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FROM TEL AVIV 281140Z JUN 83

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TO PRIORITY FCO
TELNO 177 OF 28 JUNE 1983
INFO PRIORITY BEIRUT, DAMASCUS, AMMAN, CAIRO, JEDDA, WASHINGTON,
UKNIS NEW YORK AND MODUK.
INFO SAVING JERUSALEM, PARIS AND ROME.

MY TELNO 171: ISRAEL/LEBANON

1. ALL THE EVIDENCE, BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE, IS THAT THE ISRAELIS ARE DETERMINED BEFORE LONG TO PULL BACK IN LEBANON. BUT THEY ARE FULLY AWARE OF THE NEED TO DO IT WITH AS MUCH LEBANESE AND AMERICAN COOPERATION AS POSSIBLE. THEY HAVE AS GOOD AS PROMISED NOT TO MAKE ANY MOVE BEFORE BEGIN'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON AT THE END OF JULY.

2. THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY WAS AT PAINS TO DESCRIBE A POSSIBLE REDEPLOYMENT CONSTRUCTIVELY WHEN I SAW HIM ON 27 JUNE. KIMCHE SAID THAT:-

(A) REDEPLOYMENT SHOULD BE SEEN AS ENABLING THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT TO EXTEND ITS AUTHORITY, AN OBJECTIVE WE ALL SUPPORTED. HE HOPED IT WOULD ALSO SHOW THE LEBANESE AND ISRAELIS COOPERATING TOGETHER IN THE SPIRIT OF THEIR BILATERAL AGREEMENT AND REFUSING TO BOW TO SYRIAN PRESSURES.

(B) ISRAEL DID NOT SEEK A DIVIDED LEBANON. BUT ASSAD WOULD BE MAKING A PROFOUND MISTAKE IF HE THOUGHT THE IDF WOULD GET OUT OF LEBANON WHILE SYRIAN FORCES REMAINED. ON THE CONTRARY, THERE WOULD ONLY BE ANY PROSPECT OF A CHANGED SYRIAN ATTITUDE ONCE THEY WERE PERSUADED THAT THE ISRAELIS WERE PREPARED TO STICK IT OUT

IF NECESSARY AND WERE NOT ON THE POINT OF CRUMBLING SEMICOLON
(C) NOR DID KIMCHE ACCEPT THAT A DIVIDED LEBANON WAS INEVITABLE. THE ONUS WAS NOW ON DAMASCUS. LEBANON'S OWN GOVERNMENT WANTED SYRIAN FORCES OUT. THE EUROPEANS SHOULD BE DOING MORE TO BRING THIS HOME NOT ONLY TO THE SYRIANS BUT TO ARAB MODERATES SEMICOLON

(D) THE ISRAELIS WERE PLEASED WITH THE STUTTGART STATEMENT ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND WERE GRATEFUL FOR BRITISH HELP IN GETTING THE COMMUNITY MEASURES AGAINST ISRAEL LIFTED. IF ANY COUNTRY NOW DESERVED DISCRIMINATORY MEASURES IT WAS SYRIA SEMICOLON

(E) HE ASKED WHETHER THERE WAS LIKELY TO BE AN INCREASED BRITISH CONTRIBUTION TO THE MNF WHICH COULD HELP FILL THE GAP IF THE ISRAELIS PULLED BACK. IDF REDEPLOYMENT MIGHT BE QUITE LIMITED IN SCALE. THEY WERE PARTICULARLY KEEN TO GET OUT OF THE AREA AROUND BHAMDOUN AND ALEY. KIMCHE ADDED THAT ISRAEL WAS URGING BOTH PHALANGE AND DRUZE TO AGREE IN ADVANCE TO A STAND-OFF IN THEIR ARMED STRUGGLE IN ANY PART OF THE SHOUF FROM WHICH THE IDF WITHDREW.

3. IN MY VIEW A REDEPLOYMENT DECISION OF THIS KIND, EVEN IF PRESENTED AS A STEP IN THE DIRECTION OF TOTAL WITHDRAWAL BY ALL FOREIGN FORCES, WOULD STILL FACE THE ISRAELIS WITH CONFLICTING PRESSURES. THEIR AIM IS TO REDUCE IDF EXPOSURE AND HENCE CASUALTIES. THE SMALLER THE AREA VACATED, THE LESS WILL THIS EXERCISE ACHIEVE ITS PURPOSE IN MILITARY AND DOMESTIC TERMS.

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YET A BIGGER PULLBACK COULD WELL OVER-TAX THE LEBANESE ARMY'S ABILITY TO POLICE THE NEW AREA (NOT TO MENTION ADDITIONAL RISKS FOR ANY MNF INVOLVEMENT), THUS GIVING THE SYRIANS AND PLO THE VERY OPENING OF WHICH ISRAEL IS AFRAID.

4. I SUSPECT THE ISRAELIS WILL SETTLE FOR A RELATIVELY SMALL REDEPLOYMENT IN THE FIRST PLACE MAINLY TO IMPROVE MORALE. THIS HOWEVER WILL STILL LEAVE THEM DEEPLY ENMESHED IN SOUTHERN LEBANON BUT WILL AT LEAST, SO THEY HOPE GIVE THEM A BREATHING SPACE. THEY REALISE, IN KIMCHE'S WORDS, THAT ISRAEL IS GOING TO HAVE TO PLAY ITS HAND WITH ENORMOUS CARE AND PATIENCE IN THE COMING MONTHS. THE BASIC DILEMMA NEVERTHELESS REMAINS: HOW TO EXTRACT THEMSELVES FROM AN UNDERTAKING WHICH LOOKS INCREASINGLY OPEN-ENDED.

5. FCO PASS SAVING PARIS AND ROME.

MOBERLY
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REPEATED AS REQUESTED

MIDDLE EAST

STANDARD

NENAD
MED
HAD
SAD
UND
EESD
EOD
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RID
SEC D

MAED
ESSD
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ARAB/ISRAEL DISPUTE

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