE BAGHDAD NUCLEAR RAID AND THE GOLAN LAW FOR INSTANCE HAD BEEN BARELY TOUCHED ON. MITTERRAND HAD PLEASED THE ISRAELIS BY ASSURING BEGIN OF FRENCH REFUSAL TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE ARAB BOYCOTT AND BY PROMISING TO INTERVENE OVER THE PLIGHT OF JEWS IN SYRIA AS WELL AS SOVIET JEWS. (THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR COMMENTED THAT REPRESENTATIONS IN DAMASCUS WERE NOT LIKELY TO GET FAR BECAUSE THE FRENCH WERE NOT ON GOOD TERMS WITH THE SYRIANS OVER LEBANON SEMICOLON MITTERRAND HAD TOLD BEGIN THAT THE FRENCH BELIEVE THE SYRIANS WERE BEHIND THE ASSASSINATION OF THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR IN DAMASCUS LAST YEAR).

4. THE ISRAELIS HAD OF COURSE WELCOMED MITTERRAND'S ASSURANCE THAT HE WAS IN FAVOUR OF CAMP DAVID OR MORE PRECISELY PEACE BETWEEN ISRAEL AND EGYPT. EQUALLY HE HAD DECLARED HIMSELF AGAINST THE VENICE DECLARATION ON GROUNDS THAT THIS ASSUMED A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO THE ARAB/ISRAEL DISPUTE WHEN IN THE FRENCH VIEW STEP BY STEP WAS THE RIGHT WAY FORWARD. MOREOVER IT WOULD BE FOR THE PARTIES THEMSELVES TO WORK OUT A SOLUTION, ALTHOUGH THE EUROPEANS SHOULD BE READY TO SUPPORT AND ASSIST THE PARTIES IN THAT PROCESS. (IT WOULD FOLLOW, ALTHOUGH ACCORDING TO THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR WHO WAS PRESENT AT ALL HIS TALKS, MITTERRAND HIMSELF DID NOT ACTUALLY SAY SO, THAT FRANCE WOULD NOT SUPPORT ANY NEW EUROPEAN INITIATIVE.)

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/ 5. THE FRENCH

5. THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR THEN LISTED THE POINTS MADE BY MITTERRAND WHICH THE ISRAELIS WOULD NOT HAVE LIKED:

(A) PALESTINIAN STATE (UNDERLINED). IN HIS SPEECH TO THE KNESSET ON 4 MARCH, MITTERRAND HAD REFERRED TO THE RIGHTS OF EACH PARTY. QUOTE FOR THE PALESTINIANS AS FOR THE OTHERS THIS MEANS IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS A STATE QUOTE. I GATHER THAT MITTERRAND WROTE THIS CENTRAL SECTION OF THE SPEECH HIMSELF OVERNIGHT. NOTHING WAS SAID ABOUT WHERE SUCH A STATE MIGHT BE LOCATED. ALTHOUGH CHEYSSON HAS REFERRED IN THE PAST TO A PALESTINIAN STATE, THIS IS SAID TO BE NEW FOR MITTERRAND WHO UNTIL NOW HAS REFERRED ONLY TO STATE STRUCTURES.

(B) PLO (UNDERLINED). BY INCLUDING THE PLO SQUARELY IN HIS KNESSET SPEECH, MITTERRAND CAN CLAIM TO HAVE ESTABLISHED THE PLO QUESTION AS A SUBJECT FOR DISCUSSION WITH ISRAEL. BUT HE BALANCED THIS BY CALLING FOR MUTUAL RECOGNITION OF RIGHTS AND FOR RENUNCIATION OF WAR DIRECT OR INDIRECT:

(C) AUTONOMY TALKS (UNDERLINED). BEGIN GAVE MITTERRAND A STATEMENT OF ISRAELI PROPOSALS FOR AUTONOMY IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES PREVIOUSLY HANDED TO THE AMERICANS AND EGYPTIANS. FRENCH AMBASSADOR TOLD US THAT MITTERRAND HAD DISMISSED THESE BRUSQUELY WITH THE COMMENT THAT JURIDICALLY THE ISRAELI PROPOSALS MIGHT BE FINE BUT POLITICALLY THEY WERE NO GOOD - THE ARABS WOULD NOT ACCEPT AUTONOMY ON THOSE TERMS. THERE WAS NO DISCUSSION OF ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS ON THE WEST BANK. WHEN MITTERRAND TOUCHED ON THE PROSPECT OF EVENTUAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM OCCUPIED TERRITORIES WHICH HE SAID WOULD OF COURSE NEED TO BE DEMILITARISED, BEGIN WAS NOT TO BE DRAWN ON WHETHER ANY FORM OF DEMILITARISATION SATISFACTORY TO ISRAEL COULD BE DEvised: BEGIN'S FOCUS HAD BEEN ENTIRELY ON AUTONOMY.

6. ON OTHER INTERNATIONAL SUBJECTS, THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR GAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT NOT MUCH HAD BEEN SETTLED. HE CONFIRMED THAT THE LEBANON, AFRICA AND POSSIBLE SUPPLY OF A FRENCH NUCLEAR REACTOR TO ISRAEL HAD BEEN DISCUSSED, BUT INCONCLUSIVELY. THE FRENCH HAD CONCLUDED THAT AN ISRAELI MILITARY MOVE INTO SOUTHERN LEBANON WAS NOT LIKELY FOR THE MOMENT. ON ARMS SUPPLIES, THE FRENCH HAD TOLD THE ISRAELIS THAT THEY WOULD BE WILLING TO CONSIDER REQUESTS BUT HAD MADE NO COMMITMENT, (AMBASSADOR SAID FRENCH EXPERIENCE WAS THAT ISRAELIS USUALLY WISHED TO BUY FOUR OR FIVE EXAMPLES OF SOME NEW PIECE OF EQUIPMENT WHICH THEY THEN COPIED FOR THEMSELVES.)

7. MITTERRAND HAD NOT RESPONDED DURING THE VISIT TO A PROPOSAL BY BEGIN IN THE KNESSET FOR A MEDITERRANEAN CHARTER. IN HIS SPEECH BEGIN ASKED MITTERRAND TO PURSUE THE IDEA OF THE MEDITERRANEAN STATES AGREEING NOT TO INITIATE WAR, TO RESOLVE DISPUTES THROUGH NEGOTIATION, AND TO RENOUNCE WARFARE AS AN INSTRUMENT OF POLICY. AMBASSADOR'S OWN VIEW WAS THAT THIS WOULD NOT APPEAL MUCH TO MITTERRAND: A MEDITERRANEAN CHARTER HAD BEEN ONE OF POMPIDOU'S IDEAA.

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8. ON BILATERAL COOPERATION ISRAELIS HAVE MADE MUCH OF VARIOUS FOLLOW-UP ARRANGEMENTS. AMBASSADOR WAS AT PAINS TO SAY THAT THESE WERE MORE SPECTACULAR THAN PROFOUND. OFFICIALS WILL MEET NEXT MONTH AT DIRECTOR-GENERAL LEVEL, BUT PLAN FOR A MIXED COMMISSION HAD BEEN AGREED BEFORE THE VISIT AND ISRAELIS HAD PRESSED UNSUCCESSFULLY FOR IT TO BE AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL. ALTHOUGH SHAMIR WOULD BE GOING TO PARIS IN MAY, THIS AGAIN HAD BEEN DECIDED AT THE TIME OF CHEYSSON'S VISIT TO ISRAEL LAST DECEMBER. FURTHER MINISTERIAL VISITS IN BOTH DIRECTIONS WERE POSSIBLE, INCLUDING THE FRENCH DEFENCE MINISTER, BUT NOTHING WAS FIXED. NOR HAD ANY INVITATION BEEN GIVEN TO BEGIN OR PRESIDENT NAVON TO VISIT PARIS.

9. COMMENT. THE ISRAELIS HAVE HAILED THE VISIT AS A GREAT SUCCESS AND A BREAK-THROUGH IN RELATIONS WITH FRANCE. OF COURSE MITTERRAND HAS BEEN HERE OFTEN BEFORE AND KNOWS MANY ISRAELI POLITICIANS PERSONALLY. I CAN WELL BELIEVE FRENCH AMBASSADOR'S COMMENT THAT MITTERRAND PROBABLY DID NOT LEARN MUCH NEW, HAVING NO ILLUSIONS BEFORE HE CAME. BUT THE NEW WARMTH IN RELATIONS IS PLAIN FOR ALL TO SEE. THIS IS DOUBLY WELCOME TO THE ISRAELIS IN THEIR PRESENT MOOD OF ISOLATION. DESPITE THE HOME TRUTHS AND PLAIN SPEAKING WHICH HE BROUGHT TO THEM, NOTABLY OVER A PALESTINIAN STATE, MITTERRAND WAS RECEIVED AS A FRIEND AND LEFT WITH HIS REPUTATION HERE NOT JUST INTACT BUT ENLARGED. TIME WILL SHOW HOW THE ARAB WORLD REACTS TO WHAT LOOKS FROM HERE LIKE A PRETTY SUCCESSFUL BALANCING ACT.

FCO PLEASE PASS SAVING ADDRESSEES EXCEPT JERUSALEM.

MOBERLY

[REPEATED AS REQUESTED]

MIDDLE EAST
STANDARD
NENAD
WED
MED
NAD
UND
EESD
ECD
RID
MAED
ES & SD
ERD
ESID
CABINET OFFICE

ADDITIONAL DISTN.
ARAB/ISRAEL DISPUTE

[NOT ADVANCED]