

GR 750

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

DESKBY 131630Z

FM BEIRUT 131445Z FEB 84

TO IMMEDIATE F C O

TELEGRAM NUMBER 118 OF 13 FEBRUARY 1984

INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON, UKHIS NEW YORK, DAMASCUS, JEDDA, TEL AVIV,
PARIS, ROME, MODUK, CBFC

Prime Minister

MY TELNO 111: LEBANON

1. PALMER AND I CALLED ON BERRI TODAY. HE ASKED HIM HOW HE NOW ENVISAGED THAT GEMAYEL WOULD FORM A GOVERNMENT. BERRI SAID THAT AGREEMENT ON OUTSTANDING MATTERS IN DISPUTE WOULD BE NECESSARY BEFORE A GOVERNMENT COULD BE FORMED. THESE INCLUDED NOT JUST THE 17 MAY AGREEMENT BUT ALSO ASPECTS OF CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM AND THE ARMY. HE DID NOT FLATLY RULE OUT GOING TO GENEVA ON 27 FEBRUARY. BUT HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE THOUGHT IT MOST UNLIKELY THAT AGREEMENT ON THE NECESSARY POINTS COULD BE REACHED IN TIME. GENEVA HAD BEEN A SUCCESS, BUT PRESIDENT GEMAYEL HAD SUBSEQUENTLY CONCENTRATED ON STRENGTHENING HIS OWN POSITION INSTEAD OF WORKING FOR RECONCILIATION. EVEN NOW, IF HE COULD MAKE ONE FIRM GESTURE OF RECONCILIATION - EG ADMIT THAT HE WAS SORRY FOR THE POUNDING OF THE SOUTHERN SUBURBS - THIS WOULD MAKE A GREAT DIFFERENCE. BERRI CONFIRMED THAT HE WAS NOT CURRENTLY CALLING FOR GEMAYEL'S RESIGNATION (DESPITE A SPIEGEL ARTICLE APPARENTLY PUBLISHED TODAY WHICH HAS ATTRACTED PRESS ATTENTION TO THAT EFFECT). HIS POSITION WAS THAT GEMAYEL OUGHT EITHER TO STEP DOWN OF HIS OWN ACCORD OR ELSE UNDERTAKE TO SUBMIT HIMSELF FOR RE-ELECTION AFTER TWO YEARS IN OFFICE, HE IN THE SUMMER.

2. HE ASKED BERRI WHAT THE NEXT STEPS NOW WERE FOLLOWING THE RETURN OF POLITICAL FIGURES FROM DAMASCUS (MY TUR). BERRI SAID THAT THE SYRIAN INVITATION TO THE EX-PRIME MINISTERS HAD NOT YET HAD NOT BEEN INTENDED TO NOBBLE INTENDING CANDIDATES IN ADVANCE: RATHER TO STRENGTHEN THE SYRIAN INFLUENCE OVER SUNNI OPINION IN GENERAL. BERRI ADDED THAT THE BALL WAS NOW IN GEMAYEL'S COURT. AMAL HAD MADE ITS PROPOSAL ABOUT A TWO-YEAR PRESIDENTIAL TERM. IT WAS NOW UP TO THE PRESIDENT TO MAKE HIS POSITION CLEAR AND TO PUT FORWARD PROPOSALS FOR ENDING THE IMPASSE.

3. BERRI MADE IT CLEAR THAT FOR THE TIME BEING HE WAS CONCENTRATING ON PRACTICAL STEPS. FIRST, HE HAD ARRANGED FOR THE GENDARMERIE TO DISPLACE THE MILITIAS FROM THE STREETS OF WEST BEIRUT: THEN HE HAD WORKED ON GETTING CROSSING POINTS ACROSS THE GREEN LINE OPENED. THE NEXT STEP WAS TO ARRANGE RE-PROVISIONING OF WEST BEIRUT (NEWS WAS BROUGHT ABOUT THE ARRIVAL OF CONVOYS EVEN WHILE WE SPOKE). THE NEXT STEP WOULD BE TO GET THE SCHOOLS AND THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT RE-OPENED: AFTER THAT, RE-OPENING OF THE AIRPORT.

CONFIDENTIAL

/4

4. BERRI THEN SAID THAT HE WANTED A UN FORCE TO TAKE OVER THE POLICING OF ALL BEIRUT. HE DID NOT TRUST THE ARMY. NEUTRAL POLICING WAS NECESSARY WHILE THE PROCESS OF RECONCILIATION PROCEEDED. THE BRITISH AND ITALIANS HAD DONE A MAGNIFICENT JOB IN THE MNF. HE HOPED THAT THEY, THE CANADIANS (WHOSE AGREEMENT HE CLAIMED TO HAVE OBTAINED) AND OTHERS WOULD NOW BE PREPARED TO JOIN A UN FORCE, ARMED LIKE UNIFIL, TO POLICE BEIRUT IN COOPERATION WITH THE GENDARMERIE. THE ARMY IN BEIRUT WOULD MEANWHILE REMAIN IN BARRACKS. HE DID NOT WANT THE UN JUST MANNING THE CROSSINGS ON THE GREEN LINE. THIS WAS TOO NEAR THE CYPRUS PRECEDENT AND COULD LEAD TO PERMANENT PARTITION. HE SAID THAT ALL THIS WAS WILDLY AMBITIOUS, ALTHOUGH HE SYMPATHISED WITH HIS INTENTIONS. THE UNITED NATIONS WOULD NOT WANT TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ENORMOUS TASK HE ENVISAGED. NO COUNTRIES WOULD AGREE TO CONTRIBUTE CONTINGENTS FOR SUCH A DANGEROUS MISSION. IT WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT FOR SUCH UN FORCES TO REMAIN IMPARTIAL, AND THE NUMBERS REQUIRED WOULD BE HUGE FOR ANY FORCE THAT WAS REALLY EXPECTED TO BRING EFFECTIVE POLICING TO A CITY SO TURBULENT AS BEIRUT. HE SUGGESTED THAT, IF HE WISHED TO BRING THE UN IN, HE WOULD DO BETTER TO CONCENTRATE ON GETTING A UN PRESENCE TO HELP OVER A LIMITED AND EVIDENTLY IMPORTANT TASK, EG A CROSSING POINT, THE REFUGEE CAMPS, OR THE AIRPORT. MOREOVER, HE WOULD NEED TO GET GEMAYEL'S AGREEMENT, SINCE THE UN WOULD NEVER ACT EXCEPT AT THE REQUEST OF THE ESTABLISHED GOVERNMENT OF LEBANON. BERRI SAID HE WOULD THINK ABOUT ALL THIS. HE UNDERTOOK TO REPORT AND TO LET HIM HAVE ANY FURTHER VIEWS.

5. WHILE BERRI WAS INTERRUPTED BY A TELEPHONE CALL WE ASKED HIS ADVISES WHETHER AMAL SUPPORTED THE GOVERNMENT'S WISH TO INTRODUCE THE LEBANESE ARMY INTO ANY AREAS IN THE SOUTH WHICH THE ISRAELIS MIGHT UNILATERALLY ABANDON. THEY SAID THAT AMAL FAVOURED THIS: BUT IT WOULD NEED TO BE DONE BY ARMY UNITS WHICH RALLIED TO THE NATIONALISTS IN WEST BEIRUT (EG 6 BRIGADE) RATHER THAN ARMY UNITS FROM THE EAST. HE ASKED THEM WHETHER HE WOULD BE PREPARED TO DISCUSS THIS WITH THE ISRAELIS AS GEMAYEL HAD BEEN DOING. THEY SAID THIS WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE.

MTERS

[COPIES SENT TO NO 10 DOWNING ST]

MULTINATIONAL FORCE IN LEBANON (MNF)
 LIMITED PS
 NENAD PS/LADY YOUNG
 MED PS/MR LUCE
 DEFENCE DEPT PS/PUS
 PUSD SIR J BULLARD
 NEWS DEPT SIR J LEAHY
 UND SIR W HARDING
 NAD MR WRIGHT
 WED MR CARTLEDGE
 SED MR MACINNES
 ECD(E) MR ADAMS
 FINANCE DEPT MR JENKINS
 PROTOCOL DEPT MR EGERTON
 NED
 PLANNING STAFF

COPIES TO:
 MOD DS11
 MR GOODALL) CABINET
 SIR R ARMSTRONG) OFFICE
 SIR P MOORE
 BUCKINGHAM PALACE

2
 CONFIDENTIAL