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 TO IMMEDIATE FCO
 TELEGRAM NUMBER 628 OF 23 FEB
 INFO IMMEDIATE PARIS, ROME, UKMIS NEW YORK, MIDDLE EAST POSTS

LEBANON AND THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS

1. EAGLEBURGER WAS ILL DURING SIR J LEAHY'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON YESTERDAY BUT HE INVITED HIM TO CALL AT HOME. EAGLEBURGER WAS ALONE AND UNUSUALLY FRANK, EVEN FOR HIM. WHAT HE SAID SHOULD NOT BE QUOTED BACK TO OTHER US REPRESENTATIVES.
2. EAGLEBURGER MADE NO BONES ABOUT THE WAY US INVOLVEMENT IN THE LEBANON HAD TURNED OUT. THE POLICY HAD COLLAPSED. THE RESULT WAS A DISASTER. NEVERTHELESS, EAGLEBURGER HOPED THAT THE DAMAGE TO US INTERESTS IN THE AREA NEED NOT BE ENDURING. HE HAD ADVISED THE WHITE HOUSE THAT THE BEST LINE FOR THE PRESIDENT TO TAKE AT HIS PRESS CONFERENCE LAST NIGHT WAS THAT THE US HAD SET OUT WITH THE RIGHT OBJECTIVE OF TRYING TO RESTORE PEACE AND STABILITY TO THE LEBANON. IT HAD DONE SO WITH THE SUPPORT OF ITS ALLIES. IT HAD MADE ITS BEST EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE THAT OBJECTIVE BUT HAD NOT SUCCEEDED. THE TASK WAS NOW, DESPITE THIS, TO TRY TO ACHIEVE THE SAME OBJECTIVE BY OTHER MEANS AND TO MOVE THE PEACE PROCESS FORWARD.
3. EAGLEBURGER WENT OVER THE CURRENT THINKING IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT ABOUT US SECURITY FORCES TO BE LEFT BEHIND IN BEIRUT (PARAGRAPH 2 OF MY TELEGRAM NO 626) AND WENT ON TO THINK ALOUD ABOUT THE FUTURE. NO FINAL DECISIONS HAD YET BEEN TAKEN ABOUT HOW MANY TROOPS TO LEAVE OR WHAT THEIR EXACT ROLE SHOULD BE. WHOM WOULD THEY BE SUPPORTING OR TRAINING? EFFECTIVELY A PHALANGIST MILITA? A SIMILAR PROBLEM AROSE OVER THE SUPPLY OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT. WHAT WAS ALREADY ON THE WAY COULD HARDLY BE STOPPED WITHOUT GIVING A CONFUSING SIGNAL. BUT EAGLEBURGER WOULD HIMSELF OPPOSE THE COMPLETION OF ANY NEW EQUIPMENT ORDERS UNTIL IT WAS CLEAR WHO WOULD BE IN CHARGE IN BEIRUT WHEN THE EQUIPMENT ARRIVED. ALL THAT NEEDED TO BE THOUGHT THROUGH AFRESH.
4. THERE WAS ALSO THE PROBLEM OF WHAT TO DO WITH THE SHIPS. HOW LONG WOULD THEY STAY. WHOM WOULD THEY BE SUPPORTING? THERE WAS OF COURSE STILL A DANGER OF ATTACKS ON THE EMBASSY: THE REMOVAL OF THE SHIPS MIGHT PERHAPS BE SEEN AS AN INVITATION TO EXTREMISTS. BUT THE SHIPS COULD NOT JUST HANG AROUND. HE THOUGHT THEY WOULD PROBABLY GRADUALLY DWINDLE AND IF HE HAD TO BET, HE WOULD BET THAT MOST OF THEM WOULD BE GONE FROM THE LEBANESE COAST BY JUNE.

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9. EAGLEBURGER CONFIRMED THAT DURING THE KING'S RECENT VISIT HERE, EVERY EFFORT HAD BEEN MADE TO TREAT HIM GENTLY. IT WAS HE WHO NOW WANTED TO GET A MOVE ON. EAGLEBURGER DOUBTED IF IN FACT KING HUSSEIN WOULD BE ABLE TO HURRY ARAFAT INTO MAKING THE NECESSARY MOVES TO ENABLE THE JORDANIANS TO COME TO THE PEACE TALKS. HE ALSO DOUBTED WHETHER ANY ALTERNATIVE COULD BE QUICKLY DEVELOPED. BUT EVEN IF THINGS BEGAN TO MOVE BEFORE THE US ELECTIONS, EAGLEBURGER DID NOT THINK THIS WOULD CAUSE THE ADMINISTRATION ANY DIFFICULTIES. JEWISH OPINION IN THE UNITED STATES WAS STRONGLY IN FAVOUR OF THE PEACE PROCESS AND WOULD BE HIGHLY CRITICAL OF ANY ISRAELI GOVERNMENT THAT FAILED TO RESPOND ADEQUATELY TO AN ARAB MOVE. HE THUS SAW PROSPECTS ON THE PEACE PROCESS AS A POTENTIAL ADVANTAGE FOR THE PRESIDENT RATHER THAN A HAZARD. THE PRESSURE OF U.S. JEWISH OPINION, HE THOUGHT, WOULD BE ON SHAMIR TO MOVE FORWARD RATHER THAN ON REAGAN TO HOLD BACK.

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