

EIR Feature

It was Kissinger who destroyed the nation of Lebanon

by Bassam El Hashem

Bassam El Hashem is a professor at the Social Science Institute at the Lebanese University in Beirut. He has been living in France since July 1989, and has written a book on the Lebanese crisis, which will be published in early 1991 by the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS). He has been serving as an unofficial spokesman for the Lebanese patriotic movement of Gen. Michel Aoun in France and elsewhere in Europe. The following is an edited and somewhat condensed transcript of a speech given by Mr. El Hashem to the Schiller Institute in Leesburg, Virginia on Oct. 24, less than two weeks after the surrender of General Aoun's forces to the Syrian-backed puppet regime of Elias Hrawi.

I'm going to give you a small idea of the political systems that were, and still are, in place in the Middle East—except for Lebanon, which has now, for 10 days, been wiped off the map of the world. But in the other countries, the regimes have been the same since the end of the 1960s—except for Iran, whose regime was replaced in 1979, after the fall of the Shah and the installation of the revolutionary regime, which is a Shi'ite one, the Islamic Republic.

Let us start with Lebanon. Lebanon has 17 communities, half of the population being Christian, and the other half, Muslims and Druses. [See the accompanying article for a fuller discussion of the demographic features of the Middle East—ed.]

If you want to compare the different regimes which were in place in the area, the first characteristic of the Lebanese regime was that it was typically a regime of power sharing—whatever lies have been spread about Lebanon all these years. It was the only country of the Middle East, including Israel, where all the communities were guaranteed a certain part in the government; and that formula seems to have worked well enough, in order to bring about prosperity to the country. Lebanon was perhaps the most prosperous country in the Middle East in the first half of the 1970s. In order to prove that, let us remember that the Lebanese pound



Stuart Lewis

Gen. Michel Aoun sought to rally both Christians and Muslims in defense of Lebanon's national unity and sovereignty, but was bitterly betrayed by the United States, and finally defeated in October of this year. Shown here is a demonstration by Lebanese-Americans in support of Aoun at Lafayette Park near the White House, on Nov. 29, 1989.

was then one of the five strongest currencies of the world—the equivalent of half a dollar at that time. (Of course now, you need 1,200 Lebanese pounds to make a dollar.) If this Lebanese political system didn't work, and didn't ensure real cooperation among all the communities, one couldn't explain this prosperity that Lebanon enjoyed at that time.

The Israeli system had always been the opposite. While the Lebanese system was a multireligious and multicultural system, relying on a peaceful coexistence among 17 communities, the Israeli regime had always been stressing the fact that it is, and will forever be, a monoreligious and a monoracial state. That's very important to be noted, because we will see how this affected the destiny of Lebanon later on.

The bloody rise of Hafez al-Assad

If we go to Syria, we find that in 1963, a coup d'état occurred, led by what was called the Military Committee. The Military Committee was formed of some officers who all were descendants of the minority Alawite community, and among whom was Hafez al-Assad. He was a member of this Alawite military community, but when they led their coup d'état, they didn't put themselves forward as being Alawite Military Committee, but rather, in the name of the Ba'ath Party.

The ideology of the Ba'ath Party is a pan-Arabist ideology, pretending to favor the reunification of the Arab nation for the construction of a socialist society, and a free society—and, of course, an ideology to fight in favor of the liberation

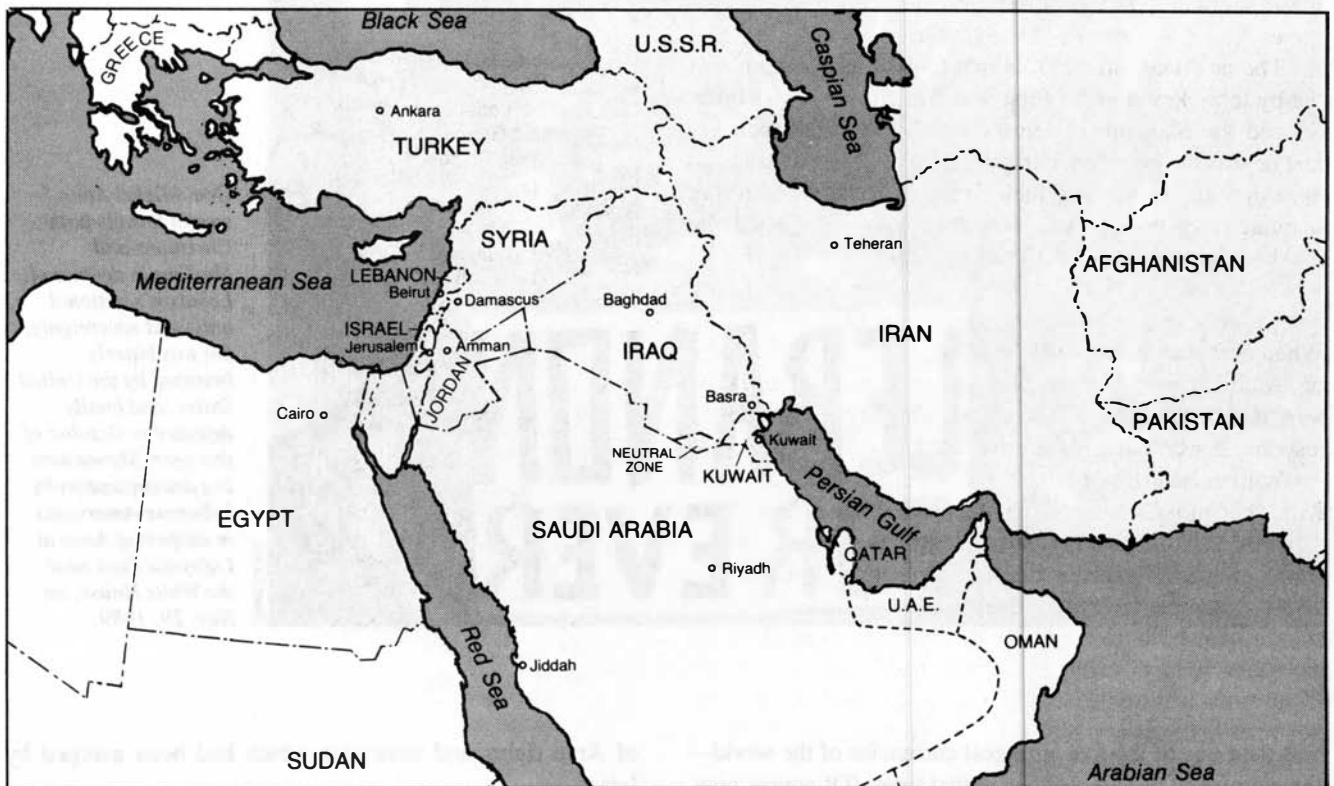
of Arab rights and territories which had been usurped by Israel.

That was the ideology. But what was going on underground, was totally different. In the beginning, the Alawites managed to convince some figures of this balanced party, some Christian and some Sunni figures, and especially the founder of the Ba'ath Party, who was a Christian named Michel Aflak, the main figure of the Ba'ath ideology. The Alawites managed to convince him to get involved with them. But this didn't last long, because in 1965, all these figures, Sunni and Christians, were swept out, and the only ones left were Alawites.

But 1965 wasn't the final round among the different factions within this military office, because they all wanted to be the supreme master of the game. In 1967 another coup d'état happened; in 1968 another coup d'état happened; and the final one happened in 1970, when Hafez al-Assad, who had been before that, during the 1967 war between the Arabs and Israel, the minister of defense of Syria—the one who lost the war. So he came up with a coup d'état that he called *el-haraq ad-tachihyya*—a movement of rectification. He wanted to correct what was going wrong—even though *he* had been minister of defense during the war. Since then, never has this regime known any other coup d'état, or any other trouble.

But that's only on the surface. Among the different dominant factions, no more problems occurred since then. But what was going on underground was totally different: a war

The Middle East today



between this regime and the Syrian population, a real war. The Syrians were always resisting the regime, but the only way that this regime faced the opposition was by killing the opposition: cleaning up the administration, the military forces, the educational system, everything! They just eliminated all the previous staff and replaced them by Alawites.

Since the beginning of the 1970s—that is, since Hafez al-Assad took power in Syria—from 1970 to 1980, 70% of all the scholarships that were awarded to Syrian students for studies abroad, were given to Alawite students. Now, all the key figures of the Syrian government are Alawites. They control the Army, the Defense Brigades—it's a sort of Securitate, if you remember the Ceausescu system, and they built the Syrian system according to the system of Ceausescu, who used to be a great friend of Hafez al-Assad.

In 1982, the latest confrontation occurred between the regime and the civilian resistance. Hafez al-Assad sent in his brother, because these Defense Brigades were, since 1970, commanded by Rifaat al-Assad.

In order to face the civilian opposition in 1982, Hafez al-Assad sent his troops, this Defense Brigade, the elite of the Syrian forces, to Hama, in the north of Syria, because that's where the stronghold of the resistance was. Within three days, they killed 20-30,000 Syrians, and destroyed 20-100%

of the city.

That's only to give you an idea of the nature of this regime. Of course, when he committed all these crimes, nobody knew anything, because everything is under control in Syria—the media, everything. Only a few months later on, we started to find out about it. Maybe *Le Monde*, the French newspaper, was the first one to publish anything about it. Michel Seurat, the French researcher, was kidnaped and then killed in Beirut. Do you know why he was killed? His wife was Syrian, and because of that, he was allowed to get into the real Syria—what was really going on. He wrote a lot of things about the real nature of the Syrian regime. He revealed its real nature as a sectarian regime, a minority regime keeping a whole country under control by repression, by terror. So, he lost his life because he told this. We all know that Michel Seurat, whatever other things were said at that time, was killed immediately after he was kidnaped.

More coups: Iraq and Iran

Let's go to the Iraqi regime. The team that is now in power in Iraq, took control in 1968. You notice, that all this occurred after the 1967 war, because this war provoked a collapse of the credibility of all the pre-established Arab regimes. They were all promising victory and glory to the

Arabs, and they were beaten. So all the ambitious factions who wanted to seize power in the different countries, seized the opportunity, and overthrew all the pre-established regimes, and took control of their countries.

The new team in 1968, which took power in Iraq, was led by three key figures. First was Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr. Second was Saddam Hussein, who was the second man. (In fact he was the key man; but as usual, as Hafez al-Assad had done in Syria, they put all their rivals up front, and then start to reduce their power. And when everybody is smashed, the real hero appears later on.) Third was Hardan al-Takriti. He was killed two years later. Nobody knows who killed him, but we only know that he was killed in a helicopter crash. Whether it was an accident or a plot, nobody knows. Later on, Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr was put away, and Saddam Hussein became the master of Baghdad. This happened in 1978, just one year before the war broke out between Iraq and Iran.

Who is Saddam Hussein? He is neither a Shi'ite nor a Kurd, but an Arab Sunni. That means that he descends from a minority in Iraq. It's not as much of a minority as the Alawites in Syria, because the Arab Sunnis in Iraq are around 20%—but at the same time, there is another source of confusion in Iraq, because they have the ethnic problem between the Arabs and the Kurds. If the power went to a Shi'ite, the Kurds would absolutely rise up against him. So, the Arab Sunnis could always play on this opposition between Kurds and Arabs, to their own benefit.

While the Syrian regime pretends to be a Ba'ath regime, the Iraqi regime claims to belong to the same ideology. That is, they both belong to the Ba'ath Party, the Ba'ath ideology; they both are fighting for the unity of the Arab world, of the "Arab nation," as they say; but since they came to power, they have been enemies.

Let's go to Iran.

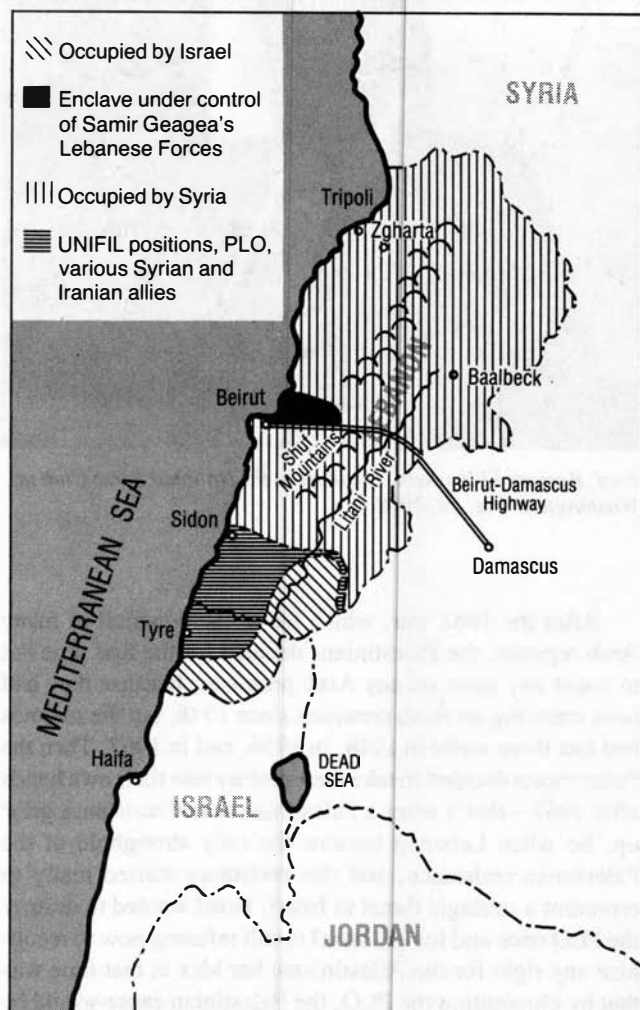
Since 1975, the Shah's regime in Iran had been relying on a very strong army. More and more, the Shah became a real regional power. In the beginning, he was under American protection. But in the middle of the 1970s, he started to seek a role for himself; he wanted to become the policeman of the Gulf, and he showed some distance regarding the American hegemony in the region. He was thrown out two or three years later by the Ayatollah, who installed an Islamic republic—that's what it's called, but in reality it's a Shi'ite republic. This is very important to understand.

Now let us return to the Lebanese problem.

There was no Lebanese 'civil war'

Usually it is said that in Lebanon there was a civil war, or more precisely a religious war, a war between Christians and Muslims. What I want to show now, is that *never* did Lebanon have a civil war; that war, even if some Lebanese factions took part in it, could not be understood as a war between Christians and Muslims, because what was really going on was *a war totally orchestrated from outside*.

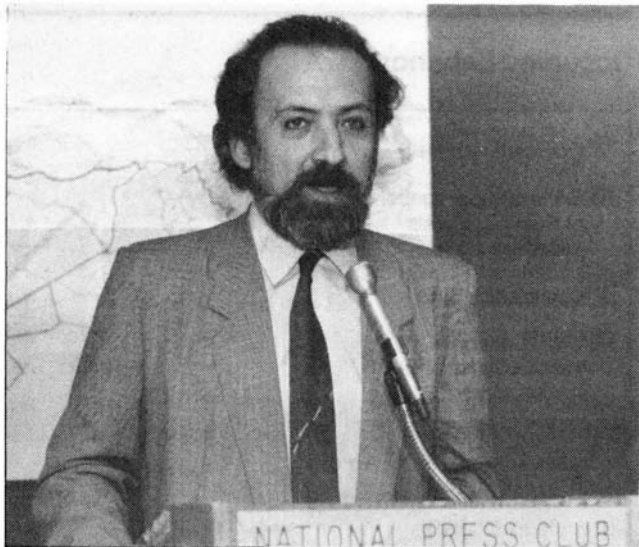
Occupied Lebanon



It was Henry Kissinger who orchestrated this war, and I will tell you why. The war was orchestrated in order to accomplish three targets: to give satisfaction to Israel; to give satisfaction to the Alawite regime in Syria; and to serve the American strategy in the Middle East and the Gulf, as it was determined from the beginning of the 1970s and specifically since the Arab-Israeli war of 1973, by Kissinger. At that time, Kissinger was President Nixon's national security adviser.

Israel's interest in Lebanon

What was the interest of Israel? In order to understand this, one has to know that after 1970, after the Black September for the Palestinians—the massacre of the Palestinians in Jordan which led to a withdrawal of all the Palestinian resistance from Jordan—Lebanon became the only stronghold of the PLO in the whole area.



Prof. Bassam El Hashem, speaking at the National Press Club in Washington, Oct. 19, 1990.

After the 1967 war, which led to the downfall of many Arab regimes, the Palestinians decided for the first time not to count any more on any Arab promises, because they had been counting on Arab promises since 1948, but the regimes had lost three wars: in 1948, in 1956, and in 1967. Then the Palestinians decided to take their destiny into their own hands after 1967—that's when a Palestinian armed resistance grew up. So when Lebanon became the only stronghold of the Palestinian resistance, and this resistance started really to represent a strategic threat to Israel, Israel wanted to destroy the PLO once and for all. Israel is still refusing now to recognize any right for the Palestinians; her idea at that time was that by eliminating the PLO, the Palestinian cause would be buried once and for all on Lebanese soil. But that was only one target.

Another target was the Lebanese system itself, since Israel stresses its nature as a monoreligious and monoracial state and refuses any sort of dealing with any kind of multiplicity or coexistence with Arabs. The PLO had proposed in 1968 and, in 1973, the Arab League sent the Lebanese President of the Republic, Suleiman Franjeh, to the United Nations, to offer Lebanon as a model for a future compromise between the Palestinians and Israel, in such a way that in the future, the solution would come from a compromise whereby the Jews and the Arabs—the Arabs being Christians as well as Muslims—would live in peace, as they had lived in Lebanon. Because of this, Israel wanted to destroy the Lebanese pattern. Israel wanted to destroy its Lebanese antithesis. Only by this, could Israel have demonstrated that she is right, because as long as the Lebanese pattern was able to survive, that would always be an argument against the Israeli state.

Secondly, the war of 1973 came along. It was a war

launched by the Arab regimes; indeed, for the first time, the Arabs didn't lose—they didn't really realize a victory, but they didn't lose either. That meant that from then on, a certain balance between Israel and the Arabs had been achieved. Israel realized that maybe in the future, Arab unity would be strong enough to beat the Israeli entity.

This wasn't only a product of the situation prevailing in 1973. It became evident what had been the policy of Israel's founders even from the early 1940s, from the foundation of the Israeli state. According to the memoirs of Moshe Sharet, who had been prime minister of Israel at the beginning of the 1950s (he died at the end of the decade, and his son managed to publish, against the will of the present leaders of Israel, his memoirs in 1976 or 1977), from the beginning, Ben Gurion and all the founders of Israel were always hoping that they would be able to create around them monoconfessional states in order to homogenize Israel's very nature with the environment.

In 1973, this became very relevant to Israel, because if Arab unity represents a strategic threat for Israel, the only way to fight this was to try to convert the common hostility of the Arabs against Israel into hostility *among* the Arabs, by provoking the Arabs one against the others, across the lines separating the different religious communities.

They wanted to start with Lebanon, by using the weaknesses of Lebanon, because of the PLO presence in Lebanon, with a very heavy presence of Palestinian refugees—they represented at that time more than 20% of the population; that's huge, tremendous. Israel wanted not only to destroy Lebanon, the antithesis of Israel, but in its place they wanted to create three microscopic ministates—Shi'ite, Druse, and Christian—fighting against each other, hoping that this would be able to be generalized all over the Middle East. That would allow us to understand why Israel supported Iran after the war broke out between Iran and Iraq. We will come back to this point.

Israel wanted always to eliminate the PLO, to destroy the Lebanese pattern of peaceful coexistence among different communities, to build up, in the place of this pattern, rival and hostile confessional mini-states, to balkanize the region.

There was another reason that Israel wanted to destroy Lebanon: the south of Lebanon. What is the property of the south of Lebanon? Palestine is poor in water, and the south of Lebanon is extremely rich in water. In the south, we have three rivers: the Litani River, which has its source in the central Bekaa Valley and goes to the Mediterranean along the town of Tyre in the south. Thus, the river only circulates inside the Lebanese boundaries. The two other rivers are the Hasbani and the Wazzani, the sources of the Jordan River, which irrigates the Palestinian territories.

This is something that Israel always wanted to control, even from the early beginnings, with that famous Balfour promise from His Majesty that they would have a homeland in Palestine. In 1919, the Zionist leaders came to the peace

conference in Versailles seeking to be allowed to annex the south of Lebanon, stating that this would be the only way for them to irrigate the Israeli territories for agriculture and to allow Israel to have water for itself. Since then, this goal had never changed, and when the war broke out, Israel wanted to achieve this purpose.

Syrian designs upon Lebanon

As far as the Syrian regime is concerned, as you already know, it managed to keep in power only by eliminating, by terror and violence, any and all opposition. But Hafez al-Assad and his assistants knew that this would not be able to last forever.

In order to ensure what was needed for the long-range survival of the Syrian regime, something had to be done on a structural level.

First of all, this regime pretended to be fighting for the unity of the Arab world, the liberation of the Arab territories—everything you can imagine as extremist slogans. But at the same time, the PLO was representing a real revolutionary force, threatening all the Arab regimes that were in power. And the PLO is, from the Alawite standpoint, a Sunni force, because the Palestinians are about 90% Sunnis and 10% Christians. But of course the leading force was Sunni—Arafat is a Sunni. So, in order to ensure the safety of the regime, they always wanted to eliminate the PLO.

That's one common goal of Israel and the Syrian regime: They both wanted to eliminate the PLO—from Israel's point of view, for the security of the state, and from the Alawite point of view, for the security of the regime.

But that wasn't the whole story of the Syrian regime. While everything is controlled in Syria, Lebanon used to be the only democratic country in the region, with a very free press. That was absolutely dangerous for such a regime as the Syrian one. So Assad needed to destroy that freedom in Lebanon, and that meant that Lebanon became the first target.

But there was another goal of the Syrian regime, and this one is essentially a demographic one. Of course, in order to counterbalance the Sunni majority of 72%, Hafez al-Assad could have converted people—but nowadays it's not common to convert people to a religion by force—or could elaborate another strategy, which would achieve such stability for the regime. What he decided was to elaborate a strategy of gathering a certain number of minority communities—and when I talk about minorities I'm talking on the general level of the whole Arab world, and not on the level of each country alone.

This strategy consisted of gathering together a certain number of minorities, which would have been able, by their demographic weight and cultural, economic, and political influence, to counterbalance the weight of the Sunnis. Of course, in Syria alone, all the minorities added up to only 28% of the population. So, the only thing was to annex

Lebanon, because in Lebanon, the equation between minorities and the Sunni is just the opposite of what it is in Syria—and of course the resident population of Lebanon was at that time 2.5 million, while all around the world the immigrants were millions and millions. That was what was needed to stabilize the regime.

So the Alawite regime of Syria and Israel turned out to be both objectively seeking, even without any previous agreement between them, to destroy the PLO first, and to destroy the Lebanese state. Of course, they did not want to destroy the Lebanese state for the same purpose: Israel wanted to annex first the south, and then to divide up the country among three microscopic mini-states, while Syria wanted to integrate the whole lot.

Let's go now to the American strategy.

The U.S. policy

In 1973, the war that led to a certain balance between the Arabs and Israel, also led to an oil embargo, which was imposed by the Gulf oil producers against the Western countries. Why? Because the United States had always been unconditionally supporting Israel against the Arab cause. They imposed the embargo in order to force the United States, and all the West, to finally be a little bit more just. You all know the recession that the embargo led to in the different industrialized societies.

On the American side, Kissinger realized that it was becoming urgent to confront this increasing threat, the instability on the Mediterranean side of the Middle East. What did he decide to do, to control all this, and to recoup the losses of the Anglo-American financial milieu which he always represented?

Since the Middle East is the closest neighbor of the Soviet Union, and at the same time, the closest neighbor of Western Europe, the strategic position of the region always took a privileged place in American strategy. This strategy always sought to keep Soviet influence away from the region, and, at the same time, to control the region in such a way as to control the different European countries.

How? By keeping the oil under U.S. domination. How did they usually manage to keep the oil under their control? That was very easy. The stronger Israel was, the more it was capable of threatening the Arab countries, and the more the Arab countries were in need of somebody to protect them. Who was the "protector" who blackmailed them? The American administration.

That's what always happened since at least 1956, which was the last time that the American administration decided to intervene in a just way. In 1956, Israel, France, and England went into an expedition in the Suez Canal, and Eisenhower forced them out. That was really the end—the only time that the Americans decided to really play a fair game.

So, in 1973, when the embargo occurred, that was a very big problem.



Refugees flee from their destroyed home in southern Lebanon during the "civil war" in 1978. In fact, it was no civil war, but a conflict imposed from the outside, from which the local warring parties found they could not escape.

United Nations/J. K. Isaac

What did Kissinger's strategy consist of?

First of all, he knew that as long as the Israel-Arab problem was not solved, insecurity and the instability would be permanent in the region. So, one had to find a solution—whatever the solution. When I say "solution," I'm not talking necessarily about justice.

The strategy elaborated by Kissinger was complex. He wanted to bring about peace between the Arabs and Israel, but of course, if all the Arabs were allowed to discuss peace with Israel together, that would weaken Israel's diplomatic and political position.

That's why Kissinger decided to promote a separate peace process, "step by step"; that's why after the war of 1973, the first step was the disengagement that occurred on the Sinai, and then on the Golan Heights. After this disengagement, he engaged in a separate peace process between Israel and Egypt. That reached a happy end, thanks to Sadat and all his strength—really—to force the Israeli leaders to an agreement. That reached an end in 1978.

A second step was to penalize every single Arab leader who even dared to threaten America. Who dared at that time? King Faisal of Saudi Arabia. What was the price he paid? He was killed in 1975. That turned out to be dissuasive enough to prevent anybody after him from ever daring to proceed with any other embargo.

Third: As the Shah became more and more conscious of his own strength, Mr. Kissinger decided that because the Shah was no longer a loyal client, but was claiming ambitions for himself, he would not be suitable from now on, and should be removed. So beginning in 1975, they started to

destabilize his regime by using the religious factions. Why did they use the religious factions, despite the fact that in Iran there were democratic factions against the regime? Because they thought it was the only way that allowed America to keep the communist influence out of the region, and at the same time helped to destabilize the region, in order to be able to control it better. Because only when the region is unstable, could it be controlled.

Fourth: The only Arab regime which kept out of America's control was, until then, the regime of Saddam Hussein. His regime was the only one to reject all the international resolutions that stressed the necessity of a compromise, a negotiated solution for the Arab-Israeli problem. So they wanted to diminish the capability of this regime, to humiliate this regime.

The next step would be later on: the war between Iraq and Iran that would begin at the end of 1979.

But before all this, the war of Lebanon was already orchestrated.

Kissinger's strategy in Lebanon

What did Mr. Kissinger seek in Lebanon? The ultimate purpose was to prepare the ground for a Syrian-Israeli conciliation or compromise. But Hafez al-Assad and his friends could never, for the sake of their own credibility, just leave the Golan Heights, which had been occupied by Israel since 1967.

So Kissinger thought that a solution could be reached, by proposing to Syria compensation which would be helpful in order to realize two goals: first of all, to get land in place of

the Golan Heights, and second, to give the Syrian regime the demographic weight needed to counterbalance the Sunnis. That's why the invasion of Lebanon by Syria was so suitable for Hafez al-Assad.

Mr. Kissinger wanted to lead Syria and Israel to a compromise. What was the ground on which they were supposed to compromise?

First of all, that's why the Lebanese war was orchestrated. The first goal of this war was to eliminate the PLO; the second, to eliminate the Lebanese state; the third, to allow Israel to keep the south of Lebanon, for the sake of its water needs; and the fourth, to give all the rest to Syria, and promote, at this price, a compromise between Syria and Israel, at the expense of Lebanon and the PLO.

All that has happened from 1975 to the present was, I would say, indefatigably governed by these goals. Never did the American policy in the Middle East change by an inch. You tell me that in 1982, Reagan sent American Marines to Lebanon, and the French sent in troops of their own within the multinational force. Yes, they did indeed; but what was the purpose of this multinational force? It wasn't sent in order to restabilize Lebanon. It was only sent in order to allow the PLO, the remaining resisters, a way out in dignity, because of all the pressures that were put on the United States from the different Arab so-called allies—slaves, in fact, vassals.

That was the only purpose for which the multinational force was sent to Lebanon in 1982, after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

This was covered, of course, by slogans, ideological justifications. Hafez al-Assad, in order to get his troops into Lebanon, pretended to be there in order to bring peace, to help the Lebanese to reconcile among themselves. Syria sent its troops officially in 1976, but unofficially, in a speech on July 20, 1976, in Damascus, President Hafez al-Assad revealed that he had already sent troops into Lebanon, behind the back of the Lebanese authorities, in 1973. That is two years before the war!

How could he send troops without its being known? Nothing could have been simpler, because the Palestinians in Lebanon were enjoying an accord with the state, the Cairo Accord, which was signed in 1969, according to which they had the right to circulate freely with arms in Lebanon, and even to bring weapons from Syria. As long as this Cairo Accord existed, nothing was easier for Syria than to send guns and troops to Lebanon. Syrian troops only had to wear Palestinian uniforms!

That was the first time. And according to the same speech of Hafez al-Assad, the second time the Syrian troops were sent to Lebanon, before they were sent officially, occurred at the end of 1975—that means, a few months after the war broke out. When were they sent? When, for the first time since the beginning of the war in Lebanon, the inhabitants of the Christian town of Damour, halfway from Beirut to Sidon, were to be pushed out of their town and massacred. Three to

four hundred people were killed, and the others were forced to move out.

A 'civil war' run from outside

All these years, you've been told that there was a civil war in Lebanon. Nothing is easier than to create a civil war, when there is a foreign force such as the PLO within the country. This foreign presence is usually a factor to polarize all the radical factions against each other. It was enough for Lebanon that Pierre Gemayel was ready to fight, and on the opposite side, Kamal Jumblatt, with his allies, to create a so-called civil war.

But as soon as this happened, of course, in order to pretend that they were the only representatives of the Christians, the Falangists of Pierre Gemayel eliminated a great number of Christians who were opposed to them.

I would have been immediately killed if I had not left the country in 1976. I went back later on, but in 1976, I was obliged, with many thousands of Lebanese Christians, to leave the country, because we were threatened with being killed by the Kataeb Party, the Falangists.

But there were far more important leaders than the Falangists, with huge followings, such as Raymond Edde, who since the end of 1976, has been in voluntary exile in France. He is now 78. He was forced out after several unsuccessful attempts against his life.

The former President of the Republic, Suleiman Franjeh, was also threatened by the Kataeb and their fighters, and in 1978, they killed his son, Tony Franjeh.

That's how they managed to appear to represent all the Christians: by eliminating their opponents by force—the same way that Hafez al-Assad kept control over the Syrian society. They all did the same: the Kataeb among the Christians, Jumblatt and his allies among the Muslims, in order to claim to be a complete representation among the communities. They eliminated the opposition, whether by forcing them to leave the country, or by killing them.

But even those who agreed, in the beginning, to try the adventure, to engage in hostilities, discovered immediately what it was—that they were *being driven by foreign forces*. At the beginning, Kamal Jumblatt thought that he would be able to provoke a shift in the power in the country in his own favor; and Pierre Gemayel was hoping the same thing. But once they got into the war, they discovered that they were being driven into it, against their their own will, against their own interest, by Syria, Israel, the United States, and all the other foreign forces involved. So, they wanted to disengage. And what happened? They all—*all! all!*—were systematically killed: Jumblatt in 1977, Imam Mussa Sadr in 1978, Tony Franjeh in 1978, Bashir Gemayel in 1982, Mufti Hasan Khalid in 1989, Prime Minister Rashid Karami in 1987, and many, many, many others.

When a political party, or when a force, or a militia loses its leader by an assassination, what happens to the successor?

Either he continues to obey, or he will be killed just like his predecessor. That's how the different militias became *instrumentalized* by Syria and Israel.

The so-called Lebanese Forces of Samir Geagea now are the Israeli instrument in Lebanon, while the so-called Druse militia of Walid Jumblatt (the son of Kamal Jumblatt who was killed in 1977) and the Amal militia (led now by Nabih Berri, as a successor of the Imam Mussa Sadr, who was eliminated in 1978 in Libya)—both are instruments of Syrian policy in Lebanon.

Walid Jumblatt—he's a funny one, because he could change his mind so quickly. He could give a declaration, and two hours later, the opposite one, as easily as you take off your jacket and put it on. A few months ago, he was in the Soviet Union, and he gave a declaration to Novosti in which he said, "As different Lebanese factions, we have no control whatsoever on the ground; *we all are dependent on foreign powers.*" That's what he said, in essence.

If you want to know what this "civil war" was all about, I can only tell you, that the civil war—even if, in the beginning, it involved certain radical factions wanting to increase their own power—after just a short while became only a Lebanese cover for a *multinational war*, using the Lebanese, against their own will, forbidding them to meet with each other, to discuss with each other, because that was the only way for the foreign powers to keep controlling the ground. If the Lebanese sat down to negotiate with each other, what would be the reason for Syria to stay in Lebanon, or for

Israel? As long as Israel is in the south, Syria will not withdraw; Israel says, as long as the civil war is going on, and Syria is staying in, we will not withdraw. And that's how each of them uses the other as an excuse not to withdraw.

But in the meantime, one has to record that since 1978, the U.N. Security Council, after the first Israeli invasion of the country, passed Resolution 425, calling for an unconditional and immediate withdrawal of Israel from Lebanon. And after the second invasion of 1982, three other resolutions were passed, in the same direction. But never, never, has anything been done to force Israel to respect these resolutions.

As far as Syria is concerned, the United States administration has never wanted to point out its responsibility in the Lebanese tragedy.

General Aoun becomes prime minister

Then in 1988, General Aoun, who had been before that the commander-in-chief of the Army, was promoted to the status of prime minister. Lebanon's Military Council is headed by the commander-in-chief, and he recruits five other generals, representing the five other main communities of the country—one Sunni, one Shi'ite, one Druse, one Greek Catholic, and one Greek Orthodox.

In 1988, Lebanon was an occupied country by more than 80% of its territory: 10-11% by Israel in the south, and the rest under Syrian control, except for that small region that is called from outside the Christian region, which was the only

Michel Aoun: a personal profile

Asked to describe Lebanon's Gen. Michel Aoun personally, Professor El Hashem replied:

Michel Aoun is a son of the people, coming from a poor family. His father and mother were small farmers—don't imagine people owning a very big ranch; it's a small farm, with a few cows, and so on. He lived and grew up on the farm. He went to a public school, which is a multiconfessional school, because the area where he used to live was inhabited by Christians, Shi'ite Muslims, Sunni, etc. By growing up under these conditions, one learns to be tolerant, and to know the others. I, too, went to a multiconfessional school, where I met with different people, and from my early childhood I learned to love my country's people.

General Aoun doesn't belong, by any means, to the

establishment that ran Lebanon since independence in 1943, and even before.

When he got his Lebanese baccalaureate, he passed his test to get into the military academy. According to all his professors at the military academy, he was a brilliant student. After this, he was sent to France and to America, for specialization in artillery. He was a brilliant artillery man, according to his superiors. I'm not only giving him labels; I'm only telling the truth. Brilliant people start by being brilliant from the beginning.

Before that, during his studies in the military academy, every time he went on vacation, you know what he used to do? Go and help his father and his mother on the farm. Usually, in the military education, people learned to be very proud, and to look down on such things. But he used to go to the farm.

In 1961, there was an attempted coup d'état in Lebanon, led by the Syrian Social Nationalist Party. The coup d'état failed, and all the members of this party were caught, put into jail, and tortured. According to the top leader of the coup d'état, whom I knew, and who wrote about what happened there—writing during the war of

remaining area of the country free of foreign occupation. This area was under a certain form of coexistence between the operational brigades of the Lebanese Army, on one side, and the Lebanese Forces—actually, the “Israeli Forces in Lebanon” would be a much more suitable name—of Samir Geagea on the other side.

So, on Sept. 23, 1988, the mandate of the last President, Amin Gemayel, was due to come to an end, according to the Constitution. Ten days before, also according to the Constitution, a new President should have been elected, in order to be ready to take office on the 23rd.

Syria did everything to forbid the Lebanese Parliament to meet and elect a new President. Seven days before the end of the term, Richard Murphy was sent by the American administration, with the explicit mission, to find an agreement to unblock the situation in Lebanon. So, he went to Syria, where he spent four days, after which he came out alone to Lebanon, and met with officials there—the Commander-in-Chief of the Army General Aoun, the President of the Republic, Samir Geagea, and other personalities—and he told them that after very hard, very tough discussions in Syria, Syria is ready to allow the election of a new President; *but* under the condition that the Parliament vote only for Mr. Michel Daher. *No other candidate is allowed*, and if you don’t accept this proposal, then you’ll have to face the chaos alone.

That was the proposal of Mr. Murphy, the representative of the biggest “democracy” in the world.

The Lebanese officials said to him, “Well, during the Ottoman Empire, even when the Sultans wanted to send us a new governor or something, they were a bit more polite. Before they sent us one, they used to send somebody to say, ‘We intend, we feel, that this man is right for the job. We hope that you have no objection if we send you this one.’ But, without any consultation, you can’t appoint us a dictator. We have to refuse it; we are going to face chaos, if that is the only alternative that you leave us.”

And that’s how the country was left without a President. On the last day of Amin Gemayel’s mandate, the President, according to Articles No. 53 and 62 of the Constitution, transformed the Military Council, which was formed in a balanced way on the interconfessional level, into a transitional government. According to the Constitution, when the presidency is vacant for any reason, a transitional government takes its place and assumes the functions of both the President of the Republic and the cabinet, until a new President is elected.

That’s how the *perfectly constitutional* government of Michel Aoun came about.

Of course, Syria is always doing everything to destroy the state. What Syria did, first of all, to contest the legitimacy of Aoun’s government, was to get the previous government, that of Selim al-Hoss, to remain in place, *de facto*, claiming that his was the only legitimate one. Under what constitutional provision? *None. Only by the force of Syria.* And secondly, they put pressure on the Muslim generals of the Aoun combi-

liberation last year, from West Beirut, and that means under the Syrian control—he gave a testimony, saying that there were at that time very few Lebanese officers who refused to participate in the torture. One of them was Michel Aoun.

When the war broke out in 1975, Michel Aoun was always on the front to defend legitimate institutions. Never did he participate in any fight between factions. He only took part in the fighting between the Palestinians and the Lebanese, because he thought that the Palestinians were abusing and violating Lebanese sovereignty. After the war, when the Palestinians stopped, he never participated in any fighting between Christians and Muslims, whatsoever.

In 1983, after the redeployment toward the south of the Israeli Army, the Syrians tried to get back into Beirut, because they had been pushed out of Beirut by the Israeli Army. Never did the Syrian Army face Israel! Why do they pretend to be there to fight against Israel, when they have never faced Israel? So, when Syria was trying, at the end of the summer of 1983, to get back into Beirut, and the famous battles occurred on the Souk-al-Gharb front,

who was the commander-in-chief of this stronghold? It was Michel Aoun.

Two or three months later, the hostilities settled down, and a so-called conference for national reconciliation was held. That was a big joke, because the Syrians wanted to show the whole world that the Lebanese weren’t able to reach an agreement among themselves. How could they have been able to reach an agreement in the presence of Mr. Khaddam, the Syrian vice president? That wouldn’t be possible.

After this conference, a new government was formed, a so-called government of national unity, gathering, of course, Muslims and Christians. And guess who said that Michel Aoun should become the commander-in-chief of the Army? Amin Gemayel, the President of the republic? No. Nor any of the Christian ministers; rather, it was the Muslim ministers.



Michel Aoun



A rally in support of Aoun in Washington, D.C. Four hundred thousand people—both Muslim and Christian—camped out around the Lebanese presidential palace at Baabda, to defend the nation's constitutional government.

nation, to prevent them from joining the government. They didn't dismiss; they only sent their excuses. The government survived by its Christian half, but that's not because they were fanatics, but because they were the *only* Lebanese who were free to say yes or no, because the others were under Syrian control, threatened with their lives.

So, facing an almost entirely occupied country, and a state which is undermined by the militias, the government had either to accept all this, and to coexist with it, or to refuse it, and to call for the restoration of sovereignty by the withdrawal of the foreign forces, and for the disarmament of the different militias. What Aoun and his government chose, was the second option, of course. He fought against the militias, he fought against Syria, and virtually against Israel, because he demanded the withdrawal of all the foreign forces.

He was betrayed, very, very immorally betrayed, by the American administration. We now know that in the beginning, he was encouraged by American officials, and when the war of liberation broke out between himself and Syria, the American officials went to deal with Syria, against him. They used him, they used the war that he was fighting against Syria, as a pressure point, in order to reach agreements with Syria, at the expense of Lebanon.

Betrayal at Taif

The Taif Accord was one of the conclusions of that war of liberation. It committed Lebanon, before any Syrian withdrawal, to elaborate treaties with Syria, covering all the dif-

ferent aspects of national life, in order to illustrate the so-called special links between the two countries. Well, I beg you to tell me, what kind of treaties could be concluded between an elephant and a fly under his feet? This was due to happen within two years, after which the Syrian troops were supposed to redeploy, to get out of Beirut, and to be redeployed to the north of the country and the Bekaa Valley. That means around 35% of the country!

This so-called agreement is an imposition, because if you compare the initial text that was put forward as a platform apparently by the Saudi government, but really, as we all know, by the Americans, you will find that it was an accord with a *koufeia* [Arab headdress].

So, there is no change. My friend Raymond Edde told me that when Mr. Hariri—who is a Lebanese naturalized Saudi, the wealth-keeper of King Fahd of Saudi Arabia—came up to address the invitation to Edde in Paris, he told him, “Oh, yes, *Amid* [“Leader”], but you know, this text should not be modified.” Edde asked, “If no modification is allowed, why do you want me to go to Saudi Arabia? I'm not going.” He did not go.

That's why General Aoun refused this agreement. But the Bush administration was the first to recognize the Taif agreement and the puppet government which resulted from this so-called agreement. Behind the American administration, all the allies, all over the world, recognized the agreement and what resulted from it—the government of René Muawad and then Hrawi after Muawad was killed. The Arab states, except for Iraq and the PLO, and in the beginning Egypt (and now, they're allied with all the others), all gave their recognition, against the constitutional facts of Lebanon, to this accord imposed from the outside.

You couldn't believe it, how everything has been, for the last 16 years, an imposition from outside, and especially from the Kissinger policy of America.

So, we refused this. They threatened us, to force General Aoun out, by using the Syrian Army. Immediately after the first threats were formulated, 400,000 Lebanese people—Muslim and Christian alike—went up to the presidential palace at Baabda and camped for three months around Baabda, in order to say, “If you want to force General Aoun out, you'd better start by killing us.” Do you know what 400,000 people means? That's proportionally the equivalent of 60 million Americans around the White House. Despite this fact, the legitimate government was considered to be the Hrawi one, which was imposed from outside, and the one that the people were ready to defend, without weapons, with their own bodies, was not considered legitimate—despite the fact that this one was nominated according to the Constitution, while everything that was done from Taif to the elections that came later, was absolutely unconstitutional.

That's how the reforms, in the “democratic” way of Saudi Arabia and Syria, occurred in this region. Imagine Saudi Arabia proposing democratic reforms for Lebanon!