

THERE WON'T BE A MIRACLE IN ROME : UNFORTUNATELY, THE WAR WILL CONTINUE

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While the ground operations are going on, things appear to speed up at a diplomatic level. But these stirrings and the declarations of the ones and the others do not foretell the beginning of a solution. And that, for the simplest of reasons : although each one is in agreement about the existence of the illness and the extreme gravity of the symptoms, nobody agrees about its origin and the way to cure it.

Responsible Europeans quoted Tuesday evening by the AP agency stated that **M. Javier Solana**, E.U. High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), will propose to the International Conference that taking place in Rome this Wednesday, July 26, a cease fire and the deployment of a rapid reaction force. The core of this force would be constituted by French, German and Spanish soldiers with the contribution of the military *“from Turkey, the Netherlands and Arab countries such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia”*, according to AP. But Mr Solana refused to comment about this information.

Curiously, these Brussels declarations echo a commentary of the Israeli Defense Minister, M. Amir **Peretz**, who declared earlier in the day that Israel *“will maintain a security zone in south Lebanon until the arrival of an international force”*. Mr. Peretz insisted nevertheless on the necessity to reach an accord *“allowing the removal of Hezbollah from the south of Lebanon, the control of the frontier crossings between Syria and Lebanon, to stop the passage across the frontier of new weapons (...) Of course, this will lead to an international force with the capacity to force the application of the accord that will be signed”*.

We have emphasized already in our previous analysis that a multinational force will make no sense unless it can :

- **secure the Israeli frontier**
- **prevent infiltrations by Hezbollah and the shootings at the Hebrew State**
- **disarm Hezbollah applying resolution 1559.**

Only these measures can bring peace between Israel and Lebanon. Such a program cannot be applied except on the base of a clear and precise political mandate. It will be very astonishing if the Rome meeting delivers this mandate.

France, thinks that it is necessary to take first two steps : the end of hostilities and a political agreement among the belligerents. Only afterwards could an intervention force be deployed. **It is worth noticing, in passing, that Paris is no longer talking about the stirring idea of President Jacques Chirac, of putting in place an international force that would be able to “disarm Hezbollah**

through coercive measures. In any case, in Brussels, **M. Solana said on Monday to Saad Hariri, that the disarmament of Hezbollah is not envisaged but, at most, the “supervision” of the operation.**

It is therefore necessary to believe that Hezbollah will lay down arms by itself – which it has not done for the last 6 years... - or will be disarmed by the Lebanese army, which until now has never shown great enthusiasm about this task. Lebanese authorities said clearly to Mme. Rice on Monday that they do not want this solution that will carry the germs of a burst within the army and a new civil war.

For his part, **Ottawa,** intends to raise the question of Hezbollah at this meeting. **The minister for Foreign Affairs, Peter McKay declared yesterday : “We hope that the international community will take advantage of this occasion to grapple with this problem (...) non-governmental role players such as Hezbollah and Hamas have been able to built up military stock and attack Israel, either because of the incapacity of governments or with the support of certain governments.”**

Finally, we will add that if the Arab countries come to Rome with the hope of reaching an immediate cease fire, for its part the United States does not seek any short term solution but wants to get down to the roots of the problem.

The most likely Roman scenario is that the participants at this huge diplomatic meeting will all go their own way without having reached an agreement that will allow, maybe, to resolve the crisis. The war will therefore continue and Europe, which wants to go to the Middle East to play some kind of role, but above all not that of solving the problems, will be able to do what it does best... counting the dead, distributing good and bad points and lamenting the death of civilians which it could have helped to save with a little bit of courage.