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FM BEIRUT 201150Z JAN 84  
TO IMMEDIATE F.C. O.  
TELEGRAM NUMBER 38 OF 20 JANUARY 1984  
INFO IMMEDIATE MODUK

PRIORITY WASHINGTON, PARIS, ROME, DAMASCUS, TEL AVIV,  
UKMIS NEW YORK, AMMAN, JEDDA, CAIRO, MOSCOW, CBFC  
SAVING BRITFORLEB

Prime Minister

On X, the Lebanese Foreign Minister told the Foreign Secretary today that action to close the gap was a distant possibility and he recognized that the UNF 4 would have to be consulted.

I have asked the F/C.O. to telephone the Ambassador in Beirut this weekend and instruct him to tell the Lebanese that in view of our exposed position we expect to be fully consulted in good time if there is any prospect of such action.

1. I CALLED ON KASSIS (MILITARY INTELLIGENCE), AND WADIH HADDAD (SECURITY ADVISER TO THE PRESIDENT) THIS MORNING, TO PROBE THE GOVERNMENT'S STRATEGY. THEY MADE IT CLEAR THAT THEY INTENDED TO CONTINUE TO TRY TO GET THE SECURITY PLAN BROUGHT INTO EFFECT.

KASSIS WOULD PROBABLY GO TO DAMASCUS FOLLOWING KHADDAM'S RETURN FROM CASABLANCA. SYRIAN OBJECTIONS WERE NOT FUNDAMENTAL. THEY WANTED TO GET WHAT THEY COULD FROM AGREEING TO THE PLAN, BUT THE REAL OBSTACLE WAS JUMBLATT, WHO WAS CONFUSED AND IRRESOLUTE AND AFRAID OF BEING CRITICISED FOR NOT CONVERTING THE DRUZE VICTORY OF SEPTEMBER INTO REAL GAINS FOR HIS PEOPLE. HADDAD SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD OFFERED JUMBLATT A LOT POLITICALLY, BUT THEY COULD NOT MAKE PROMISES THAT MIGHT NOT BE ACCEPTABLE TO OTHER GROUPS COMPARABLE TO THE DRUZE, EG THE GREEK ORTHODOX. HE THOUGHT THAT THE PROBLEM OF DRUZE PROMOTIONS COULD BE SOLVED ROUND A TABLE WITH JUMBLATT AND BERRI. KASSIS SUGGESTED THAT THE LAF HAD ADAMANTLY OPPOSED THE PROMOTION OF DESERTERS: BUT HE SAID THAT A COMPROMISE WAS ON OFFER UNDER WHICH THE DESERTERS WOULD BE GIVEN RETRO-ACTIVE PROMOTION WHEN THEY RETURNED.

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2. HADDAD MADE IT QUITE CLEAR THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS DETERMINED TO CLOSE THE SHUWEIFAT GAP. THIS WOULD BE DONE BY THE ISF IN TWO KEY POSITIONS. THE ARMY WOULD BACK THEM UP AS NECESSARY. SUCH ARMY ACTION WOULD NOT CONSTITUTE A BREACH OF THE SECURITY PLAN OR CEASEFIRE, SINCE THEY WOULD ONLY BE INTERVENING TO HELP THE ISF, WHOSE ACTIVITIES WERE PART OF THE PLAN. HE ASSURED ME THAT BERRI AND JUMBLATT UNDERSTOOD THAT THE GOVERNMENT INTENDED TO CLOSE THE GAP IN THIS WAY. AT ONE STAGE HE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD TO RELY ON THE GOODWILL OF THE OTHER PARTIES TO THE AGREEMENT: AT ANOTHER HE SAID THAT THE NEED TO IMPOSE THE LAW (IT WAS ILLEGAL TO MOVE ARMS WITHOUT PERMISSION) MUST IF NECESSARY TAKE PREFERENCE OVER WHAT THE GOVERNMENT COULD NEGOTIATE WITH THE OPPOSITION. HE ALSO SAID THE ARMY WAS MUCH STRONGER NOW THAN IT HAD BEEN IN AUGUST.

(A.S.C. 20)  
We must ask for guidance from our Commander-in-Chief so that we can, if necessary, prevent it happening  
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3. I ASKED HOW THE GOVERNMENT THOUGHT NABIH BERRI COULD ACCEPT GOVERNMENTAL CLOSURE OF THE SUPPLY LINE INTO THE SOUTHERN SUBURBS WHEN THIS WOULD PRESUMABLY BE UNACCEPTABLE TO MANY OF THE AMAL MILITIAMEN AND OTHERS WHOSE SUPPORT HE CLAIMED. KASSIS SAID THAT BERRI EXERCISED REALLY VERY LITTLE CONTROL ON THE SOUTHERN SUBURBS NOW. SOONER OR LATER HE WOULD HAVE TO DECIDE WHETHER HE WAS WITH OR AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT. HADDAD ALSO SAID THAT ONCE THE SECURITY PLAN WAS IN FORCE THE ARMY WOULD UNDERTAKE A BIG OPERATION TO "CLEAN UP" WEST BEIRUT. IF THEY TRIED THIS NOW, THEY WOULD RUN INTO A LOT OF POLITICAL OPPOSITION FROM PEOPLE LIKE SAEB SALAM. BUT SUCH OPPOSITION WOULD BE DEFUSED ONCE THE SECURITY PLAN WAS IN FORCE, SINCE IT PROVIDED FOR THE ARMY TO TAKE OVER FROM THE LEBANESE FORCES IN MANY PLACES: THE LEBANESE FORCES WERE "THE BIG LOSERS" UNDER THE PLAN.

4. I THANKED HIM FOR THIS INFORMATION. I SAID THAT THE SECURITY SITUATION WAS ONE WHICH HMG WANTED TO FOLLOW VERY CLOSELY. IT WAS NATURALLY OF CONCERN TO THEM IF CLASHES WERE TO OCCUR AS A RESULT OF THE SECURITY PLAN GOING INTO EFFECT. WE NEEDED THE FULLEST POSSIBLE CONSULTATION IF FIGHTING WAS FORESEEN WHICH MIGHT INVOLVE THE MNF.

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