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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone Call to Pope John Paul II (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Pope John Paul II
Notetaker: Robert HutchingsDATE, TIME September 16, 1989, 7:01 - 7:11 a.m. EDT
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

The President initiated the call and explained that he was calling concerning Lebanon. He said that efforts to get the Arab League to re-engage in the peace process seem to have succeeded.
(U)

Pope John Paul II replied that he hoped the Arab League's efforts would be fruitful. (U)

The President informed the Pope that the Saudi Ambassador had told the U.S. about renewed Arab League efforts. They will call for an immediate cease-fire, removal of blockades, and a mechanism to deal with arms shipments. The statement will give the assurance that others, meaning Syria and Iraq, will stop the supply of weapons -- an assurance linked to the political process. The President noted that Lebanese parliamentarians are going to meet on September 30 to discuss a new national charter. The President commented that the U.S. believes that the Arab League effort is a good first step. It is in the right direction and is the best that can be hoped for at the moment. The President added that the Saudis have asked for a message of support, which the U.S. will issue today. The message, basically, is to stop the shooting and get to the bargaining table. (U)

The President, continuing, said that he felt that the Pope could play a role. Noting that Lebanese Christians pay special attention to the Pope's words, the President expressed the hope that the Pope could use his voice to persuade Aoun to accept the cease-fire and support the political process. The President said that he was concerned that General Aoun would object to much of this, but that Aoun's "war of liberation" was untenable. These concerns are why the President was calling. It is important to encourage Aoun to seize this opportunity. (U)

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The Pope agreed, adding that it is also necessary to have security and the assurance that Syria and Israel maintain the decision to support Lebanese independence. Lebanon, the Pope said, has been nearly destroyed, so it is necessary to achieve a cease-fire so as not to destroy totally the country and its people. The people must be assured that their sovereignty will be respected. (Ø)

The President said that the situation in Lebanon was preventing the U.S. Embassy from carrying out its tasks, but that he hoped to return U.S. diplomats to Beirut as soon as it is safe. The President repeated that he had called to see what support the Pope might be able to give. (U)

The Pope said that of course a cease-fire should be respected on both sides. The first condition is that Lebanon and Syria agree to reconstruct the Lebanese state and its government and parliament. (Ø)

The President agreed absolutely and said he was encouraged by the Syrian response. The question is whether Aoun will go forward with constitutional changes. (Ø)

The Pope said he would try his best to save Lebanon, working through the Church as well as on the political side. Turning to Poland, the Pope said he was very grateful for U.S. aid. (U)

The President assured the Pope that the U.S. wants to do more and will do more to help Poland with its difficult reforms. Both the U.S. Government and the private sector will do more to help the new Polish government. (U)

The Pope expressed the view that changes in Poland cannot be so sudden as to disrupt society. Transforming political and economic structures will be a great task for the new Prime Minister. (Ø)

The President agreed and concluded the call. (U)