

Syria, and Iran. If wise leaders reinforce the idea of “No Re-Kissingerization,” such tricks cannot destroy Lebanon again.

Take the case of the Maronite Patriarch, Cardinal Nasrallah Boutros Sfeir, who in his long life has learned to avoid being ensnared by such deceptions. When the Patriarch was invited to the United States to meet with President Bush in March, he was given a hero’s welcome; but was also put under tremendous pressure to accede to the immediate disarmament of the Shi’ite movement Hezbollah. The Patriarch calmly explained to President Bush and others that this is an internal Lebanese matter, which will only be discussed by the Lebanese themselves, and not until after the parliamentary election. All other religious and political factions in Lebanon stood together against the pressure, and this demand has been temporarily laid aside.

The irony of President Bush’s mantra about “free and fair elections” does not escape Lebanese observers, who recall the President’s own election contests. One can only imagine the difficulties involved in putting together a national election after 30 years of war and occupation from, as the Lebanese say, their “neighbors to the south and their neighbors to the east,” and especially under the pressure of the U.S. “Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act,” and UN Security Council Resolution 1559. The fact that section 23 of the Syria Accountability Act quotes serial liar John Bolton, asserting that Syria has chemical and biological WMD programs, shows why Lebanese leaders are so carefully watching what is going on in the U.S. Congress.

With only days to go until the elections begin on May 29, there are current difficult disagreements over election procedures within Lebanon. This is purely an internal Lebanese matter. Yet, as the Muslim cleric quoted above observed, the very U.S. officials who lionized the Patriarch on his visit to the United States, denounced him the week of May 9 for “adding fuel to the fire,” and said they were “deeply concerned” over what they called “a mean drive to convince the Lebanese that they were better off under Syria’s tutelage.” This grotesque criticism was directed at the Patriarch after he convened a Council of the Maronite Bishops to discuss a parliamentary faction’s use of what the bishops consider unfair gerrymandering of electoral districts.

There are many dangers on Lebanon’s horizon. On May 9, the Israeli Defense Forces lobbed eight shells across the border and flew over Lebanese airspace ten times. Then, on May 11, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon accused Hezbollah in Lebanon of firing a rocket into northern Israel. The role of Hezbollah, as well as the return from exile of former President Gen. Michel Aoun and the imminent release of Lebanese Forces Commander Samir Geagea from prison (see box), all bring the issue of competing militias to the fore again.

But, it is the principle of the real sovereignty and economic development of Lebanon and her neighbors which will determine the solutions to these and other problems, and those principles are now front and center. Therefore, we applaud our Lebanese friends for their poetic slogan—“No to Re-Kissingerization.”

Congressman McCotter Joins Cheney’s Drive

On May 10, at the Cannon Office Building of the U.S. House of Representatives, a provocatively titled news conference announced that Rep. Thaddeus McCotter (R-Mich.) would brief reporters on how to get rid of the “Syria-controlled government of Lebanon.” It was a naked attempt by British and U.S. neo-conservatives to fan the flames of civil strife in Lebanon, at the very moment that leaders inside Lebanon are trying everything to maintain stability.

Poor Congressman McCotter! He has been picked up by Vice President Dick Cheney and House Majority Leader Tom Delay (R-Tex.)—receiving \$20,000 from Delay PAC; being named Assistant Majority Whip; and being appointed to two subcommittees of the House International Relations Committee. Now he is being made a fool of by the British NGO Christian Solidarity International

(CSI) and its unwitting Lebanese front groups.

The May 10 event, which was aimed at enforcing the Syria Accountability Act, and which bused in Lebanese-Americans from Michigan and Ohio, was also addressed by a speaker from the Australian organization Cedarwatch, which champions jailed Lebanese Forces militia leader Dr. Samir Geagea. CSI’s main issue in Lebanon is the case of Geagea, a warlord and former hit-man for the late Phalangist leader Bashir Gemayel. In the present electoral period, CSI is provoking the very hot-headed agitation others in the opposition have sought to avoid. Many in Lebanon are backing a pardon for Geagea, in the interest of quieting down the volatile political situation.

When a Lebanese Maronite leader was told of the role of Baroness Caroline Cox’s CSI in manipulating Lebanese-Americans, he said, “Oh, that’s the British back to their own tricks. . . . Those citizens who came from Michigan and Ohio will do much more for the United States and Lebanon if they lobby Representative McCotter to retool the auto plants in those states, than if they allow themselves to be maneuvered by outside agendas around the delicate situation in Lebanon.”—*Nina Ogden*