

MEETING WITH PRESIDENT HAFEZ ASSAD
Damascus, Syria - November 2, 1988
10:15 AM/12:40 PM

Beginning pleasantries about my previous visits, especially my return to AmAr in 1984. Told him of the joyous celebration with food, gypsies and Arak. He laughed and said Arak was the national drink. We discussed that the "spice" of America was the foreign born or their children that would bring their tradition and culture to the United States, but keeping a sense of their roots. He said Richard Murphy spoke of his Irish background. I said I was a devout American with a Syrian background. He told me about his invitation (to South American/Arabs) to "camp" in Syria in ages from "pioneers" to 12 years) to college age young men and women. To live with other Syrian people. Apparently going on now. I said that was good but coming with parents to their parents or grandparents home also was good. He asked if I had returned to my village this trip. I said yes, Sunday and Monday to Amar and he knew the location of that place.

I told him one third of my three week was devoted to Syria, to see how I could assist the country. That there was a place for a person like me to create an unofficial channel of communication between the U.S. and Syria. That I had observed for years, through Kissinger, Habib, etc. attempts, but nothing has changed. Maybe, just maybe, a different system in tandem with our official system would work. I reminded him of our first meeting when he said Syria is on one side of the table and the U.,S. and Israel is on the other and that the U.S. must move in-between. That the U.S. has had misguided policies such as ignoring Syria in the peace process which I stated in Syria in 1985 and publicly in the U.S. I told him that in 1984 that I was a devout American and his reaction was "good, that's all we ask". I told him I said the same to Shamir with no reaction.

At this point the President launched on a long talk about past history, from Woodrow Wilson and talks in Versaille where England and France wanted a mandate - a partition of what once was Syria (Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon) and even four states in now Syria. The U.S. opposed such a move. If that had not happened, present unrest, fighting (and Israel) would not exist. He spoke of a team from U.S. England, France and Italy to survey to see if there should be a mandate, The answer was no, but if there be one it should be under America. More history followed. (arming "the people" against the Muslim brotherhood and they put down the unrest).

My response was that what he had all said could find no disagreement with me. That I pursued the concept of my being an unofficial channel. That I thought that Amb. Djerijian was a very good "no

nonsense" Ambassador and felt very comfortable with him, but he had official channels through which he must work and was somewhat restricted by that. The President agreed that Amb. Djerijian was a good man and he felt comfortable working with him and that his Foreign Minister and others who had met him felt the same.

Finally, I asked him what method of contact I should use to convey messages to him. His response directly by me to him in person. That not being possible, call his Secretary D. Iskandar Louka-335960 (private) or 231112. If he was not there to leave a return call number to call (I gave Louka and President Assad and Adnan Barweh, his interpreter, my card). Also I could use diplomatic pouch through the Syrian Embassy (Boshra Kansani) mail marked President Hafez Assad - "To be opened only by the President".

I told him on my return I would propose the same to George Bush and relay the result to him. He said, please send Vice President Bush my personal greetings which I said I would. He also sent his personal regards to my wife and children.

Now, who knows what the future holds?

Note: Waleed Moallem, Secretary Foreign ministry
Adnan Barneith, President's interpreter, Damascus Syria
710830 Private phone// 660639 Home

(I also spoke about South Korea's interest in establishing a relationship, requested by Amb. Ahn (Kuwait). He told me of North Korea's long time friendship and help in '74 war by sending pilots. We agreed that cultural and some economic would be a start.