

SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE

# THE INVASION OF LEBANON

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**and Eqbal Ahmad**

**RACE &  
CLASS**

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# **RACE & CLASS**

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## **THE INVASION OF LEBANON**

Edited by Ibrahim ABU-LUGHOD and EQBAL AHMAD

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Leyli Shayegan, Carol Stock and Juli Diamond collaborated on this issue.

## Introduction

Articles on the Middle East have appeared but infrequently in *Race & Class*. Yet, readers of this journal must be aware of the importance we attach to this region. Our first special issue was *The United States and the Arab World* (Vol. XVII, no.3, winter, 1976). In it, A. Sivanandan described the Middle East as 'the most significant theatre' of Third World struggle against imperialism. All our writers – including Mohammed Hassanein Heikal, Munif Razzaz and myself – warned of the United States' and Israel's ambitions in the Middle East. We dwelt on their attempt to achieve the long-standing goal of isolating Egypt – the political centre of the contemporary Middle East – from its Arab milieu. And we regarded the first Sinai agreement as the reflection of a dangerous trend, not towards a comprehensive and just peace, but to a piecemeal sell-out by Arab elites and the systematic sapping of Arab will.

In his brief editorial, Sivanandan summarised the issues we had raised, and a few of the conclusions we had reached. Eight years later, it is worth summarising his summary:

(a) [The United States'] moves towards a 'peaceful settlement' in the Middle East – or, in the alternative a military intervention – signify a shift in the centrality of imperialism's focus from the Pacific and Atlantic to the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean regions – areas on whose resources of raw material is predicated the very fabric of industrial society.

(b) But to gain effective control over ... these resources America needs to prise the indigenous bourgeoisie from ... the other super-power, the Soviet Union, and help them defeat at the same time



those liberation movements which spell danger to imperial hegemony.

(c) Unlike the Jewish and black diasporas before it, the Palestinian diaspora – by the very nature of its history, locale and time – carries with it the contagion of revolution. In the Arab countries into which it has dispersed, the Palestinian resistance has become the spearhead of revolutionary Arab nationalism, portending socialist change.

(d) [The] ruling elites of the region ... find a more natural identity of interests with their Israeli counterparts than with their own revolutionary rabble. All the urging they need is imperialism's whisper: we are all capitalists under the skin.

That editorial was written *after* the October 1973 Arab-Israeli War, and *after* the first Sinai agreement (18 January 1974), which, delivered by the canny mid-wifery of Dr Henry Kissinger, started Anwar Sadat on the fateful road to Camp David. It went to press *before* Syria had signed the second Sinai accord (4 September 1975); and *before* its 'Arab Deterrent Force' had intervened in Lebanon (January 1976) to prevent the impending victory of the progressive forces (of the Lebanese National Movement and the PLO) over the Israeli-supported, Phalangist-dominated right-wing coalition. In June 1982, when Israel launched its long-expected, full-scale invasion of Lebanon, the Palestinians supported by their Lebanese comrades had to fight alone. They fought for more than two gruelling months. Ironically, the Palestinian's loneliest was history's longest Israeli-Arab war. For the Israelis it became the most divisive. Of the Arab states, especially of the Steadfastness and Rejection Front and of the 'Islamic' governments in the region, it was the most revealing.

This issue of *Race & Class*, intentionally limited in scope, concentrates on Israel's invasion of Lebanon and its immediate aftermath. Facts are often elusive – or are replaced by myths – in discussions concerning the Middle East; hence we begin with a series of 'fact sheets' – relevant maps; a profile of Lebanon, the Palestinians, and the PLO; a chronology of events; estimates of casualties on both sides. These were prepared by the New York-based National Emergency Committee on Lebanon, and by Leyli Shayegan. We hope that this section will be particularly useful to students, teachers and political activists.

\* \* \*

The Israeli army overran the South within a week of Israel's land invasion. In a woman's eye-witness account of the fall of the Phoenician port city of Tyre, recorded by Selim Nassib, we get a glimpse of the fire-power and brutality of Israel's blitzkrieg through the ancient cities and villages of southern Lebanon. After the first week of the invasion,

the bulk of resistance centred on the defence of Beirut and the areas surrounding it. Three of the six writers in the articles' section – Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, Selim Nassib and Sami Al-Banna – lived through the battle of Beirut. Their analysis and accounts testify, on the one hand, to the humanity and courage of the Lebanese and Palestinians who suffered and survived the horror produced by the generosity of the United States and, on the other, to the violence of a state and ideology which has inflicted extraordinary sufferings upon one people and stimulated amnesia in another. Of the other three writers, one – Dr Ameen I. Ramzy, an American surgeon-traumatologist – was a volunteer with the Palestine Red Crescent Society and served in Beirut during August 1982; another, Reverend Donald Wagner, visited Beirut both before and after the invasion of Lebanon. Khalil Nakhleh's brief resumé of continued resistance in Lebanon, based mainly on Israeli press reports, completes this section of analysis and documentation on the Palestinian-Israeli war.

In standing by the Palestinians, the people of southern Lebanon and Beirut stood alone in the Arab world. And they stood above it – symbolising the Arab people's unrealised but culturally and ideologically rooted ideal of national and human solidarity across ethnic, religious and state boundaries. In his important essay, Professor Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, member of the Palestinian National Council, points out that, a century and a half ago, Beirut was the birthplace of the struggle for the transformation of the Arab world into a non-sectarian, secular and democratic polity; that by virtue not only of their ideology, but also the structure of their organisation and the composition of their leaders, cadres and constituents, the Palestine Liberation Organisation and the Lebanese National Movement were the two political formations in the Middle East which had a pluralist character and the commitment to a non-sectarian, secular and democratic future.\*

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\* It is not widely known that a significant number of Palestinian leaders and cadres – including Dr. George Habbash and Nayef Hawatmeh, as well as many of the West Bank's prominent leaders (e.g., Karim Khalaf) – are Christians. So are many of the martyrs – including Kamal Naser and Wadi Haddad. Non-sectarian values have become so internalised among the Palestinians that one rarely hears or becomes aware of the religious and sectarian identity of individuals. Thus, when Kamal Naser was killed, many people in the funeral procession wondered why his body was being taken to a Christian cemetery. Similarly, Christians and Sunnis have important roles in the Lebanese National Movement (two of its most prominent leaders – George Hawi and In'am Raad are of Christian origin); the Shi'ites and Druzes constituted its backbone. In the occupied West Bank and Gaza, Israeli authorities have been particularly harsh on the Christian population (thus, since 1968, their numbers have been drastically reduced in Jerusalem, even compared with Muslim Palestinians); and the Begin government has been encouraging the fundamentalist Islamic groupings in the Occupied Areas, allowing them considerable freedom to organise – freedoms denied the secular Palestinian nationalists.



Beirut was also, Abu-Lughod argues, the concrete place in which that idea had materialised. For its universalism, its heterogeneity, its mixed ethnic composition, its democratic spirit, Beirut had come to symbolise the Arab people's hopes and drive towards secularism and democracy. The symbol and the reality were the primary targets of Israel's long and unsuccessful siege, and Beirut's destruction their intended end. And it was their shared antipathy to the secular, democratic ideal that underlay the alliance between Israel and the Phalange party. So that when the Habib agreement appeared to be saving the symbol of Beirut, the temptation to enter and desecrate it with the sectarian spilling of blood was too great to keep Israel from breaking the international accord.

Sami Al-Banna, who gives here the first inside account of the organisation that made possible the defence of Beirut, adds that Beirut resisted also because its majority was made up of the dispossessed who had acquired, the hard and messy way, their natural right to exercise power. He concurs with Abu-Lughod that human dignity lies in the experience of 'people of diverse ethnic, religious, cultural and philosophical backgrounds discovering out of their common disasters, their resources and strengths. This is the real reason that Beirut fought back.' The Palestinian movement would do well to add, more consistently than it has so far done, the ideal of socialism to non-sectarian democracy.

Selim Nassib's despatches are vivid illustrations of Ibrahim Abu-Lughod's and Sami Al-Banna's contention. His 21 June 'Stories from an apartment block' shows us a microcosm of the Beirut that Israel tried – is still trying – to destroy. We meet the irrepressible Madame Miza and her husband, both Maronite Christians, on the first floor; Orthodox Christians and their cats on the second, a Shi'ite Muslim family on the third; Sunnis on the fourth and, on the fifth floor, a Syrian family whom, in a gesture of delicacy, the reporter is advised not to interview.

To single out one despatch is unfair to Selim Nassib. His is crisis reporting of the highest order. One is reminded of Edward Morrow on the battle of Britain, John Reed on the October Revolution and Edgar Snow on the Long March. For he has an uncanny eye for the relevant detail, an obviously analytical mind, the listening talents of a good story-teller; above all, an unmistakable empathy with the experience and struggles of his subject. He senses the unyielding persistence of the Palestinians; the yearning for the 'smell, the scent' of the ancient homeland of which they have been dispossessed by a kindred people. He captures the mood of the moment, the desperation and the inspiration, the ironies, griefs and humour of a generous, spirited and resilient city under siege. He reports with a sense of history, an instinctive comprehension that he was recording a historic moment in Middle



Eastern history, one that may yet prove the nemesis of future Israeli, American and Arab governments.

\* \* \*

The Notes and Documents section focuses on the aftermath of the accord under which the PLO agreed to leave Beirut, opening with an interview given by Arafat just after the accord was made. It was an accord arranged and underwritten by the United States; and it included guarantees for the safety of the Palestinian and Lebanese civilians of Beirut and other areas under Israeli occupation. These guarantees were further strengthened by written assurances given to Yasser Arafat by Ambassador Philip Habib through the intermediary, Lebanese Prime Minister Shafik Al-Wazzan. Equally clearly, the agreement had forbidden Israel from invading Beirut after its defendants had departed. Both provisions were violated by the Israelis within days of the PLO's departure from Beirut. The massacres in Sabra and Shatila Camps were its direct outcome, and are presented here from two perspectives: an account of events meticulously pieced together by Thomas Friedman in the *New York Times*, side by side with the appalling and moving testimonies of six of the survivors, as told to Layla Shahid Barrada in *Revue d'Etudes Palestiniennes*. (Amnon Kapeliouk's excellent reportage on the massacres is discussed in the book reviews section.)

Killings and harassments of civilians in occupied southern Lebanon continue to occur regularly in pursuance of a policy of dispersing and eliminating the Palestinian and independent Lebanese presence. Some indication of the devastation wrought in southern Lebanon, and conditions there, is given in the extracts we publish from the McBride report, and the report from the Palestine Red Crescent Society – important because scholars and researchers are unable to travel or work freely in the occupied areas. An even more closely guarded secret – the reality of the Israeli prison camps – is chillingly glimpsed in the personal account of a former Israeli guard at Al-Ansar. And 'American arms in Israeli hands' completes this section, with a factual account of the different types of weapons used, their destructive long-term effects and a list of the US companies which manufacture them.

\* \* \*

The report of the Israeli Commission of Inquiry has appeared just as this issue of *Race & Class* goes to press. We cannot reproduce it but a few comments on it are in order. From the trials of Robert Clive (1725-74) and the impeachment of Warren Hastings (1787), through the punishment of General Michael O'Dwyer (the butcher of Jallianwala Bagh, 1919), to the conviction of Lieutenant Calley (of the Mylai massacre) imperial democracies have a history of absolution through judicial sanction. The appointment of the Commission of Inquiry by Prime Minister Menachem Begin was undoubtedly a tribute to the

400,000 Israeli men and women who demonstrated their outrage following the massacres. Yet, with reason, one feared its falling into the historical pattern.

The verdict of the media on the Israeli Commission of Inquiry is in. David Shipler of the *New York Times* paid tribute to its 'exacting standards of humaneness'; Trudy Rubin in the *Christian Science Monitor* called it 'a stunning moral triumph'. In an editorial, the *Los Angeles Times* declared, 'Out of the tragedy and anguish and shame has come a certain redemptive honor'; and a *New York Times* editorial heading announced the advent of a 'Jerusalem Ethic'.

A recurring theme in the media's comments has been the contrast between Israel's willingness to investigate the massacre and Lebanon's failure to punish the Phalangists who actually did the killing. It is disingenuous to blame dismembered Lebanon for not punishing the Phalange, since the Israeli government, not the Lebanese, controls the Phalangist militia.

When the accolades have ceased and the furore over the cabinet reassignment of Ariel Sharon and the resignations of the generals has stilled, sober reflection will suggest that the Commission failed in at least two important respects. It did not disclose all the facts, and it did not assign legal and political responsibility in a way that could diminish the likelihood of a repetition of the massacre.

The Commission cited the unambiguous obligations that international law imposes on an occupying power to ensure the well-being of civilians, but it went on to profess a 'lack of clarity' on the question of whether or not Israel was legally the occupier in West Beirut. The Commission then invoked, in stern phrases to be sure, the vaguer moral precepts of civilised societies and enunciated its own doctrine of 'indirect responsibility' – a doctrine which is as judicially spurious as it is morally reprehensible.

The facts disclosed by the Commission warranted a different finding:

(1) The Phalangist militia was 'ordered' into the camps by Israeli Chief-of-Staff Lieutenant General Rafael Eitan. Neither Amin Gemayel, the President of Lebanon, nor his father, Pierre Gemayel, founder of the Phalange, were aware of Eitan's order and of the subsequent movement of the militiamen into the camps.

(2) At 11am on Thursday, 16 September, Phalangist commanders met with General Amir Drori, commander of Israeli troops in Lebanon, and General Amas Yaron, divisional commander for West Beirut, to 'coordinate' the militia's entry into the camps and to arrange for a 'communications set' at an Israeli post overlooking the camps. At 6pm the Phalange entered the camps. An hour later a lieutenant who was one of Yaron's aides overheard a jocular conversation in which Elias Hokeiba, head of the Phalangist intelligence service, gave the signal to start killing civilians. The Arab-speaking Israeli lieutenant



passed on the information to Yaron, who was present at the scene.

(3) The Israeli army gave the Phalange logistical support during the forty-hour massacre that followed. Not included in the published sections of the report, is the information that the Phalange has accepted not only 'orders' from the Israelis but also salaries and training. According to denied reports, this information is included in the Commission's secret appendix.

The finding of 'indirect responsibility' is based on a single premise: Israeli soldiers did not pull the triggers and Israeli officers were not present during the killings. By this logic, the Israeli government is exonerated so long as a few of its officials resign or are transferred.

The doctrine of indirect responsibility has extremely dangerous implications. Israel already has a surrogate force in the West Bank – the Village Leagues – and it has armed and trained militias there. In southern Lebanon, Israel has armed the forces of Lebanese army defector Saad Haddad and is now organising militias, drawing recruits from among the hoodlums and thugs living in the area.

The Commission acknowledged that the Phalangists' 'hatred of the Palestinians' should have been taken into account by Israeli commanders and that the Phalange 'leaders' plans for the future of the Palestinians when said leaders would assume power' should have been seen as a warning of what the militiamen might do in the camps. But the Commission ignored Israeli enmity towards Palestinians as well as the strong current of Israeli policy seeking their expulsion and dispersal.

This attitude is crucial, because Begin and Sharon espouse the absorption of what they call 'Judea and Samaria' into Israel and also envisage the de facto retention of southern Lebanon. Sharon's plan for the invasion of Lebanon, publicly known months in advance, had among its objectives the destruction of the Palestine Liberation Organisation in Lebanon and the dispersal of the Palestinian population. Menachem Milson, in the article in *Commentary* that won him appointment as civilian administrator of the West Bank, advocated the resettlement of the Palestinians outside Lebanon. These and other such views of Israel's US apologists are the subject of Sheila Ryan's analysis (book reviews section) and stand in stark contrast to Timerman's anguished indictment of Israeli government policy in *The longest war*, reviewed by Stuart Schaar.

But it is not only the supporters of the ruling Likud coalition who are on record as seeking the dispersion and elimination of the Palestinians; other Israeli officials and even some liberal leaders of the Zionist movement has concurred with such a policy. General Ahaaron Yariv, former chief of Israel's military intelligence, has reported high level discussions on expelling 500,000-700,000 Arabs from the occupied West Bank and Gaza. During the siege of Beirut, Rita Hauser, a well-known figure in the American Jewish community and Vice-President



of the American Jewish Committee, proposed in a *New York Times* article (26 July), that the '400,000' Palestinians in Lebanon be dispersed to various countries, including the US, Canada and France. But none of these were to be repatriated to their original homes (the large majority of the Palestinian population in Lebanon comes from the Galilee area!). 'By dispersing them,' Ms Hauser wrote, 'the problem would be pierced.' Only after this has been accomplished would Ms Hauser have Israel negotiate autonomy in a 'generous spirit' at an international peace conference to which might be invited 'freely selected [sic] Palestinian representatives from the West Bank and Gaza'.

I believe it wrong to expect, as some people do, a higher sense of humanity from Jewish people. But there is reason to think that Jews would know better than most people that *dispersion* and *freely selected* leaders are not notions ever to be resurrected. Both had a crucial role in the Third Reich's blueprint for the solution of the Jewish 'problem'. *Concentration* followed the failure of *dispersion* to solve the problem; and *freely selected* representatives assisted in the final solution.

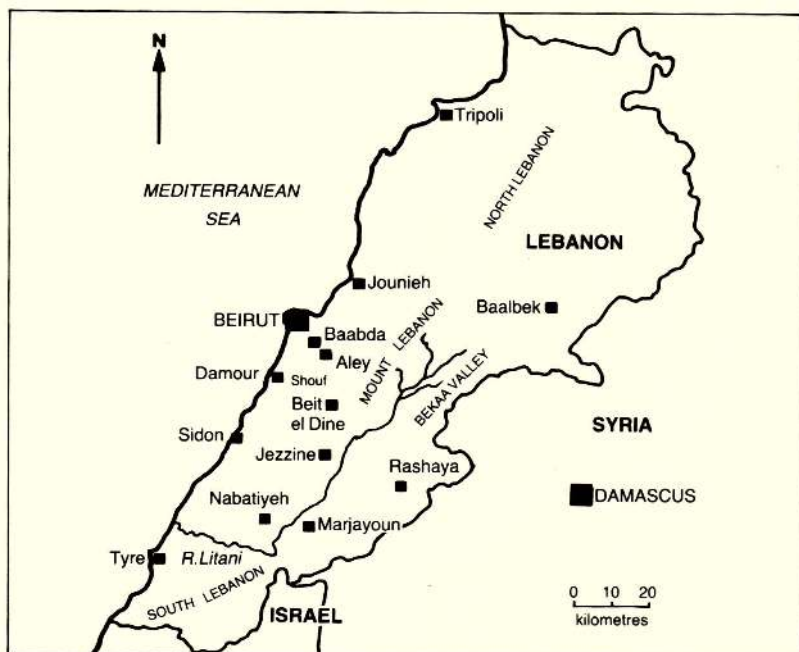
The Commission's recommendations were not legally binding; but they carried an obvious political weight and could have established the norms needed to protect the beleaguered populace in the Occupied Territories. The Commission could have found that allowing Palestinian civilians to be terrorised by Israel surrogates is a matter of direct governmental responsibility; that Israeli-paid, trained and controlled troops should be considered Israeli soldiers even if they are remunerated secretly; that officials who pay, lead and order such surrogates are guilty of the crimes that their surrogates commit. Had the Commission faced up to its responsibilities concretely, and paid less regard to public relations, its judgment might have struck hard at the Begin-Sharon agenda of expelling a people from the remnants of their homeland – the West Bank and Gaza.

In effect, the furore over the massacres of Sabra and Shatila has not served even to ensure the safety and well-being of the survivors in occupied Lebanon. An uncounted number of men between the ages of 14 and 60 have disappeared (according to the International Red Cross, 15,000 is a 'very realistic' figure), and are presumably incarcerated in concentration camps – another violation of the Geneva Convention (1949). The remaining Palestinians, many of them dependants of those in captivity, are subject to constant terrorising. Homeless again, they are barely managing to survive. The commendable effort of the McBride Commission (whose conclusions and statement on genocide and ethnocide are reproduced below) to draw world attention to the excesses of an ideologically motivated ethnocentric power has been bypassed and ignored by the US-dominated media. And nowhere has there been the slightest attempt to mount an inquiry into such acts as the systematic destruction of historical archives and libraries – for that would be to bear witness to a civilisation's descent into barbarism.

# Lebanon, the Palestinians and the PLO: a profile

## *Lebanon: physical characteristics and boundaries*

Lebanon is a small Arab country situated along the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea. It has a land area of 4,015 square miles. The



*National Emergency Committee on Lebanon* is at PO Box 1757, N.Y. 10027, USA.  
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120-mile coastal area is dotted with the historic sites of Tripoli (Trablus), Byblos (Jbail), Beirut, Sidon (Saida), and Tyre (Sour). The Mount Lebanon range rises steeply, sometimes immediately behind the coast. The fertile Bekaa (Biqā') Valley is nestled between Mount Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon, and slopes southwards into the foothills of Mount Hermon. Beyond the Anti-Lebanon is the country's eastern frontier with Syria. Beirut, the capital, is connected to Damascus, the capital of Syria, by a major highway running eastwards through Mount Lebanon and the Bekaa to the border. The Bekaa has two major cities: Zahle and Baalbek. Lebanon has three major rivers: the Litani, which rises in the north by Baalbek and crosses the country to empty into the Mediterranean by Tyre; the Orontes, in the northern Bekaa, and the Kabir, which forms part of the northern border with Syria.

### *The people and the government*

Following the First World War, Lebanon was part of the territory claimed by the French from the Ottoman Empire. In 1920, the French established a mandate over Lebanon from territory that had all been part of Syria under Ottoman rule. In addition to the district of Mount Lebanon, the main cities of the coastal area – Tyre, Sidon, Beirut and Tripoli – and the Bekaa Valley were defined as Lebanon. At the time, the decision was contested by large portions of the population.

While no official census has been taken since 1932, the Lebanese population is estimated at 3.1m. The people are of mixed ethnic origin but culturally and linguistically Arab. Lebanon is a member of the Arab League, a regional political, cultural and economic organisation.

The present system of government is defined as political confessionalism, which is a political arrangement whereby the different religious communities (confessions) are granted political representation in an attempt to provide consensus. In Lebanon there are seventeen recognised religious groups, and the distribution of posts in all state institutions and the army is carried out on a confessional basis. The larger religious communities play a bigger role in government and include five Christian communions – Maronite Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic (Melkite), Armenian Orthodox and Armenian Catholic; and three Muslim groupings – Sunni, Shi'ite and Druze. No one confession constitutes a majority.

This system is based on the Constitution of 1926 reinterpreted by the National Pact of 1943. The 1926 Constitution, written while Lebanon was still under French rule, provided for a one-house legislature, the Chamber of Deputies, and for a strong president, elected by the Chamber. The National Pact was a verbal agreement adopted in 1943 when Lebanon achieved independence. It allocates a role in government to each confession proportionate to that



confession's size as determined by the 1932 census. Under this arrangement, the presidency (the most important office) was allocated to the Maronite Catholics, the premiership to the Sunni Muslims, and the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies to the Shi'ite Muslims. Other offices were also distributed in this manner.

The National Pact also established representation in the Chamber of Deputies proportional to each confession's numbers, again according to the 1932 census, which established a nationwide ratio of 55 per cent Christian and 45 per cent Muslim. Therefore, in the Chamber of Deputies, it has been customary for there to be six Christian deputies for every five Muslim deputies. The number of deputies (now ninety nine) was always a multiple of eleven to maintain this ratio, but was allocated according to each confession's numerical strength. The Maronite Catholics, the largest confessional grouping at the time of the census, were granted 30 per cent of the seats, Sunnis 20 per cent, Shi'ite 19 per cent, Greek Orthodox 11 per cent, Greek Catholic 6 per cent, Druze 6 per cent and so on.

However, the most important understanding of the National Pact was that it attempted to provide certain guarantees for both the Christians and Muslims of Lebanon. The Christian community was not to be dominated by Muslims or by Islamic rule. In return, the Christians were not to look to the West for protection, and the Muslims of the country were not to be subjected to Maronite domination.

### *Political parties*

Lebanese politics have been dominated for a long time by certain urban and rural families, both Christian and Muslim. They have formed loose alliances and counter-alliances for the purposes of winning elections, receiving political favours and attaining political influence and office. These alliances are largely non-ideological and many still exist. However, since the 1975-76 civil war, ideology has played a more important role.

The Lebanese National Movement (LNM) is a coalition of progressive parties which has adopted a transitional programme for the transformation of Lebanon into a secular democracy. The programme calls for economic and social reforms to narrow the gap between the rich and poor. It supports the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) in its struggle for Palestinian self-determination. The parties of the LNM include members and leaders from all religious communities.

The parties of the right are grouped in the Lebanese Front. The Lebanese Front is predominantly Christian, and dominated by a few Maronite families. Although the Front was first organised as a coalition, it has been dominated both politically and militarily by the Phalangist party since 1980.

The Phalangist party was organised by Pierre Gemayel. In 1936 he

toured Hitler's Germany where he saw 'well-organised, hard-working, disciplined youth toiling to build a dynamic, well-ordered society'. He returned to found the party, named after the Phalange of Francisco Franco of Spain.

Before his assassination, Pierre's son, Bashir, had risen to a position of unquestioned leadership of the Lebanese Front after a series of military operations had been carried out against other members of the Front in July 1980 (see below, 'The 1975-76 civil war'). The Phalangist party opposes any modification in Lebanon's political system, a system which gives Maronites a preponderant role. It also opposes the PLO, and has called for the expulsion of all Palestinians from Lebanon. It has a long history of open collaboration with Israel. At the time of the 1982 invasion, its military units controlled about 20 per cent of Lebanese territory.

### *The Palestinians in Lebanon and the PLO*

As a consequence of the first Arab-Israeli war (1947-49), the Jewish state of Israel was established on nearly 80 per cent of the territory of Palestine. The rest of the country, which Israel failed to occupy, became known as the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The former territory was annexed to Trans-Jordan to become the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and the latter was administered by Egypt. Small fragments of Palestine became no-man's land and demilitarised zones which Israel later annexed.

Most of the Arab population of Palestine, two-thirds of the total population of the country at that time, were displaced and became refugees scattered throughout the Middle East and beyond.

An estimated 500,000 Palestinians live in Lebanon. A good number came as refugees from northern Galilee. They initially settled in camps and urban neighbourhoods. In the south many became small farmers, while in the urban neighbourhoods of Beirut they worked as labourers in factories. They did not receive the same salaries or guarantees as Lebanese workers. In the north they served both as a source of cheap labour and became small farmers. While most of the Palestinians are Sunni Muslims, there are a significant number of Christians from various communions.

In 1964, a large number of Palestinian personalities representing Palestinian communities throughout the diaspora convened in Jerusalem and created the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) to reorganise the Palestinian people and lead their quest for the reconstitution of Palestine. The Palestinians created a national liberation movement to mobilise their resources and to guide their struggle for usurped rights.

In order to articulate a national Palestinian political consensus, to generate a representative national leadership and to institute



constitutional channels of decision-making, the PLO evolved democratic political structures and procedures. It created the Palestine National Council (PNC) to serve as a Palestinian parliament in exile. The PNC, the highest policy-making body in the PLO, is composed of representatives of all sectors of these communities, such as women, students, workers, writers and others. It gives proportional representation to all Palestinian political groupings as well as independents to ensure an accurate reflection of prevailing Palestinian opinion. The PNC periodically elects an Executive Committee which functions as the PLO's executive branch (or cabinet), responsible for the implementation of PNC-approved policy, and the representation of the Palestinian people regionally and internationally. The Executive Committee, presently chaired by Yasser Arafat, is accountable to the PNC in the manner of representative parliamentary democracies. A larger Central Council is also elected by the PNC to formulate policy guidelines on behalf of the PNC when it is not in session.

The PLO also developed and supported a cluster of popular organisations to ensure the effective articulation of interests by the various sectors of the Palestinian community, and to organise and channel needed socio-economic services to that community. They include Palestinian trade unions, student and women's associations, societies for Palestinian writers and journalists, artists, doctors, engineers, and other professional groups. In brief, the PLO became not a Palestinian organisation, but the Palestinian people organised. Today, the PLO also embraces eight parties and movements.

The PLO, as all other national liberation movements, also established a military structure, the Palestine Liberation Army, to undertake the armed struggle required for the recovery of Palestinian national rights. From the PLO's perspective, by ruling out the possibility of negotiating with the Palestinians, Israel had necessarily made military struggle an essential component of the Palestinian movement. Although an initial small-scale border raid against Israel occurred in 1965, the 1967 war was the catalyst that brought recruits – primarily from the refugee camps of Jordan and Lebanon and from inside the newly occupied territories – to the various Palestinian resistance organisations. In the mid-1970s, the PLO renounced 'external operations' (military actions taking place outside Israel/Palestine), but continued cross-border attacks and internal resistance within the occupied territories.

During the 1960s, the Palestinian movement in Lebanon faced repression from both the Lebanese army and the 'Deuxième Bureau', the Lebanese secret police. This led to a crisis which was finally dealt with in November 1969, when President Nasser of Egypt mediated the Cairo Agreement. It put an end to repeated clashes between the Lebanese army and the Palestinian guerrillas operating from Lebanese

soil. The Cairo Agreement legitimised the Palestinian armed presence in Lebanon but restricted it to certain localities.

In later years, several other agreements were concluded in response to the recurrent tension between the Lebanese government and the PLO. All reaffirmed the validity of the Cairo Agreement, but circumscribed some of its clauses. The Melkart Agreement of May 1973 differed from the Cairo Agreement by its explicit suspension of guerrilla operations across the border against Israel. It put an end to bloody clashes between the Lebanese army and PLO units in the wake of an Israeli commando raid in the heart of Beirut in which three top PLO leaders were assassinated. At the Riyadh Summit of October 1976, which ended the civil war in Lebanon, all provisions of the Cairo Agreement were affirmed. The Shtaura Accord of July 1977 set a new timetable for the implementation of the Cairo Agreement in light of the Riyadh Summit. In more recent years, as tension and social strife resumed in many parts of the country, other accords were reached between the PLO and the Lebanese government – or with the LNM, where the latter was the effective power. These accords limited the Palestinian armed presence in certain towns and villages.

Within the Palestinian community, the PLO created a vast network of social structures, like the Palestine Red Crescent Society, and Sam-ed, the Palestinian industrial establishment. Through these and other institutions, the PLO built schools and kindergartens, hospitals and clinics, factories and publishing houses. It provided the Palestinian people with health insurance, student scholarships, vocational training and welfare assistance to needy families. It even inaugurated a programme of technical assistance to less developed nations through a number of model farms in several African countries, staffed and operated by Palestinian technicians and funded by the PLO.

Since the PLO had a greater measure of freedom of access to the Palestinian community in Lebanon, the bulk of its socio-economic institutions and services existed in Lebanon. In Beirut and south Lebanon alone, the Palestine Red Crescent operated nine hospitals of from 30-350 beds, and eight clinics. At the time of the Israeli invasion, an additional 300-bed hospital was under construction in Sidon. During 1980, Red Crescent hospitals in Lebanon admitted 18,976 patients, both Palestinians and Lebanese. It is these kinds of institutions that Israel essentially had in mind when it said that the purpose of its invasion of Lebanon was to destroy not only the PLO military establishment, but also the PLO 'infrastructure'.

#### *The 1975-76 civil war*

In the 1960s and early 1970s the state institutions were increasingly unable to respond to the needs of the poorer segments of Lebanese society, both rural and urban. The contrived equilibrium of the



National Pact was challenged by the rise of strong new social forces, generally represented by the parties of the LNM. The National Pact was increasingly seen as preserving a semi-feudal system of government benefiting a few wealthy families.

The movement for Palestinian national self-determination, led by the PLO, had been gaining support since the mid-1960s. Following the 1970 civil war in Jordan, the PLO political and military leadership was centralised in Lebanon. The longstanding antagonism of the rightist parties, coupled with their announced desire to expel all Palestinians from Lebanon, created conditions of natural alliance between the LNM and the PLO. This was perceived by the parties of the right as Palestinian interference in Lebanese internal affairs.

Social unrest increased in the months preceding the start of the civil war. First, Israel stepped up military pressure against Lebanese border villages. This included razing the town of Kfar Shuba with a population of 5,000 in January 1975. Secondly, economic dislocations prompted marches, demonstrations and a general strike in the southern port city of Sidon in February and March 1975. Demonstrations by small tobacco farmers and small fishermen were put down by the Lebanese army. The popular Mayor of Sidon, Maarouf Saad, who had supported the striking fishermen, was killed by the Lebanese army.

The incident, which is generally regarded as the event which ignited the civil war, took place on 13 April. Phalangist militiamen ambushed a bus carrying Palestinians back to the camp at Tel al-Zaatar. All of the passengers were killed.

These latter two events illustrate the main features of the civil war. The LNM was emphasising the social origins of the struggle and the need for social and political reform. The Phalangist party, on the other hand, was pushing the conflict as a confessional clash between Christians and Muslims, and as a national clash between Lebanese and Palestinians.

During the first two years of the civil war, the LNM succeeded in dominating the political and military scene in the country. Its programme for transition to a secular state was gaining support from both Christians and Muslims.

The PLO attempted to maintain a position of official neutrality during the early stages of the fighting. But it found itself increasingly drawn into the fighting as the need arose to protect itself from attack.

In 1976 the Syrian army entered Lebanon. Israel had agreed on the Syrian presence in Lebanon but stipulated a 'red line' near Nabatiyeh. If Syrian troops went below this line, Israel announced it would consider this as an act of aggression against Israel. Major clashes took place between the Syrian army and the LNM and PLO fighters. During these clashes, the Phalangists succeeded in besieging the Palestinian refugee camp of Tel al-Zaatar. They massacred many, then bulldozed the camp.

The civil war formally ended in mid October 1976 as a result of a cease-fire arranged by an Arab mini-summit called by Saudi Arabia in Riyadh. The cease-fire imposed by the Riyadh summit did not remove the root causes of general hostilities; violent clashes became routine throughout the country.

The leader of the LNM, Kamal Jumblatt, was assassinated in March 1977, and the LNM found itself under severe political attack as the Phalangists began an offensive aimed at controlling the state apparatus. Also in 1977, the Syrian-Phalangist alliance broke down and the Phalangists began their direct alliance with Israel.

In March 1978, the Israeli army entered southern Lebanon. It created a six-mile zone on the Lebanese border which it turned over to Major Saad Haddad, a renegade Lebanese army officer. Israeli-Phalangist cooperation increased as Israel gave the Phalange militia training and aid worth \$100m.

In 1979, the Phalangists began attempts to dominate the Maronite community. They attacked and massacred Tony Franjeh, his wife and young daughter. Tony was the son of Suleiman Franjeh, the leader of the Maronites of the north. In 1980, the Phalangists massacred some 400 members of the militia of their allies, the National Liberal Party. The National Liberal Party, with its militia, the 'Tigers', is led by former President Camille Chamoun. The 'Tigers' were dissolved shortly after this attack.

Sporadic fighting continued with the Syrians maintaining a stand-off. In July 1981, after Israeli attacks in the south and on West Beirut, a cease-fire was agreed. This was maintained by the PLO, despite Israeli provocation, until May 1982, when there was some retaliation against heavy Israeli bombing on the outskirts of Beirut and Damour. On 4 June 1982, the massive Israeli invasion of the Lebanon began with the bombardment of Beirut and points in the south, followed, two days later, by the rapid advance of Israeli troops across the frontier up to Beirut, which was reached by 10 June.



# Lebanon and the Palestinians: chronology

1943

Lebanese independence. The 'National Pact' formalises a political system based on sectarian division of power and Maronite predominance.

1948

The establishment of the state of Israel. As a result, nearly three-quarters of a million Palestinians become refugees, 120,000 of whom enter Lebanon from the Galilee.

1958

First major breakdown of the confessional system of the National Pact. Lebanese civil war over the apportionment of political power. US Marines land in Beirut to support the government of Camille Chamoun.

1964

The Palestine Liberation Organisation is formed in Jerusalem at the initiation of the Arab League. Ahmad Shukairy is named chairman.

1967

Israeli occupation of West Bank, Gaza, Golan Heights and Sinai following June War. In the aftermath of the war, Israeli shelling of South begins; it continues into the summer of 1982.

1969

*February:* Yasser Arafat replaces Shukairy as chairman of the PLO. The PLO adopts the goal of a 'democratic secular state' in all of occupied Palestine.

*November:* Cairo Agreement. The Lebanese government and the PLO formalise the relationship between Lebanon and the PLO. The Palestinians undertake to respect Lebanese sovereignty and security while the PLO takes charge of the refugee camps and gains recognition of the right of commandos to pass from Lebanon into Israel.

1970

*September:* The Jordanian army attacks Palestinians and expels PLO officials from Jordan. Shelling of Palestinian neighbourhoods and refugee camps results in major casualties. Most PLO forces move to Lebanon.

1973

*April:* Israeli commandos attack Beirut and kill three Palestinian

leaders in their homes. Inability of Lebanese forces to react precipitates cabinet crisis. Period of tension leads to new Lebanese-Palestinian agreement, basically a reaffirmation of the Cairo Agreement.

*October:* October War. Aftermath of war in Lebanon includes an economic crisis as result of rise in oil prices.

1974

At its twelfth session, the Palestine National Congress adopts the 'Ten Point Programme', which includes readiness to 'establish the independent combatant national authority for the people over every part of Palestinian territory that is liberated'.

1975

Economic crisis deepens in Lebanon.

*February:* Fisherman's strike in Sidon is bloodily repressed by the Lebanese army; unrest spreads to Beirut.

*April:* Phalangists ambush a bus filled with Palestinians and trigger a conflict between the Phalange and the PLO which soon widens into conflict between Lebanese militias of the right, primarily Maronite, and the Left and Muslim alliance.

*August:* Civil war rages. The various Left and Muslim groups join formally in the Lebanese National Movement. They have been gaining ascendancy over the rightist forces.

1976

*January:* Syrian forces enter Lebanon in a move to contain the Lebanese National Movement and their Palestinian allies. Syria initially supports the Phalange and their allies.

*June-August:* Siege of Tel al-Zaatar refugee camp by the Phalange and their allies; ends with slaughter of Palestinians.

*October:* Riyadh and Cairo summits order cease-fire in Lebanon. Inter-Arab force formed to implement agreements.

1977

*March:* The Palestine National Council passes resolutions citing the goal of establishing an 'independent national state', and calling for 'relationship and coordination with the Jewish democratic and progressive forces inside and outside the occupied homeland, in the struggle against Zionism ...'

*July:* Shtaura Accord. The Lebanese government, the PLO and Syria affirm the Cairo Agreement.

1978

*March 15:* Israeli invasion of Lebanon up to Litani River in stated reprisal for PLO commando attack on 11 March. Israel withdraws, but retains a 'buffer' area in Lebanon under the putative command of



former Lebanese Major Saad Haddad. UN Security Council stations UNIFIL troops north of Haddad enclave.

1979

*March:* Camp David Treaty between Egypt and Israel signed in Washington, excluding the PLO from the peace process. PLO political and military infrastructure reinforced. Israeli response to Camp David involves increased attacks on villages in southern Lebanon and greater backing for Christian militia of Major Saad Haddad in the South.

1981

*July:* Israeli jets bomb Beirut: 300 killed and 800 wounded. Habib mission in response arranges cease-fire with Israel and the PLO which takes effect on 24 July.

1982

*April:* Israeli soldier killed by a land-mine in area of Lebanon controlled by Haddad: Israeli bombardment of Lebanon in retaliation breaks cease-fire.

*May 9:* Israel bombs and strafes villages along the Lebanese coast. PLO fires artillery and rockets into northern Israel in retaliation.

*June 3:* Israel's ambassador to the United Kingdom, Shlomo Argov, is shot by unknown 'Arab' assailants. PLO denies any involvement. London police sources confirm this with the information that the attack had been carried out by the Abu Nidal splinter group, and that in fact their 'hit list' included PLO representatives.

*June 4:* Massive Israeli invasion of Lebanon begins.

*mid-July:* More than 100,000 Israeli troops in Lebanon; Beirut under siege. In the South, the Israelis stock supplies and consider contingency plans to remain for several months. Administratively, they put into place structures which parallel their administrative apparatus on the occupied West Bank. The Israeli Defence Forces continue to bomb Beirut during the month of August.

*August 21:* The PLO begins evacuation of Beirut under a plan announced on 18 August that includes implicit US guarantees for the safety of Palestinian civilians left behind in the camps. In addition, the US expresses its assurances in letters and memoranda from US envoy Philip C. Habib to Prime Minister Wazzan, who is acting as intermediary between the US and the PLO.

*August 23:* Members of the Lebanese parliament meet in a military school in Fayadieh, an eastern suburb of Beirut dominated by the Israeli forces, and elect Bashir Gemayel, leader of the Phalangist militia, as the new president of Lebanon. The election is boycotted by the main Muslim and progressive forces.

*September 1:* Reagan peace initiative. President Reagan announces a new peace plan which includes self-rule for Palestinians linked to Jordan, a freeze on settlements in the West Bank and an undivided Jerusalem. The Israeli cabinet immediately rejects the initiative and in subsequent weeks pushes ahead with further settlement of the occupied territories. This plan excludes the possibility of an independent Palestinian state.

*September 2:* Private meeting between Gemayel and Begin. Begin proposes comprehensive Lebanese-Israeli peace treaty; the restoration of Major Haddad to the Lebanese army with control over the South. Gemayel refuses.

*September 7:* Fez Summit. The Arab League meets and adopts a peace plan which includes the creation of a Palestinian state, calling on the United Nations to guarantee peace to all states in the region.

*September 11:* Eight hundred US troops, part of the multinational peace-keeping forces in Lebanon, leave Beirut fourteen days ahead of schedule, despite Lebanese government appeals to remain. The Italian and French components of the forces soon follow.

*September 15:* President-elect Gemayel is assassinated when an explosive device is detonated at his party headquarters. No group claims responsibility. Following the assassination, the Israeli army moves into Beirut and occupies the western section, former stronghold of the PLO and progressive Lebanese forces. Thousands of Palestinians and Lebanese are detained as a result of the occupation.

*September 16:* An Israeli army spokesman announces: 'The IDF [Israeli Defence Forces] is in control of all key points in Beirut. Refugee camps harbouring terrorist concentrations remain encircled and closed' (*New York Times*, 26 September, 1982). On the same morning, the massacres in Sabra and Shatila refugee camps begin. Until Saturday, 18 September, a group of Lebanese rightist militiamen pass through Israeli lines and enter the refugee camps and systematically massacre Palestinian men, women and children. Mass graves are dug; bulldozers are brought into the camps in an attempt to bury some of the victims beneath the rubble; truckloads of people are taken out of the camps and their fate remains unknown. Numbers of the victims may never be known. Estimates to date run as high as 2,000.

*September 21:* Amin Gemayel is elected president of Lebanon with almost unanimous support as he pledges to unify the country and clear it of all foreign troops.

*September 23:* The multinational troops begin to return to Lebanon. US troops are delayed as the US demands complete Israeli withdrawal from Beirut as a condition for its cooperation.

*September 25:* Press reports that 400,000 Israelis demonstrate against



the Beirut massacres. They demand an official investigation which Begin has refused to call.

*October 4:* Fighting breaks out in Tripoli between pro and anti-Syrian forces resulting in twenty-four deaths.

*October 5:* The Lebanese army begins disarming the few armed groups left in West Beirut. It detains approximately 1,400 persons. The Lebanese forces in East Beirut announce that they will not hand over their weapons should the army attempt to do the same in that part of the city.

*October 14:* Fighting breaks out in the Shouf mountain area, south-east of Beirut, between Druze inhabitants and Christian Phalangists. The armed clashes spread into the Mount Lebanon area and persist, despite cease-fires, into the coming months. On 14 November, Prime Minister Wazzan accuses Israel, which controls the area, of instigating the strife.

*October 18:* President Gemayel addresses the UN and demands that Israeli troops leave Lebanon; endorses Palestinian self-determination; and requests that UNIFIL forces remain in the South. The UN accepts his request. Israel expresses dismay and anger over Gemayel's speech.

*October 20:* The Israeli Commission of Inquiry into the Beirut massacres is finally appointed by Begin and begins its investigations. The commission completes the first phase of its work in early December.

*October 28:* US envoy Draper begins efforts to set up negotiations between the Lebanese and Israeli governments.

*November 26:* The Palestinian Central Council meets in Damascus and denounces the 'self-rule' provisions of the Reagan initiative, claiming that it does not satisfy the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people.

*January 2:* Lebanese-Israeli talks begin.

## The 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon: the casualties

*Editor's note: An accurate accounting of the Palestinian and Lebanese casualties is impossible. Lebanese police estimates are, at best, estimates. Because of the dangers and the abdication of authority by the Lebanese government in the war zones, the police force was conspicuous by its absence. The figures given here should be contrasted with those given by Mr Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the PLO Executive Committee, at the Arab Summit conference in September 1982. These are: 49,600 Palestinian and Lebanese civilians killed and wounded; 5,300 fighters killed and wounded; 6,000 missing.*

In early September, *An Nahar*, an independent Beirut newspaper, presented findings of a detailed survey of police and hospital records it had conducted, covering the period 6 June-31 August.<sup>1</sup> These figures were later supplemented with information gathered in subsequent months by a group of Lebanese officials working on a casualty report for the Lebanese government. The Associated Press was told that this group, which included members of the Beirut police, the national police, the internal security forces and military intelligence, cross-checked the death tolls with reports from municipal governments, hospitals, local police stations and *mukhtars* (local officials who report such things as deaths and inheritances).<sup>2</sup> These figures, which were announced in early December 1982, appear below.

*An Nahar*, in early September, warned that the estimates were likely to be on the conservative side, not accounting for bodies buried in the rubble or those buried privately by families. In addition, it noted that injury totals only include those hospitalised, not those treated and released.<sup>3</sup> Reactions to these figures have included: Israeli charges that the figures are too high, particularly for the South, where they claimed only 1,331 were killed;<sup>4</sup> many officials in Beirut, including those of the International Committee of the Red Cross, claiming that it is virtually 'impossible' to number the dead correctly;<sup>5</sup> and at least one relief official questioning the military/civilian ratio for those killed in the South, commenting that his organisation had found in its studies that about 80 per cent were civilian and only 20 per cent military deaths in the South.<sup>6</sup>



### Casualty estimates given by the Lebanese 'Police Group'

Deaths: 19,085

in the South: 7,571

in Beirut: 6,775

other areas: 4,729

Wounded: 30,302

### Comparisons

#### Military deaths

Beirut: 16%

by nationality: Lebanese 45.6%

Palestinian 37.2%

Syrian 10.0%

others 7.1%

the South: 77%

#### Civilian deaths

Beirut: 84%

¼ under 15 yrs

⅓ over 50 yrs

the South: 23%

These figures do not include the casualties resulting from the massacres at Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Beirut during September. Estimates of the death toll run from 800 (Israeli figures) to 3,500, as reported by the Israeli journalist, Amnon Kapeliouk, after he carried out an independent investigation of the massacres.

### Israeli casualties

On 11 October, 1982 the Israeli military command announced casualty figures for the period 5 June to 10 October, 1982.<sup>7</sup>

Deaths: 368

Breakdown by rank: Major General 1

Colonel 1

Lieutenant Colonels 2

Majors 19

Captains 28

Lieutenants 46

Sergeants 132

Corporals 90

Privates 49

Wounded: 2,383

These figures do not include deaths beyond 10 October, including 75 military personnel killed as a result of the explosion at the military governor's headquarters in Tyre on 11 November 1982. On 14 January 1983, the London *Times* reported total Israeli casualties since the war began to stand at 455 dead and 2,460 wounded.

In assessing Israeli casualties, official statistics showing the number of cases of Israeli soldiers fighting in Lebanon who have suffered psychiatric illness, as reported in an international symposium on psychological stress sponsored by Tel Aviv University, are relevant, particularly since they are so high.<sup>8</sup> Six hundred cases were reported, comprising 23 per cent of all those wounded. During the 1973 war, only 12.5 per cent of Israeli soldiers wounded in the war suffered mental injury. Christopher Walker, the London *Times* correspondent who first reported the figures, writes, 'Unofficially, Israelis attribute the trend to the unconventional type of warfare which led to repeated attacks against civilian targets. They also point out that many of the soldiers at the front were opposed to the long-term aims of what is often described here as "Arik Sharon's war".'<sup>9</sup>

## References

- 1 *Washington Post* (3 September, 1982).
- 2 *Washington Post* (2 December, 1982).
- 3 *Washington Post* (3 September, 1982).
- 4 *Washington Post* (2 December, 1982). Early on in the invasion, Israel took the offensive in what became a 'war of numbers' waged over casualty figures, persistently countering estimates of dead and wounded given by Lebanese sources, international relief agencies and eye-witnesses, see Judith Tucker, 'The war of numbers', *Middle East Research and Information Project* (Vol. 108/109, September-October 1982).
- 5 *New York Times* (2 September, 1982).
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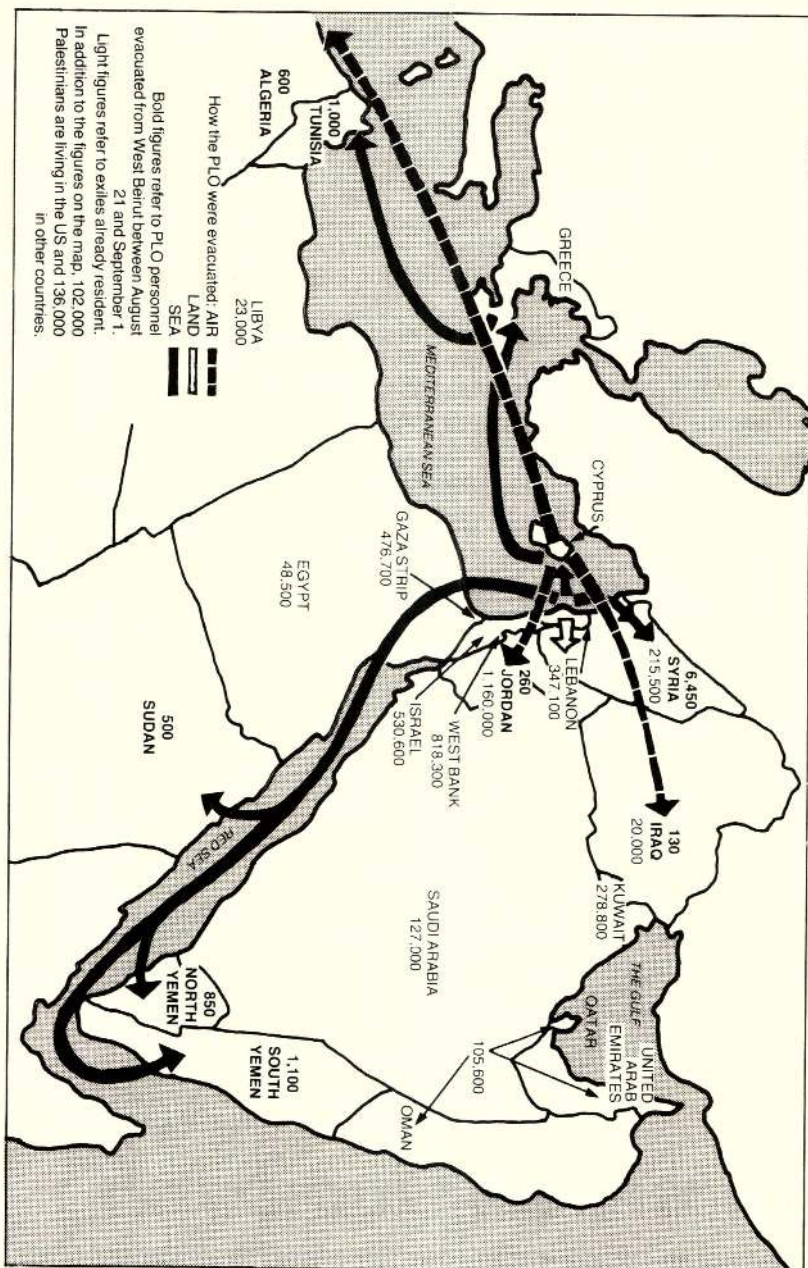
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## Evacuation of the PLO





# The meaning of Beirut, 1982

## I

On 6 June 1982 Israel formally launched its invasion of Lebanon. In fact, this war had already begun on 4-5 June with massive air raids on a number of Palestinian and Lebanese cities and settlements as well as on specifically military targets. While the systematic joint military operations of the Israeli army, navy and air forces were formally halted with the cease-fire of 12 August, the reality is different. The Israeli army continues to be deployed in Lebanon and is currently engaged in different forms of warfare with the Palestinian and Lebanese resistance. But even if we were to accept that the war ended on 12-13 August 1982, this would still be Israel's longest war, and may yet turn out to be its costliest in moral, political and economic terms.

At first this may seem paradoxical. For it is quite clear that the adversaries in this war, Israel and its Palestinian and Lebanese nationalist opponents, were unequal in all respects. Israel is a society of close to four million people, with a national economy and tightly organised structure; it could mobilise half a million men and women into its wars. (More than 100,000 soldiers were actively pressed into its invasion of Lebanon.) It has a vast and sophisticated air force, entirely supplied by the United States, which is viewed by specialists as the strongest in the entire Middle East. And for the first time in the history of its attacks on the Arab States, Israel used its naval units, in complete

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coordination with its land and air forces, largely to shell civilian targets.

Israel's war was principally against the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), and its constituency in Lebanon, and the Lebanese National Movement (LNM). While the basic society which underlies the PLO can be identified with relative ease, that of the LNM is more problematic. The Palestinian community in Lebanon rarely exceeded 450,000, the vast majority of whom were those who were expelled from Palestine in 1948 and their descendants. To these were added a few thousand who moved to Lebanon after their expulsion from Jordan in 1970-71. But no comparable figures can be given of the LNM's basic constituency. For Lebanon has been subjected for many years to processes of national fragmentation culminating in the civil war of 1975-76. The impact of this fragmentation became evident in the course of Israel's invasion of Lebanon. During the war, it was fairly simple to identify the three broad categories of the Lebanese response: there were the nationalists affiliated with the LNM who were one of Israel's major targets; there were the accommodationists, clearly identified with the Lebanese government and state, who responded fairly positively to Israel's pressure; and there were the quislings and collaborationists, typified by Major Saad Haddad with his Israeli supplied and controlled militias, and the Phalangists who actively assisted the Israeli war machine as it mutilated Lebanon. While the strength of each grouping can be easily identified, how effectively each made use of its authority differed considerably. The LNM had its basic strength in Beirut and the south. Fractious, lacking in effective social, political and economic organisation and somewhat diffuse, it was never able to mobilise as effectively as the Palestinian movement (or, indeed, their Phalangist opponents). The significance of this discrepancy became apparent during the mounting of the Palestinian/Lebanese defence against Israel's invading army. No more than 50,000 militants, modestly equipped (their most advanced weapon was the T34 tank) and without an air force or cover against Israel's air power, could be mobilised. While Israel could, if need be, call upon its reserves, the Palestinian/Lebanese defenders had no reserves to draw upon.

The political context of Israel's invasion was equally unfavourable to the Palestinian/Lebanese movements. Israel reaped the harvest of its peace settlement with Egypt, in making it incumbent upon the latter to suppress all manifestations of public support for the Palestinians and Lebanese. Jordan had been immobilised for so long that its support too was effectively curtailed. Iraq was totally engaged in its conflict with Iran. Only Syria could have blunted Israel's attacks: it had a 'deterrent force' in Lebanon numbering more than 30,000 soldiers; its territory was occupied by Israel; it has been a long-time adversary of Zionism and Israel; and it was a pillar of the 'rejection' front. But as



soon as the invasion of Lebanon began, it became evident that neither Syria nor its 'deterrent force' would perform its historic role. A combination of reassuring signals from Israel and the US and Syria's own calculation of the costs of a confrontation in Lebanon produced the militant posture of a rapidly disengaging army.

Rational military and political calculations very early suggested that the battle would be almost over the moment it began. The ease with which Israel occupied and overran the south of Lebanon suggested that defending Beirut was an impossible task; it could only be a matter of days before the Israeli army would overwhelm the city's Palestinian/Lebanese defenders. And although those days stretched ultimately to over two months, the leadership of the Joint Forces knew by the third week of June that the fall of Beirut was inevitable. That realisation produced, on 23 June, the first Palestinian proposal for a permanent and secure cease-fire, disengagement and commitment to withdraw the forces of the PLO from Beirut. Israel – and the US – refused the Palestinian offer for a number of complex reasons. Their refusal made it possible for the Palestinians/Lebanese to mount their successful defence of the city until the conditions were once more ripe for Israel and the US to accept essentially a similar offer – two months later, and after enormous casualties and damage to the city.

A decisive phase in the Palestinian-Zionist and in the Arab-Israeli conflict came to an end in the ten days between 21 August and 1 September 1982. During those ten days, and in pursuance of the Agreement sponsored by Ambassador Philip Habib on behalf of the US, close to 15,000 Palestinian militants, leaders of the PLO and its functionaries in Lebanon withdrew from the city and dispersed into prearranged locations in the Arab States. The new phase is yet to unfold, our concern now is to assess the events which culminated in the Palestinian exodus from Beirut, and the Israeli occupation of Lebanon. It may turn out to be as significant in shaping Palestinian and Arab history as the events of 1948.

## II

That Israel's war against the Palestinians in Lebanon was its longest and perhaps costliest – despite the enormous asymmetry in sheer power – should have come as no surprise to the analysts of Palestinian-Israeli encounters. The conflict between these adversaries is historic, prolonged and seemingly absolute. Sometimes it has been viewed by the leadership of the two communities as a zero-sum relationship. Only the decisive and final defeat of one can give the needed security for the other. This, of course, has not been true for the Arab States' confrontation with Israel. Their conflict, regardless of its many dimensions, remains derivative, secondary and thus more easily amenable to resolution.

Palestinians have confronted, unsuccessfully, the Zionist settlers of Palestine ever since the onset of Zionist settlement in the nineteenth century. The history of Palestine, once it was brought under a British Mandate committed to transforming it into a Jewish National Home, was a history of perennial revolts and uprisings by Palestinian Arabs intended to frustrate the founding of Israel. Their efforts lasted until 1948 when they suffered their first decisive defeat and the Palestinian polity was destroyed. The history of the Palestinian people subsequent to their exodus from Palestine is a chequered history; for all practical purposes, they did not reappear on the scene as an active political/militant force in search of its political self-fulfilment until 1967.

That political oblivion, from 1948 to 1967, seemed to validate Israel's claim that its conflict was with the Arabs rather than with the Palestinians. For Zionists, it will be recalled, had maintained that Palestine was a land without a people and, even when confronted with the Palestinians, denied their presence by denuding them of their national identity; their conflict (and that of Israel) was with the Arabs, therefore, and it was with them that they would negotiate the disposition of Palestine. Israel's intense hostility to the PLO is simply an index of its rejection of the Palestinian presence in the land and its claims on those lands.

The exodus from Palestine and the political oblivion into which the Palestinians were cast meant that, for a period, there was no direct political and militant contact between the Palestinians and their Israeli adversary. Such contact as there was, was only through an Arab intermediary. Not until after 1967 was there direct confrontation between the two primary adversaries. The first decisive encounter in this new phase was the battle of Karameh, in March 1968, when the Israeli army, for the first time since 1948, faced a distinct Palestinian national force led by Fatah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The battle of Karameh was understood by the world, as well as by the primary antagonists, as a resumption of the long-dormant Palestinian-Israeli confrontation over the destiny of Palestine. Other encounters were to follow, sometimes haphazardly, sometimes systematically, sometimes under the shadow of the wars between one or more of the Arab states and Israel – as in the war of attrition in 1969-70 and the 1973 war. And a more dramatic illustration of hostilities between the two primary adversaries was to be provided by Israel's invasion of South Lebanon in March 1978, when it tried, unsuccessfully, to destroy the Palestinian capability to engage the Israeli army.

But the apogee of that confrontation between the two societies is represented in the battle for Beirut; for there the two opponents were essentially alone in a battle that would shape the destiny of the Palestinian-Zionist struggle for years to come. Its fierceness was in part



due to a correct recognition of its significance. It indicated, too, how far the Palestinian community in Lebanon had recovered from the traumatic events of 1948 and their aftermath, and had defeated Israel's objective of removing them as a political force in determining the destiny of Palestine. It is not accidental that President Reagan announced his initiative for peace – what came to be known as the Reagan plan – on 1 September 1982, precisely when Chairman Yasser Arafat was sailing on a Greek liner to an unknown Palestinian future. There can be little doubt that Reagan, along with the Israelis, arrived at the conclusion that the Palestinian endeavour of the past fifteen years had come to a turning-point and the time to effect the politicicide of the Palestinians was at hand. Hence President Reagan's plan explicitly ruled out the possibility of a Palestinian state under any circumstances and called upon Jordan to assume the role of negotiator with Israel over the destiny of Palestine and the Palestinians.

Palestinian strategies of confronting Israel by means of a war of national liberation, not merely in the military but also in the political and diplomatic arenas, and of wresting from the Arab States the initiative in mobilising, organising and determining the destiny of Palestine and the Palestinian people, had shown remarkable success over the past fifteen years and generated a unique international consensus of support for Palestinian rights. And it was that very success that drew Israel to Beirut; the ensuing battle brought an end to this phase of the Palestinian-Zionist encounter. Fateful as the outcome was in the end, from our standpoint, even more fateful for the resolution of the Palestinian struggle was Israel's success in severing the growing contact – positive and negative – between the two primary antagonists. Israel had succeeded once more in effecting a chasm that will take some time to bridge.

### III

The Palestinian community in Lebanon, whose destruction was a principal objective of the war, symbolised a significant Palestinian achievement and experience in exile. That community had lived in Lebanon since 1948; it had endured endless hardships so eloquently portrayed in Fawaz Turki's *The Disinherited: a diary of Palestinian exile*, as well as in a host of other works. Its control by the Lebanese security apparatus, its social and economic oppression and its presence in a polity riven by internal schisms contributed significantly to its deep sense of alienation, and the retention of its specifically Palestinian identity. The inability or unwillingness of the Lebanese social, political and economic system to integrate that community meaningfully deepened further its commitment to national liberation. And this in turn was strengthened and augmented by the arrival of more

Palestinian militants, particularly after 1969-71. It was during these critical years that the Palestinian community in Lebanon was able to free itself from the shackles of the Lebanese security apparatus, was able to organise its affairs, particularly in the Palestinian settlements (euphemistically referred to as refugee camps) and to initiate programmes of social, economic and cultural action that would sustain and develop it. The eventual appearance of the offices of the PLO in Beirut crowned that community's struggle for identity and autonomy and provided it with both substantive and symbolic leadership.

Through the multiple and diverse activities of the PLO, social, economic, medical, educational, cultural and political as well as military institutions were carefully nurtured. The PLO's political achievements were epitomised by institutions such as: Samed economic enterprises, that provided work and on-job training for over 5,000 Palestinians (and Lebanese poor); the Palestine Red Crescent Society's medical and public health facilities, which provided free medical care to Palestinians and Lebanese alike; music, literary and cultural groups; schools and vocational institutes; and communication centres, ranging from the Palestine Research Centre to the Voice of Palestine broadcasting network.

Clearly, the Palestinian community in Lebanon had overcome the effects of the traumatic exodus of 1948. It had re-established a national identity threatened by Israeli absorption of Palestine, on the one hand, and weakened by the assimilationist thrust of the Arab states, on the other, and had set up the infrastructure necessary for the continuity and viability of the Palestinian struggle. Nowhere in the world of 1982 could the Palestinian hoist the Palestinian flag, or sing the Palestinian national anthem, or devise a Palestinian curriculum for the training and socialising of the young, or patronise Palestinian art and music and literature, without being threatened or controlled by some state security apparatus. Only in Lebanon was the Palestinian community able to give full expression to its identity without fear of the state. That freedom of thought and action contributed immeasurably to the emergence of a truly liberated community, fully conscious of its identity and prepared to act and shape the future on that basis. In one sense, therefore, the Palestinians in Lebanon had succeeded in creating a Palestinian society in exile, bonded by its past and historic memories, but fully committed to bring about a future consonant with its values and aspirations. The Palestinian society that was destroyed by Israel in 1948 and the one that endures under Israeli military control in the West Bank and Gaza, as well as that which exists on the margin of Arab society and culture, was in the process of being rebuilt in Lebanon. It was that society that became the central focus of the Palestinians everywhere in the world. To be a Palestinian in the full sense of the term, one had to look to, visit and interact with the Palestinians in



Lebanon; that community was the surrogate of both Palestine and Palestinian nationhood.

Two additional factors reinforced the significance of the Palestinian experience in Lebanon. The first is obviously the political experimentation that took place on Lebanese soil. It will be readily noted that all major Palestinian groups, of which the PLO is constituted, were present in Lebanon. One crucial objective of the Palestinian movement has been the establishment of a democratic society in Palestine. That was not a utopia, a dream to be realised in the future. Palestinians understood, as the movements competed actively for the loyalty and support of the Palestinian people, that the intended democratic politics must be practised *in situ*. Each Palestinian settlement in the Lebanon was controlled by a committee that was elected by the residents of that area, and investigators were often struck by the fact that such committees represented a whole variety of political tendencies. The fact that Palestinian professional, trade and mass organisations were headquartered in Lebanon meant also that their leadership assumed the mantle as a result of competitive party politics. The entire Palestinian leadership was accountable to its different constituencies – and its accessibility helped considerably in the process of policy formation. It could be said without exaggeration that the Palestinians in Lebanon enjoyed a far higher degree of political participation than in any other Arab political system.

The Palestinian organised presence in Lebanon became both an important focus of attention and an inspiration for the Palestinians under occupation. And since the principal objective of the Palestinian movement was the liberation of Palestine, their situation was of primary interest and concern to the Palestinian leadership. Moral, political and material support to the beleaguered Palestinians under occupation was provided – in Palestine, in the region and in the world. A disproportionate part of that support came from Lebanon and was channelled through the Palestinian leadership there.

In an important sense one can therefore speak of a Palestinian renaissance in Lebanon: a renaissance that brought about a vibrant polity in exile, led by a national leadership that articulated and pressed the struggle of the dispersed and occupied Palestinian people, that cared for and developed one part of that community, and extended considerable assistance to other communities, thereby threatening Israel's pervasive control. Its continuation gave the lie to Israel's claims, solidified Palestinian nationalism and legitimated an international drive to assist in the restoration of Palestinian rights. Israel's war against the Palestinian community in Lebanon was, in part, intended to destroy not a backward Palestinian society but a gradually evolving democratic polity that could become the nucleus of an independent Palestine. When Israel spoke of the destruction of the

infrastructure of the Palestine Liberation Organisation', it meant the destruction of the institutional bases of the Palestinian people in Lebanon; its eviction of the Palestinian leadership from Lebanon was intended to cripple the national basis of the Palestinian drive for liberation.

#### IV

While both Palestinians and Lebanese suffered enormously from the effects of Israel's firepower and explosives, significant differences are apparent in Israel's intentions towards each of these communities. In general, Israel's attacks did not differentiate between civilian and military targets – the devastation of hospitals and clinics, schools, industrial and commercial establishments and housing throughout occupied Lebanon have been amply illustrated and documented. Without question, Israel did intend to destroy not only the 'infrastructure of the Palestinians' but the Lebanese as well. Within this overall policy of random punishment, one can detect a more studied and systematic pattern of devastation and destruction. Admittedly, Palestinian and Lebanese communities were intermingled in the cities of Tyre, Sidon, Nabatiyeh and Beirut, as well as in smaller areas. It would have been extremely hard for the most careful military planner to target Palestinian establishments, quarters and residents in such areas. There, the devastation was all inclusive and the victims of air raids and random shelling by artillery and gunboats included both Lebanese and Palestinians.

But where Palestinians were more visibly segregated in residence and space, either voluntarily or as a result of the historic processes of refugee settlement, as they were in the various settlements of Rashidiyeh, al-Bass, Bourj el-Shamali, Ain el-Hilweh, Bourj el-Brajneh, Sabra and Shatila and others, Israel's objective was total destruction. Those parts of Palestinian settlements not demolished through the systematic air raids and shelling – by cluster, fragmentation, concussion and phosphorous bombs – were bulldozed to the ground, over the bodies of their dead and wounded. While estimates vary, it is the consensus of international observers that more than 70-80 per cent of all Palestinian settlements have been rendered uninhabitable. No less than one-third of the Palestinians in Lebanon have been destroyed, evicted or rendered homeless.

After subjugating Lebanon, Israel pursued its policy of annihilation by rounding up Palestinian males. Every Palestinian over the age of 12-13 years old was apprehended, and taken or shipped to interrogation centres either in Lebanon or in Israel. Thousands of them have never been heard from; more than 25,000 are currently in the Ansar concentration camp on the outskirts of Nabatiyeh. All have been denied the usual protection afforded by the Fourth Geneva Conven-



tion on prisoners of war.

The conclusion that has been drawn by international observers of the intentions and practices of the Israeli army, and which was recognised during the war by Palestinians and Lebanese alike, is inescapable: Israel's objective could only be interpreted as that of *ethnocide* against the Palestinians in Lebanon. Those that did not perish in the course of the war were guilty of a 'status' crime; to be a Palestinian in an Israeli-occupied Lebanon was to be a criminal – even as Jews were in Nazi Germany. That Israel defined every Palestinian male as a terrorist or as a person 'connected with the Palestine Liberation Organisation' to justify his incarceration, if not death, gives added weight to the charge of *ethnocide*.

Israel's relentless pursuit of the institutional bases of the PLO and its leadership meant, too, the destruction of all those institutions that maintained Palestinian culture in the widest sense – in terms of identity, literature, music, art and education – so wholehearted was Israel's commitment to destroy the singular cultural achievement of the Palestinian people. The variety of publishing houses, books and journals, the creativity in art and music that characterised the Palestinian community in Lebanon was not only crucial to the maintenance of their cultural identity but also to that of all Palestinians living under occupation or in exile. Its destruction was intended to weaken the capacity of all other Palestinians to express their cultural uniqueness and achievements. In that important sense, the war in Lebanon was, in effect if not in full intention, one of cultural genocide against the Palestinian people.

But there is an additional, and purely Lebanese, dimension to the Israeli destruction of occupied Lebanon. Admittedly, a good deal of the infrastructure of Lebanon was destroyed in the war; but more destruction was visited on the Lebanese poor than the middle and upper classes. The poor and lower classes of Lebanon tended to live on the periphery of cities cheek by jowl with the Palestinians – who generally shared their status of poverty. While this was true of practically all South Lebanon, it was particularly true of the outskirts of Beirut itself. What was called the 'belt of poverty', that surrounded Beirut, contained Lebanese poor and Palestinians. Israel's conduct of the war was such as to inflict equal punishment on both groups of poor. When the final toll of the war is made, it will become evident that the Lebanese poor suffered disproportionately in relation to the Lebanese middle and upper classes in human casualties and loss of property. Israeli tactics during the siege of Beirut made use of the deep class cleavages in Lebanon. Knowing that only the Lebanese middle and upper classes could take advantage of such a choice, it called upon 'the inhabitants' of the city to flee for their lives through pre-assigned 'safe' routes. These routes were, in fact, made safe by the Israeli army

to facilitate the exit of those classes who could afford to travel to and set up home in the more accommodationist (and expensive) areas of Lebanon. Less than one-third of the million inhabitants of Beirut took advantage of the offer; careful analysts at that time noted the disproportionate number of middle and upper class Beirutis who exited from the city.

This differentiation along class lines became even more striking once Israel's army had succeeded in overrunning a city, particularly in the case of Beirut. The arrest and imprisonment of Lebanese along with the Palestinians was clearly related to their class status. It is very difficult to identify Lebanese prisoners who belong to either the upper or middle class; generally, the prisoners of war are drawn from the lower classes, whose opposition to Israel also meant an opposition to the highly stratified Lebanese social and economic system. In one sense, therefore, Israel's intervention in Lebanon was related to Israel's willingness to participate in the re-establishment of that highly stratified system.

## V

In broad terms the Palestinian struggle against Zionism and Israel could be classified as a national struggle pitting two national movements against each other for the possession and political organisation of a specific domain – Palestine. Palestinians have always maintained that their struggle against Israel has another dimension: an anti-imperialist one. After all, Zionism as a colonial movement was supported, sustained and initially fulfilled by Britain. Israel expanded its territory in part as a result of its links with the France of the early 1950s and 1960s, and eventually became a dominant Middle East power as a result of the unique support which the US extended to it. The early internationalisation of the Palestine question was a commentary on the success of the Zionist movement in linking its eventual triumph with the western system of power.

Palestinians had, early on, essentially failed to counter this form of internationalisation with an alternative. Only after 1968 did they succeed in generating solid support for their cause from the socialist and non-aligned systems. In the Arab world itself, Palestinians have always linked the successful conclusion of their struggle with a mobilised and committed Arab national community. But that community is organised in a state system that did not necessarily assign a similar priority to the question of Palestine; with time, in fact, most of the Arab states began to view with increasing favour a termination of their conflict with Israel whose legitimacy they now openly accept. But the Palestinians continued to press for active collaboration with the Arab people. Although, in general, this effort did not bear significant results, it did



do so in Lebanon itself, which in part accounts for Israel's determination to bring to an end the Lebanese chapter of the Palestinian struggle.

For reasons not necessarily connected with the question of Palestine, a Lebanese national movement had emerged and gradually developed into a viable movement of national liberation. It was clearly supportive of the restoration of Palestinian rights, but its principal objective was the transformation of the confessionally-based, elitist-controlled social and economic system of Lebanon itself. Recognising the strong link between that system and imperialism, it further understood that peaceful, reformist change was highly unlikely. On objective grounds, then, both Palestinians and Lebanese nationalists shared similar, if not identical, objectives – and foes. For both, the political vision of the future was that of a democratic non-sectarian polity. But not only did they share ideals – through the processes of each movement's struggle, they forged and strengthened their links with each other. Palestinians were firmly committed to the notion of armed struggle as the only means by which Israel could be transformed; the Lebanese nationalists gradually began to incorporate this idea into their own vocabulary. And, with time, they began to resort to revolutionary violence to bring about the transformation of the equally rigid Lebanese state. In their struggle they sought – and got – the active support (moral, political and material) of the organised Palestinian movement in their midst. Each had separate objectives, but each gained strength and a deeper understanding from the alliance between their two linked movements of liberation.

While the LNM did have substantial support across confessions and classes, its main support came from the disinherited and disfranchised Lebanese living in areas of Palestinian concentration. An organic relationship of mutual support developed between the two movements that culminated in the *de facto* formation of the Joint Forces when Israel attacked Lebanon. And in that sense, the Palestinians had succeeded in fusing their national political struggle with the struggle of an Arab national community – a fusion which had no counterpart anywhere in the Arab world.

Such a fusion exemplifies the success of the Palestinians in regionalising the Palestinian struggle, without which they could not possibly succeed in their effort to establish the democratic polity in Palestine. And it is also that which made it possible for the two movements to establish in fact, if not in name, the only liberated national zone from which both could struggle against their opponents. The freedom which the Palestinians enjoyed in South Lebanon – that is the area stretching from Beirut to the Israeli-Lebanese armistice lines – was made possible by that organic alliance between the two movements. It was also the area in which the nuclei of Lebanese national institutions were beginning to develop under the leadership of the LNM.

Israel's war against Lebanon was, therefore, intended to destroy the first successful alliance between the Palestinians and a nationally committed Arab movement as well as the first liberated national zone where the alliance could have developed a prototype of a liberated Arab national polity.

## VI

The Beirut that Israel determined to conquer in the summer of 1982 is an unusual city of approximately one million inhabitants of diverse and mixed backgrounds. Over the years the city had developed a unique status for itself. Not only did it serve the normal functions of any capital city, housing the various departments of the government and educational and cultural institutions and serving as the principal economic centre of Lebanon, but its functions grew with the development of the Arab world as a whole. The eclipse of Cairo had made it possible for Beirut to become the regional capital of the Arab world in terms of banking, communications, publishing and a host of cultural activities. And the city's population developed the skills, attributes and commitments that went along with its unique regional importance. These were to serve the city well when it came under the siege of an Israeli army determined to subdue it.

But the city's growth and its expanded functions and horizons took place in the context of a governing authority that was conspicuous by its weakness, if not absence. The Lebanese government had always been somewhat non-obtrusive for important structural considerations related to the reality of the Lebanese polity; that non-intrusiveness became non-existent as the city became the site of emerging democratic forces associated with the LNM and the PLO. With time, it became clear that it had become bifurcated between an authoritarian component, that was dubbed East Beirut, controlled ruthlessly and methodically by the Phalange party and committed to the establishment of a vaguely defined Christian authoritarian Lebanese state; and another component, dubbed West or National Beirut, which was pluralistic, non-sectarian, much more loosely and autonomously organised and committed to a Lebanese state that was both democratic and non-sectarian. The first looked to Israel, the US and many of the authoritarian and conservative Arab states for support and sustenance, while the second was squarely anchored in the Arab nationalist, Third World liberationist community.

The conflict between the two parts of the city reflected the conflicting drives and visions of the country as a whole. The civil war of 1975-76, among other things, had the effect of making National Beirut self-sufficient in meeting the needs of its population. Without doubt, the division of the city had deepened and strengthened people's iden-



tification with their cause. National Beirut knew that it was the site of a heterogeneous, mixed population committed to a different and superior kind of political future than that of East Beirut. It also knew that East Beirut, driven by its Phalangist conceptions of state and society, was determined to use any pressure it could to bring National Beirut to heel. Water supplies were interrupted long before Israel's invasion, but, unappreciated by observers, National Beirut managed to dig enough wells in the city to provide for more than 60 per cent of its population's water needs. Thus, when Israel tightened its siege of the city and cut off the entire water supply, National Beirut had an alternative system that enabled the population to maintain its steadfastness. Electricity had been similarly cut off in the past and National Beirut used its own generators for power and butane gas lamps for light. Thus, when Israel cut off electricity totally for over a month and a half, the population was able to use its stored generators and butane gas lighting. When food supplies had been cut off in the past, National Beirut had learnt that its storage facilities and warehouses had to expand; when Israel prevented any food from entering the city, these storage facilities and warehouses had enough supplies to overcome the shortages.

If the city was able to withstand the repeated attempts of the Israeli army to overrun it – there were eleven such attempts that failed – and to withstand the effects of a total siege that aimed at conquest by starvation and thirst and disease, it was because it had developed an alternative system that was essentially and loosely guided by an autonomous governing alliance of the PLO-LNM. The alliance was anchored in a popular will that manifested itself during the siege by giving total, disciplined and quiet support to the militant defenders of the city throughout the siege of Beirut. And when, at long last, the Agreement was reached concerning the withdrawal of the military forces from Beirut, the same discipline and acceptance were exhibited for the last time as the entire population bade farewell, with tears and with considerable emotion, to the departing militants. Both the population of National Beirut and the militants were to face an unknown future.

## VII

The concrete reality that was Beirut could stand as the symbol of the unfolding Middle East.\* For more than a century and a half, the Arab world has struggled to transform itself from a sectarian-based society

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\* From its inception, Arab nationalism has been associated with non-sectarian, universalist and democratic ideals. The origins and the centrality of the Arab national movement lay in the heart of the *Mashriq*, constituted by Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine.

to a secular polity. Considerable, though somewhat chequered progress has been made in this direction as a result of the struggle of the Arab world's many secular parties. But many ethnic/religious/secular tensions remain far from resolved; in some instances, they have been accentuated by the colonial encounter and by uneven development. Thus, while the Ottoman empire is dead, its organisational basis – the *millet* system – continues to impinge on Middle Eastern politics. Even so, the vagaries of Arab politics and the excesses of military, often minority, regimes notwithstanding, the non-sectarian, secular ideal was held as a norm. In Lebanon the *millet* system became enshrined as a modern, constitutionally confessional state rigged to favour particular sects. And in Palestine, its ancient Arab people were dispossessed and displaced to make room for a state which effectively combined the more disabling features of both the medieval *millet* and the modern settler-colonial state. Palestine has been transformed into a Jewish state in which Christians and Muslims cannot, in law and life, be the equals of Jews. And it is this shared sectarian choice in politics that produced the strange bedfellows: Phalangists and Israelis, fascism and Zionism. Ironically, both Lebanon and Israel were hailed in the western media as epitomes of democracy.

Both states have been challenged, politically and otherwise. The challenge to Israel came from the Palestinians, who have, particularly since 1968, called for the establishment of a secular polity which would enable Muslim, Jew and Christian to coexist on a footing of complete equality. The world has come to associate the secular drive in the Middle East with the Palestinian challenge, and no matter how one viewed the legitimacy of the secular drive of the Palestinians, it was always a means of coping with the Israeli reality. The challenge to Lebanon came essentially from the LNM, whose call and drive were for the transformation of the confessionally-based Lebanese state to a democratic secular polity. The two drives essentially converged in Beirut itself, where both movements were putting their ideas into practice.

One does not need to analyse both movements in great depth before discovering that in terms of their constituencies, their leadership and cadres, and their actual performance, both movements reflected their pluralist character and commitment to a secular future. But what is less known is that both in fact have derived their ideas and inspiration from sources that were Lebanese long before the establishment of either the modern Lebanese state or Israel. A cursory examination of the origin and development of the Arab nationalist movement reveals that the call for a secular basis of a political national order had its origin in Beirut itself. Way back in the mid-nineteenth century, the Bustanis and Yazijis, who articulated the goals of the Arab national movement then directed against the Ottoman Empire, were conscious of the fact that only in the context of a secular Arab world could an Arab national



community succeed in establishing a progressive polity that would assure a democratic development of Arab society and culture. That early movement did not then succeed, but its underlying ideas and concepts constitute an important and historically decisive part of the heritage of the contemporary Arab nationalist drive. The fact that political parties such as the Ba'ath and the Syrian National Socialist party and others have campaigned on a platform of secularism, have been led by individuals of differing confessional backgrounds and have struggled to translate their secular visions into concrete legislative acts, serves to illustrate that the secular idea of the Palestinian movement and that of the Lebanese National Movement has a long and continuing history.

If Beirut was the birthplace of that idea in the Arab world, it was also the place where that idea was put into practice. Beirut's heterogeneity, its cosmopolitanism, its mixed ethnicities and its ability to fashion a social and economic system consonant with that secular drive made it an important symbol of Arab hopes, a secularised and democratic Arab world. The city's conquest by Israel and its subsequent domination by Israel's Phalangist allies was intended to put an end to the practice of the idea of a secular polity in the Arab world and, equally important, to rob the secular movement of an important symbol.

## VIII

Israel did not wait long before consolidating the gains from its military victory against the Palestinian/Lebanese national movements. Even before its conquest of Beirut, Israel facilitated the 'return' of the feudal aristocracy of South Lebanon. While its guns were aimed at Beirut and its army surrounding a Lebanese military barracks, the Lebanese Parliament went through the charade of its presidential elections and elected Bashir Gemayel (subsequently assassinated) as its next president. A Phalangist controlled government is now 'functioning' and trying to rearrange the political order of Lebanon. The extent to which the Arab States implicitly collaborated with these activities remains to be examined. But the incontrovertible fact remains: Lebanon today, as a result of the Israeli invasion, is no longer the odd man out of the Arab world. No longer does Beirut serve as the liberated capital of the Arab world; no longer does Beirut serve as the secular democratic centre of a future polity; no longer does Beirut symbolise a secular Arab world. Like the other Arab States, Lebanon is now an authoritarian state, committed to some religious bases of society and culture. In an important way the sectarian basis of society is now acceptable to all; Lebanon does not constitute an exception; all the states of the region adhere to a norm whose validity was threatened by the theoretical assumptions and practices of the Palestinian/Lebanese national movements.



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# Despatches from the war

## The spirit of Beirut

*The city: 13 July 1982*

Beirut has a kind of spirit, a special quality, that could only be destroyed by destroying the city itself. I say Beirut, and not West Beirut, because the eastern part of the capital has never been seen as *el balad* – the town. *El Balad* is *here*, and it is here that one finds that extraordinary spirit that makes the city what it is.

For example, a motor cycle policeman has bought two melons. He puts them in two plastic bags hanging off his handlebars. He's hardly gone ten metres when he comes on a group of militia guarding the area. From the shape of them, the melons might be bombs. They stop him, and prod his bags. What's in them? 'Melons', he explains. Everyone bursts out laughing, and they go off down the road saying 'Melons!', as if it was the joke of the year. The laughter relieves the hidden tension.

S is 30 years old. We won't mention his official job. The only thing that he really knows how to do well is cooking. Since the siege of Beirut began, he has been very much in demand. Any household that calls him in first has to buy the necessary food. He arrives at ten in the morning,

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*Selim Nassib*, a Lebanese journalist, reported on the invasion for *Libération*, the Paris weekly. All these excerpts, except for 'The Spirit of Beirut', are taken from his *Beirut: frontline story* (London, Pluto Press, 1983 and New York, Africa World Press, 1983), translated by Caroline Tisdall.

*Race & Class*, XXIV, 4(1983)

and shuts himself in the kitchen for anything up to three hours. The dishes he prepares are remarkable. The only payment he asks is to sit and eat with you. The next day you'll find him somewhere else. Not only has he been eating splendid meals, for free, since the start of the hostilities; he has also finally found a way to give full expression to his art. He is a happy, and well-fed, man.

When night falls, the street-corner fruit and vegetable vendors on the pavements light candles, which cast long shadows. When you ask them how on earth they are managing to get supplies, with a blockade in force, they point one finger to the sky and give a mischievous grin.

A 20-litre can of petrol, which cost 30£ Lebanese a week ago now costs 100£ Lebanese. Your next-door neighbour's nephew can deliver it to your home; he's a taxi driver. The grocer, for his part, will dig you out a bottle of champagne. And the laundry continues to operate, washing and ironing your shirts for a ridiculously low price.

Presumably the blockade is beginning to make itself felt. But in this city it is accepted with a good-natured and friendly ingenuity. The really important things seem to be happening somewhere else; at another level, somehow. How best to describe it? It's serious, yes – but not so serious.

Any Tom, Dick or Harry, any spy even, can stroll up and down the town's defences unchallenged. It wouldn't take much to make detailed sketches of them for the enemy. Everyone is quite ready to explain to you anything you want to know. This city at war, from the outside, probably appears like an entrenched camp. But inside it, any journalist can write whatever he or she likes and can get it sent out by telex, without having to ask permission from anyone. The Phalange press continues to be sold and read in West Beirut – unlike the eastern half of the capital, where daily papers like *Al Safir* and others have been banned for seven years.

### *From Rameses II to the French*

The besieged houses and the population of Beirut are not the only things under threat from the Israelis' big guns. The city is 4,000 years old. It is reputed to be the oldest continually inhabited city on earth. It is said that here St George slew the dragon, and so gave his name to the city's bay.

Today the city is waiting, hoping for the arrival of yet more soldiers from foreign countries – the multinational force. This is an old story. If the city's spirit and special quality has enabled it to survive so many by-gone ages, it is because it has been able to welcome foreigners from all quarters of the globe, with open arms. On the old bridge which spans Nahr El-Kalb (Dog river) there are a dozen tablets commemorating the passage of many conquering nations, from Rameses II to the French, passing via Nebuchadnezzar, the Greeks, the Romans, the Arabs



and the Turks. In the end these conquerors move on – but not without leaving a few kids behind them. The city has played out a thousand variations on the old Lebanese proverb ‘Kiss the hand that you cannot break’. As the Beirutis see it, the very multiplicity of the influences to which Beirut has opened itself is in a sense a guarantee of its independence. It is this which gives the city its seductive aspect as a trader, a *bon viveur*, an adaptive town that is able to reflect and play out all its contradictions, turning its very weakness, its art of coming to a compromise, into a strength and an identity.

The people of Beirut have always spoken many languages. The foreigners they have welcomed have not always come as conquerors. Right from its earliest days, Beirut has been a cosmopolitan city, embracing many different religious communities. The Romans built their most important law school here. The Crusaders in turn were captivated by the city’s villas, with their lovely terraced gardens. And when the great travellers of the nineteenth century – the likes of Gérard de Nerval, Lamartine and Flaubert – came to the city, they conversed in Italian with its Druze or Maronite nobles, the cultured traders and businessmen of Beirut.

### *A secret voluptuousness*

What remains of this heritage is an indefinable quality, a noise, a pace of life. Here and there you find sweetly scented bushes – jasmine, gardenia, frangipani – along with oleanders, bougainvilleas and giant bamboo plants. The city still maintains a secret voluptuousness, a sensuality.

You also still find a lot of that easy-goingness which used to govern people’s relations with each other – the *bassita* (it’s not important) and the *maalech* (it doesn’t matter). In the old days the city made both a virtue and a profession of its melting-pot nature. The café in which (sometimes together and sometimes separately) the Syrian, Jordanian, Egyptian and Iraqi exiles used to meet and plot was called *La Dolce Vita*. It was situated overlooking the sea, in Raouche, the area that the Israelis are now bombing. Beirut has acted as a kind of echo chamber, producing and publishing all the ideas that have flourished in the Arab world. *Laissez-faire, laissez-passer* – this is the secret of Lebanon. A whole Lebanese universe blossomed and flourished, in among the *nargilehs* in the city’s cafes; intuitively it taught toleration and the relative nature of different points of view.

Beirut was the only free city in the region. Up until 1975 it managed to steer clear of the wars in neighbouring countries, reacting to each new coup d’état by offering hospitality to new groups of refugees, new exiles, new fortunes and new plots. The Arab world maintained a curious relationship with Beirut, as with a city which is disreputable, but with whom you are hopelessly in love.

Beirut has perhaps been too clever for its own good. The sky has suddenly fallen in on its head. In one go the city is now expected to pay the full bill for all those years of carefree life and pleasure. But its spirit is far from dead. Even during the past seven years of war, there have been more publishing houses in Beirut than in the whole of the rest of the Arab world. In the first few months of 1982 there were more books produced in the Lebanese capital than in all the other Arab capitals put together. The city remains an obligatory stopping-off (and sometimes staying) point for intellectuals, journalists and artists to sit and wonder: 'Beirut, what have we done to you? And you, what have you done to us?'

Today the siege is uncovering an aspect of Beirut that we didn't know about. Forced into a corner, with their backs to the sea, the Lebanese and Palestinians that make up the population of that city now have to face up to things. If the Israelis attack, and leave the people no choice, the Beirutis will have to stand and fight. Chaotically, perhaps. Confusion, probably. But they are a proud people, and they will fight.

In the meantime, people have not given up their hopes for a political solution. 1976 saw the arrival of the Arab Deterrent Force, with soldiers from Syria, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Sudan and the United Arab Emirates. 1978 saw the disembarkation, under the flag of the UNIFIL United Nations Forces, of soldiers from France, Ireland, Holland, Norway, Ghana, Senegal and Fiji.

Today they say that the new multinational force will be made up of troops from America, France, Belgium, Canada and Greece. The spirit of Beirut is enjoying the joke. And, always assuming that the Israelis do not impose a final solution, people are of the opinion that one day these various nationalities will be shown the door. And a few more commemorative tablets will have to be put up on Nahr El-Kalb bridge.

### **The onslaught**

*Beirut: 9 June 1982*

The streets of the capital empty almost in an instant. It is midday. People vanish from the streets, traffic disappears and shops close. West Beirut suddenly becomes a dead city. The weather is still fine. The sky is still the same amazing blue of a moment ago. The difference is that the Israeli jets are on their way. You can hear them coming by the noise. The airport is closed, so it can only be them. From behind shutters straining eyes try to make them out. You see them swooping on Fakhani. The little puffs of white smoke from the anti-aircraft batteries are virtually useless against them. As a young Palestinian militant told me: 'What do you expect? Our Arab brothers have decided



that we don't deserve better weapons ...' The aircraft soar into a climb, leaving behind them a regularly spaced trail of decoy flares to draw anti-aircraft fire. At the same moment, a wave of explosions rocks the capital. They have dropped another load of bombs. Columns of black smoke rise over the bombed section of the city. The sky darkens. By now the aircraft are far away. The rattle of gunfire that had greeted them stops. The silent deserted city holds its breath. Your transistor radio gives details of the raid: the Palestinian camps of Sabra and Shatila were hit; so were Fakhani (the area which houses most of the PLO's offices), and the seafront areas of Ouzai and Khalde near the airport. Some bombs also fell near the UNESCO and Basta buildings.

The planes are already on their way back. The Thursday noon raid on West Beirut and the southern suburbs is the longest and fiercest attack since hostilities began. There are dozens of dead and wounded. Several areas of the city are burning. All members of the civil defence are mobilised into action. Ambulances are constantly ferrying people off to the city's overflowing hospitals.

Ever since last night, the same question has been on everybody's lips: are the Israelis going to attack the capital, or will they be content to lay siege to it, bomb it and strangle its lifelines? Beirutis are beginning to work out their odds of escaping attack; obviously, the further you live from where the Palestinians are concentrated, the safer you are...

Israel is leaving the Syrians no choice between doing battle or a humiliating retreat. During Wednesday there were major air battles in the sky over the Bekaa Valley. The Syrians are said to have lost twenty-two Migs – and also seven batteries of their famous SAM-6 missiles. Syrian troops withdrew, without a fight, to the Beirut-Damascus highway in the north and to the ridge of Mount Lebanon to the east...

However, in Beirut hardly anybody any longer believes in this forty-kilometre limit. Most of the Israeli forces have crossed the Zahrani River. They have driven on into the heart of the country, have attacked and shelled two of its principal cities and have forced the Syrians to choose between retreat or battle...

In West Beirut itself, the mobilisation is massive. At noon on Thursday, at the very moment of the Israeli bombing, a Lebanese army detachment was moving into position on the Corniche Mazraa which runs along the seafront facing the Israeli warships. They were welcomed with open arms by the Palestinian and progressive forces stationed there.

All the young fighters who have been itching to fight now finally find themselves face to face with a well-defined enemy, and embarking on a blameless cause. Anyway, the virtual naval blockade, the closing of the Beirut-Damascus highway and the shutting of the airport have not left people a lot of choice...

In order to raise morale, they are telling themselves that the Israelis

are trying to occupy a country that is mountainous, heavily populated and under arms, with a Syrian army that cannot retreat on their right, and a Palestinian and progressive front on their left which enjoys a new-found strength. How on earth can they hope to settle the matter, let alone settle it quickly? Beirut is bristling with Kalashnikovs, they say, and is anything but a sitting target.

Obviously, not everyone in the capital shares this point of view. We're fairly happy with what's happening, I was informed by the taxi driver who came from Jounieh to pick us up at the quayside. The *Sea Victory* was the first ship to reach the 'Christian' port since the airport was closed to traffic on 7 June. It was chartered by fourteen journalists obviously intent on paying whatever was necessary in order to get down to work right away. This explained the presence of four or five taxi drivers who had scented good business to be had. 'Who else is going to rid us of the Syrians and Palestinians? We can't do it ourselves, and so ...' All the hearsay and all your conversations tend to confirm the fact that the 'Christian' population seems to favour the Israeli invasion. This is not shouted out from the rooftops; it is kept in low profile, as a discreet sympathy, at least up until now. But it is certainly there. For example, the Phalange radio claims to be objective in its reporting, but it managed to announce the fall of Tyre, Sidon and Damour well before they actually happened. It also contrived to announce the death of Abu Jihad, El Fatah's military chief, the day after the Israelis invaded. The news was false – but a half-hour later, Radio Israel also reported it, without any qualification such as 'according to Phalange radio'...

### *Beirut: 10 June 1982*

The scene is the city's only public park. Its total area cannot be more than a hectare. In the middle stands a large pond which used to house fish. Before, there used to be portly park-keepers watching over the lawns and flowerbeds, and young children from the area used to come and ride their tricycles here.

But today the scene is different. The lawns have tents pitched on them. The occupants of these tents, with their food, their transistor radios and their young children spread all over the grass, are the people who have fled from the areas being bombed by the Israelis. For the umpteenth time they have packed up bundles of clothes, mattresses and a few cooking utensils, and have arrived in the city centre looking for shelter. There is no shortage of empty apartments, particularly since the war has driven out of West Beirut anyone who had the money and means to leave. But it is not an easy matter breaking into other people's houses. Heavy duty grilles have been put across the entrances to apartment blocks; muscular doormen have been hired; and many people have installed friends in their flats to look after them in their absence.



The number of refugees grows a little larger every day. Those who have relations in the city seek out the militias of the left-wing parties to which they are attached. At a time when most people's attention is directed skywards, it is not uncommon to see a refugee family, bundles over their shoulders, escorted by armed militia as they go looking for a place to stay for the night, or for the week, or perhaps forever.

These wanderers from South Lebanon have already suffered a lot. Now they find themselves in the disagreeable position of being forced to break down doors and move into total strangers' houses. Obviously, things are never that simple. It often happens that militias accompanying refugees clash with militias defending apartments, which then provokes the wrath of passers-by: 'So, while the Israelis are attacking us, you're going to spend your time shooting at each other in a neighbourhood squabble?'

It is by helping people in this way that the Palestinian and progressive forces have built their popularity. Other refugees, not so much in the know, have been forced to find refuge in the doorway of an apartment block, or a yard, or on a piece of wasteland. Some of them set up home on the wide flowerbeds that run along either side of the Corniche. But since the fighters were expecting an Israeli sea-landing at any moment, they decided to move on.

In fact, nowhere in West Beirut is particularly safe at this moment. So some people are deciding to leave town, with their bundles over their shoulders, to go God knows where. Those who have settled on the lawns of the public park have one small consolation. In addition to the greenery, they have a refreshment stall nearby which sells sweets for the children. And then, nobody is likely to bother them. It is, after all, as its name indicates, a public garden...

### *Beirut: 11-12 June 1982*

The explosions hit us without warning. We're thrown sprawling to the ground. Again, a whistling, and another explosion. Forty metres further on, down on the beach, right under our noses, there's a flash and a blast of heat. I try to hide behind a bush on the grassy central reservation of the main road. It's not exactly wonderful protection. A few metres further on, our taxi driver is also crouching behind a bush, a kind of dwarf palm. Are we going to make a run for the side of the road? Or would it be better to wait a moment? Here comes that whistling noise again. Here comes that falling bomb. It is (very precisely) 2.35 in the afternoon, and the ceasefire called by the Israelis came into force at noon today! You must be kidding! You don't even have time to be afraid, really. Just a very powerful sense of stimulation, a kind of intense excitement, and the feeling that your mouth has completely dried up...

*Beirut: 13 June 1982*

The cease-fire negotiated by the Israelis on Friday [the 11th] effectively put the Syrians out of the picture. This time the Palestinians are completely on their own, and in theory the Israelis could defeat them without too much problem. Midday Friday sees the cessation of shelling and bombing in the Bekaa Valley and the centre of the country, but an intensification in West Beirut, the southern suburbs and Khalde. In the capital, the bombardments are advancing from the city outskirts and the Palestinian camps (Sabra, Shatila, Fakhani) over to the residential areas (Mazraa, Basta, UNESCO). This is because the camps have emptied, and the armed elements of the Palestinian and progressive forces are now scattered in the capital. In addition, the Israelis are also trying to hit the PLO leadership, which has also transferred itself to new, less exposed quarters.

By nightfall, at 7.00pm on Friday, the bombardments cease. But at 11.00pm the noise of approaching aircraft makes us prick up our ears. All of a sudden the night is lit up by a sinister white light. The aircraft drop parachute flares, which slowly descend, providing light for the artillery to start firing again. The shelling starts afresh. For kilometres around, buildings shake with the blast. Beirut shudders under the shelling. The next morning the newspapers publish pages of photographs of entire buildings reduced to heaps of rubble, of blocks of flats sliced in two, of sections of roof dangling like papier maché from their steel reinforcement frames. How many victims? This will only be known once the sums have been done.

\* \* \*

*Sabra: 20 June 1982*

'Leave? To go where?' The question keeps coming back, punctuating the story of his life's wanderings. The question always comes back without an answer, obsessively, as if in itself it explained his determination to stay put, 'at home', in his wretched hut built on the corner of an alley in the Palestinian camp of Sabra. 'What are they calling us? The refugees? The *aidun* (the returners – i.e., those who are going to return to Palestine), the ... the ... what was it?' The words jostle to get out, tripping each other up. He wants to speak, and the tension that has invaded his body for the last fortnight overwhelms him. When he tries to explain it in words, for the sake of the outside world, it explodes: 'What is it they call us, again?' he repeats, for the sake of the young fighter who is our guide through the maze of the Sabra camp. 'The revolutionaries? ...' 'Yes, the revolutionaries. But above all, above all, the *samidun* (the resisters or, more precisely, 'those who do not retreat'). Note that well. Write 'the *samidun*'. That's what we are. Leave? To go where?'



Sabra, Shatila, Bourj el-Brajneh. The three Palestinian camps in Beirut have their backs to the wall. In normal times they have a population of at least 150,000. For several days, people tell us, they have been deserted. But that is only in a manner of speaking. They are deserted in comparison with their usual teeming bustle of life. But they are by no means deserted when you see fighters standing in groups of four or five every thirty or forty metres, when you see soldiers laying mines and digging up the road with trenches; or the military jeeps as they career down alleys that are only just wide enough to let them pass; or the women and children of these families who have decided that they have no choice but to *resist* – in other words, to stay.

Our friend, whom we have met by chance, invites us to sit down in the little yard in front of his house, around the tree which he tells us he planted himself. We sit in threadbare armchairs, surrounded by metal cans in which our host is growing plants. He is a refugee of 1948. He is 52 years old, with a fortnight's growth of beard in which white hairs mix in with the black. He seems in a state of shock, as one who has witnessed disaster.

Without stopping for thought, he goes on to tell us the story of his life. He was 18 when the state of Israel was set up. He spent a year in prison before being expelled. Jordan-Gaza, Gaza-Jordan. He met George Habash in 1954. He went on to join the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). In 1970 he was in Wahadate, the big Palestinian camp near Amman in Jordan. He took part in the operations involving hijacking aircraft to 'Revolution Airport'. The King of Jordan unleashed his repression. Black September. He came out alive. 'Leave? To go where?' Lebanon has been his last refuge, his last chance. He found himself in Sabra camp. 'On this spot that you see, there was nothing. No house, no tree, no yard. It was a wood. Well, I would give all this up and live in a tent. Not even in Palestine, but just on the other bank of the Jordan, just close enough to smell the scent of Palestine ...' He adds that if he has to leave Lebanon, he will stand before God 'with a white face', in other words, with his head held high. His words would appear melodramatic if the situation were not what it is ... 'Now,' says our host, 'all we have left is to show them what the Palestinian people are made of ...'

'Show them? We're not going to show them anything! We want to free our land!' His neighbour joined in without warning. A dozen people had gathered to listen to our conversation. 'Myself,' she said, 'I am from South Lebanon. I have nine children, and I would sacrifice them all if necessary. But I will never renounce an inch of our land, not even one olive tree. For me, there are no Shi'ites, or Sunnis, or Druze or Christians; there are only Lebanese, Palestinians, "Children of Arabs" and a country that is occupied. We have to free it, and that's that. Look at my daughter here. She's 11. Ask her what she's prepared for the Israelis...'

The girl is shy because of everyone turning and looking at her. She blushes and lowers her head, and doesn't want to speak. The mother insists. The little girl finally murmurs, 'I've prepared three crates of Pepsi-Cola bottles. I'll throw the empty bottles at them.'...

It was the same story half an hour later, with a group of Fatah fighters defending the camp. A dozen of them surrounded us in the garage that served them as an office. We arrived at dinner time. The men were standing around a table on which was placed an enormous pot of rice and another pot containing vegetables. They were taking turns to eat from the pot. The mother of one of them was in charge of the cooking.

'The road to revolution', said one of them, 'is strewn with thorns, not with roses. Particularly with the "Arab brothers" that we have. Among those "friends" we should give a special mention to the "Syrian brothers" who have run off like rabbits and who have only been acting on their own interests ...'

At the mention of the Syrians, everyone adds their own bit. 'They say that they are part of the "steadfastness" front. What steadfastness is that? Myself, before this war, if I wanted to come up to Beirut from South Lebanon, I had to bury my rifle at Zahrai. Every Syrian check-point on the way stopped and searched me. Why? I'm not in Lebanon for the sake of tourism, but to carry a gun. And the Syrian who stops me carrying my gun runs away from the Israelis, and lets the Israelis besiege me in Beirut...'

\* \* \*

### *Beirut: 1 July 1982*

She was helping her mother hand out the washing when she stepped on a round metal object the size of a melon. The pressure of her foot set off the detonator. The fragmentation bomb came out of the ground as it exploded, spinning around at high speed and sending off fragments of shrapnel in all directions. The shrapnel from a normal shell only kills when it hits some vital part of the body. But it may only wound a hand or a foot. You have a chance of escaping with your life. But there was no such chance for little Houeida. She was 12 years old. Her name was Houeida Dia. She lived in Sfair, in the southern part of Beirut.

The registrar let us see the hospital admissions register. The following are the facts, as recorded by the hospital's doctors: On 17 June, Samir Ahmad Kurmo, aged 3, had his left hand burned by a phosphorous bomb that fell on Horch (south Beirut). He survived. The same day, a 9-year-old girl (only her first name is recorded – Suzanne) died on arrival at the Gaza Hospital (Palestinian hospitals are named after towns in Palestine). She died of widespread phosphorous burns.



Then, on 24 June, in Bourj el-Brajneh, next to the Palace Cinema, Ahmed Sakka, aged 32, was injured by an exploding phosphorous bomb. He died from his injuries. On 25 June, according to the same witnesses, on the airport road, Samir Kamel (22), Khalil El-Hajj (22), Said Ahmad (28) and Samir Khalil (27) died from burns. Phosphorous burns are recognisable by their colour – yellowish – and the swelling that surrounds the burn. No sign of shrapnel, and no pus. Immediate formation of a scab, and a smell of matches.

Amal Chamaa, a young woman doctor in her early thirties, is in charge of emergency out-patients at the Berbir Hospital. She tells us that she has seen only one case of phosphorous burns. The shell fell on Bourj el-Brajneh on 14 June. The victim was Hassan Hodrouj, aged 40. Phosphorous burns, she tells us, are medicated much the same as other burns: you wash them and treat them with an ointment that marks out the location of the phosphorous. It can then be removed in order to prevent continued burning. However, this treatment was not able to save Hodrouj ...

In the heart of West Beirut, the Hotel Triumph (a hotel owned by Palestinians) has been transformed into a field hospital. Said Hegazi, aged 20, lies there. He looks extremely weak. Lying on his back, he can speak only with difficulty. His arms (from shoulders to fingertips), his head and his belly are swathed in bandages. He has a compress on his nose, and the burns on his face are covered with a yellow ointment. A fly keeps settling on his face; his friends sit there and wave it off. He tells us that he was walking down a street in Bourj el-Brajneh on Friday, 25 June, when a phosphorous bomb exploded a few metres away from him. He doesn't remember much more. He realised that it was phosphorous because his skin swelled up; the wounds continued to burn, and he had not been hit by shrapnel.

The use of phosphorous bombs, and also of fragmentation bombs, is explicitly banned under the Geneva Convention. Presumably dropping 500-kilo bombs on civilian targets is 'permitted'? But that's another matter. For the outside world, these revelations may cause a degree of horror or indignation. But for the besieged people of Beirut City, they are a foretaste of what perhaps is still to come.

### *Beirut: 10 July 1982*

A misplaced kick by Bossis. He blew it! How could he do this to us? Instead of the shout of triumph that the city has been preparing to greet France's victory over Germany, there are the confused grumbles and groans of a hope deceived. In the total silence of this dark night, people move around in illuminated apartments.

West Beirut is furious at being denied its happy ending. The match was superb, admittedly; a game of clockwork precision. Everything was all set for glory. But in the end the baddies won and the goodies were routed.

A misplaced kick! All through the two-hour match, there was no doubt whose side the people of West Beirut were on. If people support France, it's because they feel that somehow France is 'with us'. France's popularity is all the greater in that it was not assured in advance. Mitterrand's trip to Israel had even led to fears of the opposite. But today no capital city is closer to the hearts of the besieged Beirutis than Paris. So the least they can do is cheer their heads off for the exploits of the French team...

A misplaced kick! For two hours on end, people were able to escape from Beirut to the World Cup pitch in Madrid. They were as one in the comforting company of hundreds of thousands of TV viewers all over the world. The miracle of the spectacle merged the people of besieged Beirut with the rest of the world's population. The enthusiasm that greeted the French goals was also a way of releasing a bit of the tension that has built up in people, however much they may deny it. The uncertainty of how the match would end, right up till the last moment, reflected in a way the uncertainty of the West Beirut situation itself. But the similarity ends there. The two rival teams – one with more heart, and the other with greater precision – were, leaving aside misplaced kicks, evenly matched. Whereas one could hardly compare the strength of the forces defending the city of Beirut with the strength of those surrounding it...

The match ends, and at once all the lights go out. Behind the drawn curtains people again light their candles and their camping-gas lamps. Once again Beirut looks like a city isolated from the world outside. Outside the shouting dies down. A gun starts firing again. One misplaced kick, and the fairy coach has turned back into a pumpkin.

### **The fall of Tyre**

#### *Beirut: 12 July 1982*

A young woman has managed to cross the siege lines into West Beirut. Her husband is with her. He is wanted by the Israelis. She experienced the fall of Tyre at first hand. Here is her story.

'On Friday, 4 June, there was shelling, but it only affected the Palestinian camp at Rashidiyeh and the outskirts of Tyre. Then, on the 6th, the shells started falling on the city itself. Aircraft, land artillery and the navy were all involved. The firing was so intense that we couldn't even make a run for the shelter – which was totally inadequate anyway. We stayed in the stairwell of the house. From what we could see, the bombing made no attempt to distinguish between Palestinians and Lebanese, civilians or soldiers. It was designed to terrorise and destroy.

'On Sunday, 6 June, at 10.00am, helicopters dropped red, blue and



green leaflets over the city. They read: "Surrender! All the other cities have fallen." What could we do? We didn't even dare show our noses in the street.

'After half an hour the shelling started again. How can I describe it? It was even more terrible than before. The aircraft were firing (special shells which are able to go through several layers of concrete before exploding). Some of them landed next to our house. Imagine – I had been so happy when we found a flat overlooking the sea! By now we couldn't even see each other because of the smoke which was filling the stairwell. All you could hear was shouting and screaming.

'We took an alley leading to the house next door. Luckily, broken water pipes had put out the fire in the passage, but the building itself was on fire. We were able to reach the shelter which the Palestinians had built in the city. We stayed there from 5.00pm on Sunday until 11.30am on Monday. The soldiers occasionally came in to tell us what was going on above. A group of Saad Haddad's militia [the Israeli puppet controlling the territory on Israel's northern frontier] strayed into the positions held by the city's defenders. Thinking that he was among his own people, the leader of the group, a man called Abu Emile, who is very well known in Tyre, introduced himself. "Welcome, Abu Emile", said the soldiers, and executed him and his men on the spot.

'Five tanks advanced to the edge of the city. But they were met with rocket fire, and one of them was hit. So they withdrew. Then the artillery started firing again.

'In the shelter there was a mother and her baby. She only had one feeding bottle, but she passed it around so that all the children could have some milk. As for the adults, they had had nothing to eat or drink since the day before. Plus, the shelling was getting more intense minute by minute. We thought we were done for. We said our farewells. Then at 11.30 the firing stopped. We learned afterwards that the Red Cross and the town's Catholic bishop, Msgr George Haddad, had won permission for the civilians to be evacuated to avoid a collective massacre. We came out of our hole. A Red Cross car had been driving around town with loud speakers, asking all the inhabitants to go down to the Rest House Hotel on the beach. We went there. The soldiers stayed on in Tyre.

'The whole population of Tyre was gathered on the beach. Between 10,000 and 15,000 people, standing in the sun. A Red Cross representative came and told us that the Israelis were demanding that the men of the city should go over towards the Palestinian camp at Rashidiyeh to provide a human shield for the Israeli tanks which would follow behind. The news provoked utter rage and anger. The women began crying and beating their faces and tearing their clothes. In the end the men decided not to go. They said, "If we're going to die, then let's die here."

'After this episode, the aerial bombing started again. It lasted for four hours, from 12.30pm to 4.30pm. Those were the most terrible four hours of my life. The whole population of Tyre stood and watched, helpless, as their now empty city was burned and destroyed. Later, someone said that the reason why the Israelis attacked the city so thoroughly was because they wanted to make an example of it.

'All of a sudden the bombardment stopped. Flames were rising from all over the town – it's not a very big town. Total silence followed the hellish noise of the explosions. Then tanks flying the Israeli flag began to move in on the destroyed city. The city seemed completely dead. But the tanks had barely reached the first houses when a field gun of the joint forces [the Palestinian and progressive forces] began firing at them. It was miraculous. On the beach, as one person, we began shouting, singing and dancing.

'The tanks immediately turned back. They were not even out of sight when the planes returned to the attack. Really, without their aircraft the Israelis would not have overcome our resistance. They bombed and shelled with impunity. The building from which the field gun had fired was reduced to a pile of rubble ...

'Then the tanks came back again. They advanced, firing cannon and heavy machine-guns, and taking up the whole width of the road. Where they found cars in the road, they drove over them and squashed them flat as pancakes. Once they entered the town, we didn't see them again. But we could still hear Kalashnikov fire, and the sound of B7 rocket launchers.

'At 10.30pm the Red Cross came to tell us that those who wanted could, at their own risk, spend the night with them, on condition that they returned to the beach by 5.30 the following morning. Many people decided not to budge. The Red Cross had asked the Israelis (in vain) to be allowed to bring milk for the children, and to evacuate the seriously wounded.

'I saw doctors crying in helpless rage, faced with wounded people who were bleeding profusely, for whom they could do nothing. In the end a number of wounded were taken off to hospital – to an Israeli hospital. There was one man who had his guts burst open. He was shouting, "I'm going to die ... but please, not in Israel." They took him away anyway, and he must have died down there.

'That night six women went into labour on the beach. Three of them were only seven months pregnant. The inhabitants of the town took it in turns to come and give blood. All the babies survived.

'On Tuesday at 5.30am the air force started bombing the city again. By this time it was obvious that they were doing it out of spite, just for the sake of destroying Tyre. Then they stopped. They went back into the city. Finally, at 4.30pm we heard that the operation had ended.

'But the three Palestinian camps which surrounded Tyre were still



holding out. We could clearly hear explosions and the rattle of machine-guns and Kalashnikovs. Then the Israelis came and ordered all men between the ages of 16 and 60 to step aside from the crowds gathered on the beach. We all thought they were going to kill them. The women all began crying again, but what could they do? The men were taken away.

'Later on, those who came back told us that they had been paraded under floodlights before being taken, one by one, in front of informers who were disguised behind hoods. Those who got through were given permits allowing them four days freedom of movement. The others – most of whom had nothing to do with anything – were taken on a bus which left for an unknown destination. Now we understood why so many people had been taken in. Those who had done "nothing wrong" were told by the Israelis: "Very good. Now, we want you to tell us who in Tyre is involved with politics and terrorism." In this way, by a process of cross-checking, they were able to get a far more precise idea of the exact role played by those they had arrested. And at the same time they were able to break the morale of the "innocent".'

'On Wednesday they began collecting up weapons. Some of these were hidden, others were given up. When the Israelis found a Kalashnikov abandoned in the street, they would never pick it up themselves. They told the children of Tyre to go and bring it to them, in case it was booby-trapped. On Thursday food lorries arrived. We had no choice but to accept food from it. How could we do otherwise? I believe that the systematic destruction undertaken by the Israelis was intended, among other things, to make us dependent on them. With our economy destroyed and an entire population to feed, we would be forced to trade with Israel...

'Doctors were issued with movement permits valid for one week. One of them told me that an Israeli officer had said that they would soon be issuing permits valid for six months. Six months. Do you realise what that means? It means that the Israelis are here to stay ...'

### **Stories from an apartment block**

*Beirut: 21 June 1982*

You would have to see Madame Miza to understand. She welcomes us as if we were the sun shining into her flat, a welcome fit for princes. Yet it is the first time that she has met us. Her natural laughter, her way of telling jokes, her free and easy broadmindedness and her mountainous body at once put us at ease. A masseuse by profession, Madame Miza is a Maronite.

'With forty children crying all around you, you only hear half the noise of the shells. So you're less frightened. Isn't that right, Nabil?'

Madame Miza's husband nods in agreement. He is a small man, with a slender moustache and a phlegmatic disposition. Madame Miza continues:

'Last night the shelling came pretty close. It was a real nuisance. We didn't get hit directly, but the house was shaking. I woke Nabil. I told him: "Nabil, the house is falling down." But we stayed in bed, in the dark, counting the number of seconds that separated the flash from the sound of the explosion. That helps you guess the distance, and it helps to pass the time. Isn't that right, Nabil?'

She laughs again, and turns for confirmation to her children and the neighbours who dropped in when they saw us arrive. Mr Nabil goes out to make coffee. Madame Miza continues with the story of her war.

'On Friday the airplanes came knocking. Or was it Friday? I'm sorry – with this war one gets one's dates very mixed up. Wait, I shall ask my husband. Nabil! Were the airplanes working on Friday?'

Everyone roars with laughter...

She continues: 'The next day, they attacked Tyre and Sidon. Bombs started to rain on Beirut. All the neighbours came down into my flat. Everyone was chattering nineteen to the dozen. People were beginning to make each other nervous. One of my neighbours said: "That's enough talk of politics." Another replied: "So, what do you want to talk about?" The first one said: "Maybe they'll come via Christian territory, via the Shouf [the Shouf mountain, a fiefdom of the Druzes under Walid Jumblatt]", and I said: "Let them come and let's have done with it." We went down to the basement, because we felt safer there. It's stifling down there, but the noise isn't so loud. One neighbour was listening to the radio. He's a Shi'ite from South Lebanon. "They've taken the South", he began to shout. I thought I'd cheer him up. I said: "My poor friend – you had chickens ... well, I'm sure they've eaten them by now. And right now they must be pulling up the onions and lettuces that you planted." ...

The housekeeper chimes in with a quotation from the Koran: 'I do not run from my curse, for the sky is my sky and the earth is my earth.'

'Anyway, we calmed down and decided to stay. It's been worse than the 1975-76 war. At that time we were living in the area of the big hotels, and Phalangist shells were falling all around us. But that was child's play in comparison ...'

On the next floor lives an Orthodox Christian family: a mother with four daughters. The youngest is 17. She admits quite openly that she is scared to death ... 'Work is the first problem,' she says. 'I went into work this morning. Obviously, there was nothing to do. But if you don't work, then you don't get paid. That's the way bosses are.'

Her mother, a French teacher in a private school, agrees: 'If I didn't have my private lessons, I'd never be able to manage. I'm talking about



normal times. So, just imagine it *now* ... We're five of us in the house, and there's the water, the electricity and the telephone bills to pay. Yesterday they were charging 2½£ Lebanese for a bag of bread. Today it's gone up to 3 pounds. Aubergines are 7 pounds a kilo ...'

'Five days ago we decided to leave for East Beirut. We took our Shi'ite neighbours with us. At the Phalangist barricade, just past the Museum, they told us that they were willing to let us through, but that our Shi'ite neighbours would have to turn back. I said that either we all went through, or nobody would go. They gave in. We found shelter with relatives living in Achrafie. It was unbearable. Even when you're staying with your brother, when you're not in your own house, you feel as if you're in the way. And anyway, all those Maronites look down on us because we're Orthodox. They think that they're the only Christians. I wouldn't say that they're actually happy with what is happening to the Muslims here. But they're not exactly angry that the Israelis are breaking the morale of West Beirut. By the end of two days I couldn't stand the atmosphere any longer. I find that if I'm not sleeping in my own bed, I generally can't sleep a wink. Here, this is our neighbourhood, this is where we grew up. Our neighbours are closer to us than our relations. The war itself has bound us together. Here people understand each other. In East Beirut, it's all fanaticism. The Phalangists think that they represent the Christians, but in reality they represent only themselves. On our way back they stopped us at the same crossing: "Why are you going to the West? It's going to be terrible. Wait for a few days." I replied: "*Ya ammi*, I want to go home. If we're going to die, I'd rather die at home." '

On the next floor, occupied by a Shi'ite family, the atmosphere is completely different. We are received by three sisters, aged between 30 and 35, in their nightdresses. The eldest has shining eyes, and a perpetual smile hovering on her lips.

'I'll talk to you when it's all over. Today it's still too early.'

'How are you managing to get along?'

'We eat, we sleep, we read the newspapers, and we listen to the news, and that's it.'

'Don't you go down to the basement for shelter?'

'No. We're the only ones in the block to stay put.'

She's still smiling, but there's no happiness in her smile.

'I suppose you could say that we're used to it. We're from Nabatiyeh. In South Lebanon we're already familiar with the Israelis. But I'll talk to you when it's all over.'

'Why won't you say anything?' The youngest of the three interrupts. 'I've got a few things that I'd like to say. What do we want? First, the Israelis must leave our country; second, we want a strong and fair Lebanese government; third, we want the Lebanese army to face up to

the enemy and not welcome them with open arms; fourth, we want the presidential palace to fire a symbolic shot against the aggressor ...'

On the fourth floor a whole gathering of neighbours is waiting for us. The men launch into broad political analyses, and the women tell us of their daily life. They tell us that we'd best not interview the Syrian family on the fifth floor. Given their situation, they would be hesitant to speak to us.

'This is not a normal war', says the master of the house, a Sunni Muslim. 'This is a war of genocide. We're now caught up in it too. The silent majority is now being hit, as well as the vocal minority. This is what the Arab nations want. In their heart of hearts, they would be quite glad to get rid of the Palestinians. This is wholesale treachery. All this began with the Israeli-Egyptian agreement (Camp David). And now we are paying the price. At least Sadaat was an honest traitor, though. In the end we'll regret ever being born Arabs.'

'The Lebanese state is going to be destroyed, with the active or passive compliance of everyone concerned', his Druze neighbour predicts gloomily. 'The Lebanese has become a refugee in his own country. The whole world's solemn declarations will not console one single Lebanese child. I was in the Shouf when the Israelis came in. The Syrians fled from Jezzine to Mdeirej, a distance of 60 kilometres. The Shouf was counting on them. But they left their positions, one after another, and fled, along with the refugees.'

A third neighbour chimes in: 'It's not the Israelis who have attacked us, but the notorious American "Rapid Deployment Force". They're trying out their weapons, sharpening their teeth. Take note and write it down: We would like to thank President Reagan for the presents he has been showering on Beirut.'

The lady of the house interrupts: 'We never expected that our "Arab brothers" would sell out two entire nations. The Palestinians had neither land nor sky. They were living on the sand. And now they're being chased out. They want to disperse them yet again ...'

A fortnight earlier, Beirut had had enough of the Palestinians. Maybe the lady only believes half of what she is saying. Maybe she just says these things because we're the foreign press. But for the moment it seems that the bombs have given the inhabitants of the city a sense of a shared destiny.

'All these children who have been killed,' she continues, 'what have they done to deserve this? What are we going to tell our children? And what will they say to theirs? What's going to become of my daughter? Even now, every time she hears an ambulance siren, she presses her hands to her ears and goes white as a sheet. Of course, we can rebuild the houses. But who can bring back people's husbands, their parents, their children, their wives? Who is going to pay that cost? It's a cost



that can't be counted in money. And once honour is lost, it never comes back ...'

## **The camps**

*Beirut: 29 July 1982*

*Shatila:* The surrounding scene looks like something from the Apocalypse. The woman, her head wrapped in a scarf, her baby in her arms and another child between her legs, provides almost a living image of the tragedy of the Palestinians. But when we tell her this, she says, 'What tragedy?' shrugging her shoulders.

Then, there's another problem – her smile. A completely devastating, radiant smile that lights up her face. The English photographer with me asks if I can get her to stop smiling. He wants a serious picture, a front page picture, against the background of a ruined Palestinian camp. But she refuses. 'Nothing will stop me smiling. As Abu Ammar [Arafat] says, "Mountain, this little gust of wind is not going to shift you." My house is destroyed? In that case, to hell with my house! I'm not going to get upset over a little thing like that ...'

She is very young and very beautiful. Above her head stand the burnt-out remains of what was previously the City Sports Centre, bombed so many times previously, and bombed again the night before. Yesterday you could still have driven your car into this corner of the camp. Today the road is blocked by two big shell craters, three metres across. We have come into the camp on foot. All around us the camp is in ruins. Of all the small one-storey houses that used to stand in the camp, only one is still intact.

A few soldiers and residents of the camp come and gather around us. Their suspicion of foreign journalists gradually melts away. We chat with them. Suddenly there is a whirring from the photographer's camera. He has succeeded in getting a serious photograph. For an instant the very young woman facing us had stopped smiling. With a slight frown and a piercing glance she is still more beautiful. You can tell that she has something terrible on her mind.

'Do you see that piece of shrapnel?' she says, pointing to a piece of jagged metal, about thirty centimetres long. 'How I wish that it would fall on the head of Reagan or Begin and split them in two.'

A journalist from *Newsweek* is with us. He asks, 'How old are you?'

'Any age you like.'

'Nineteen?'

'Nineteen.'

'You already have two children ...'

'We Palestinian women marry young so that we can bring up new generations of fighters.'

*Bourj el-Brajneh:* The main street of this camp is buzzing with activity. The fruit and vegetable vendors have spread out their wares on the sidewalk. At the corner café a row of men sit, smoking *nargilehs*. You would never think that last night and the night before and the night before that bombs and shells had pounded these streets ceaselessly. Seen from the centre of Beirut the spectacle was truly terrifying. The sky turned red with each explosion, and the clouds of smoke rising from the southern suburbs were so dense that they blocked out the moon and much of the moonlit mountains in the distance ... A few graffiti, a few badly-fitting doors, and on the street-corners shell holes and the marks of exploding shrapnel. The vast majority of the inhabitants of Bourj el-Brajneh have left and sought refuge in the centre of Beirut.

We come across a grocer who has stayed behind. He sits behind his jars of seeds and spices. His stall is tiny. He tells us his story. He tells how, in 1948, he left his native Galilee, chased out by the terror tactics of the Haganah and the Stern Gang. He describes how Jews and Arabs lived together peacefully in Palestine, and how their troubles only began with the arrival of the European Jews. He explains how he has lived in Bourj el-Brajneh for thirty-four years, and that three of his children live with him, while the other three are abroad – one in the United States, one in the Soviet Union, and the other in Yugoslavia.

‘Why are you staying here? It’s very dangerous.’

‘Because we mustn’t leave the soldiers all on their own. Who’s going to look after them?’

‘What’s your name?’

‘My name is Palestine, and my mother’s name is Jerusalem.’

‘No, but seriously ...’

‘I don’t want to tell you. I’m frightened that the Mossad [Israeli secret services] might do something to harm my children.’

As we might have expected, he stubbornly refuses to accept any payment for the drinks he has given us.

*Mar Elias:* Mar Elias is a small camp situated just at the southern exit from Beirut ...

We find ourselves sitting in the front room of a neat little house. Velvet-covered red armchairs stand against the walls. Our host is a 75-year-old man, sitting cross-legged on a mat. He welcomes us effusively. Tea is soon served. We hardly have time to introduce ourselves before the three young men who have brought us to the old man’s house all start talking, all at once. You can see that our presence gives them a chance to unload the weight of tension that has built up in them during the previous nights of bombing and shelling. They need to talk with us, explain to us. They keep interrupting each other.

The old man starts: ‘I am Lebanese, from southern Lebanon. I live



here, in Mar Elias, and nothing is going to shift me. Why do they say that Lebanon is divided by religion? I am a Shi'ite, and that lad facing you is a Maronite.'

'That's right. I am Lebanese and a Maronite, and I am in solidarity with the Palestinians. My name is Elias [Arabic version of Elie], and I would not change it for all the gold in the world. This is ...'

Our ageing host interrupts, pointing to our guide: 'And he, he is a Christian Palestinian.'

Our guide speaks: 'I'm from Bethlehem. I am a practising Christian. Look.'

He rolls up the sleeve of his combat jacket and shows us a cross tattooed on his forearm. I manage to get a question in.

'You've got a bandaged foot. Were you wounded?'

'It happened last week when the bomb fell here. I was on the second floor. It threw me down to the ground floor. I sprained my ankle. I was hit by a couple of pieces of shrapnel, too.'

He gets up, turns around, and shows us two holes in his trousers. 'Excuse my language ... you've a young lady with you ... Anyway, I got shrapnel in my bum, and it's still there.'

The assembled company roars with laughter. A sort of tense euphoria has filled the room. I say: 'You seem very happy, all of you.'

'Why shouldn't we be happy?' explains the Palestinian. 'We are alive, and we are free. We are not retreating before the enemy – we're holding him off. We've got something to be happy about. Have you heard what happened in Sidon? Have you heard the news about the Israeli colonel who resigned for reasons of conscientious objection? I repeat, why shouldn't we be happy? King Hussein may be a king – but I feel more king than him!'

Everyone present agrees eagerly. A powerful sense of emotion unites those present. They seem closer to each other than the closest of families.

'And, anyway,' continues the Palestinian, 'what can happen to us? We might die – but that would be good. Because from happiness to martyrdom, the road is short.' (He makes an untranslatable pun on the word for happiness, *sa'ada*, which has a similar sound to *chahada*, martyrdom.)

At that moment a woman comes into the house. She is about 50 and has a 12-year-old girl with her. She is the lady of the house. She puts an enormous bunch of grapes in front of us.

'The grapevine was hit by a shell', she explains. 'But it's still got fruit on it.'

'Why do they keep saying that Lebanon is divided by religion?' the old man continues, returning to his theme. Pierre and Bashir Gemayel say that they're more Lebanese than us! It's a lie. They come from Egypt, and they're Copts by descent. Myself, I can tell you the names

of my father and grandfather and all my forefathers. Write it down. My father's name was Hassan; his father was Baker; then came Ali, and Hussein. They are buried in Bint Jbeil [southern Lebanon]; Hussein's father was Ghassan, and his father Imad. They are buried at Jez-zine ... Would you like me to continue?'

'No, it's all right. That will do.'

As we left, our host insisted on us accepting a present – a bottle of orange juice that he gives to the girl accompanying us. It was impossible to refuse.

*Shatila: 9 August 1982*

... We begin our tour of the camp. Under the midday sun the crickets hidden among the pine trees are making a devilish racket. Little alleyways snake between the one-storey houses. The sand gets into your shoes. The houses are made of breezeblocks or corrugated iron, topped off by makeshift roofs that are held in place by the weight of old tyres or stones to prevent them from blowing away. The refugees have left the camp in order to find new refuge in the centre of Beirut. Before leaving they have locked their doors with small padlocks whose security value is more symbolic than real. The whole camp smacks of absence. On the ground lie empty food tins, empty Pepsi cans, a book in Arabic squashed by a piece of shrapnel. A little further on, pages from an abandoned duplicated copy of the Lebanese Constitution are blowing down the road.

A thousand little signs tell you that the camp's inhabitants did what they could to turn this jumbled mass of rambling shacks into a semblance of home. Some walls have been painted with slightly childlike wall-paintings, in which the colour blue stands out. In more than one doorway there are empty powdered milk tins filled with earth. The heat of the August sun has dried out the plants that were growing in them, but the thought is there. The bougainvilleas that climb up the fronts of some of the houses, and the rubber plants peeping over the tops of some of the walls seem to have survived better; the overhanging grapevines, too ...

At the exit from the camp we come on a gathering of people. A bomb dropped by an airplane three days previously has fractured a water pipe. The bomb crater has turned into a little pond, and the whole neighbourhood comes here to get water. Women squat and wash clothes, and then move off with their big tin tubs balanced on their heads. Others hold cans under the bits of water-piping sticking out in order to collect drinking water. Soldiers strip down to their underwear and immerse themselves in the water. We sit down a little way off, smoking a cigarette and watching people come and go. After all, since the dawn of time, watering spots have been the place where people have met and made contact. Even our reserved soldier friend has become a



little more talkative.

'I was born in a village not far from Nablus, on the West Bank. I arrived in Lebanon in 1975.'

'Will you be involved in the evacuation of the 10,000 fighters from Beirut?'

'In principle, only those who arrived in 1948 and 1967 have the right to remain.'

'So are you willing to leave?'

'I haven't yet packed my bags, but I shall follow the orders given by the leaders of my organisation, Fatah. If they tell me to go, then, yes, I shall go ...'

*Bourj el-Brajneh: 10 August 1982*

In the high-ceilinged basement of a building on the outskirts of the camp, Palestinian women sit in a circle on the mats on the ground. Old women, mothers, hardly visible in the darkness, recognisable only by their long white scarves.

One of them smokes a *nargileh*; another blows on charcoal. A camping-gas lamp in the middle of the circle lights up the scene and casts long shadows against the wall. The surrounding concrete pillars create areas of intimacy.

When I ask how things have been going, and whether they suffered badly in the bombings of Wednesday night, a white-haired woman takes me on an underground tour. She takes me by the hand and shows me the way. She realises that my eyes have not yet adjusted from the daylight outside. We stop in front of a little pile of cinders. She tells me to look up. Through a hole in the roof you can see a small area of light. 'The shell came in through there. A phosphorous shell. But we were able to put it out.'

She leads me on. We pass the exit from the basement area, a gentle slope going up to the outside world. A slightly orange light filters through suspended dust. At the bottom of the ramp a girl sits with a baby in her arms, looking for all the world like a madonna.

We continue on our way, her in front and me behind. The basements of the buildings are intercommunicating. Suddenly we enter another cellar. Once again, pillars, and yet another world peopled by white-scarved ghosts sitting in a circle.

When we get back to our own circle a few minutes later, a lively discussion is underway. The women are wondering whether the fighters – that is, their children – will be able to leave Beirut safe and sound, or whether the Israeli army will try to attack the city and slaughter them.

'Does the evacuation involve you?'

'In principle, no,' replies one of the women. 'The *fedayeen* who have to leave are those who came to Lebanon after 1967. We are refugees

from 1948, we are Lebanese Palestinians. But some fighters, the children of the 1948 refugees, will also have to leave. And they won't be able to take their families with them ...'

Another woman chimes in: 'Bourj el-Brajneh itself dates from 1948. When we arrived there was nothing here but sand and jackals. The Palestinians built this camp with their own hands. They built house after house, with money hard-earned by fathers, brothers and sons who had emigrated to Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Dubai. I remember how it was in my house; we never opened the windows at the back, so as not to hear the jackals baying in the night. Let me tell you, money didn't grow on trees in this place.'

'Everything that you see here,' explains a third woman, 'the whole of Bourj el-Brajneh, has taken an entire lifetime to build, to raise it from the sand. We had to scrimp and save to get a few belongings, buy a few pieces of furniture.'

She waves her hand around her, as if to say that, for her, the Palestinian camp was heaven on earth.

'Everything that we have built,' says another, 'everything that we have done over the last thirty-four years, has been destroyed by the Israelis in this war. They want to scatter us yet again. We're used to it. But the children who have been born here, who have never known any other country but this, for whom Bourj el-Brajneh, despite everything, is home ... how are they going to be able to leave?'

Coffee is served. The young lads bring it in and run out again. The tray is passed around, the *nargileh* too. Silence reigns. The Lebanese friend who brought me here explains to the assembled company that, in his opinion, the Israelis will move on to the offensive, on the one hand in order to annihilate the PLO, but also in order to install in Beirut a regime favourable to themselves.

'Israel', he explains, 'wants to see a puppet president installed who can then sign a peace treaty. Then a set of unequal economic relations will be set up. Already Israeli agricultural produce is invading our markets. I have seen 7-centimetre cucumbers, completely tasteless, in the markets. The sort of cucumbers that we have never grown. And I've seen apples ...'

'Yes,' one of the young women interrupts, dreamily, 'I've seen apples, too.' She makes a gesture as if she is holding one in her hand. She lifts it up as if to smell it. 'They're Israeli apples. But they're also Palestinian apples. I have smelt them. I recognised those apples. They come from the village of Telchiha.'

### **To kill an idea**

*Beirut: 12 August 1982*

Israel's murderous activities around Beirut have run into extra time.



The pilots take off from airports in northern Israel. Within minutes they are over the besieged Lebanese capital. They carry out a dummy run over their designated targets. Behind them they drop regularly-spaced decoy flares, designed to draw the anti-aircraft fire of the SAM missiles. Then they come over on a second run. The computer on board triggers the plane's firing mechanism, and it drops its lethal load. Several tons of metal drop to earth, blasting buildings, killing and mutilating people, and tearing up the ground ... From six in the morning to the end of the day the skies over Beirut are hardly empty for a moment.

The Israelis' naval guns and land artillery have also played their part. The four Palestinian camps in the southern part of the city have been hit again and again. Sabra, Shatila, Bourj el-Brajneh and Mar Elias. Leaving aside any political or military considerations, it seems that Israel is pursuing a policy of destruction for its own sake. The camps in southern Lebanon have been bulldozed flat. The camps in Beirut are being systematically destroyed, from a distance. Israel's intention is that, at the end of the war, the Palestinians should have no roof over their heads. The Israelis work methodically ...

Many of the Palestinian refugees from the deserted camps have taken shelter in the two-storey basement of Beirut's shopping centre, the 'Concorde'. Two thousand people, the majority of them women and children, are crammed together in this small space ...

### *Beirut: 13 August 1982*

Friday the 13th. Seventieth day of the war; sixty-ninth day of the siege. The city woke up painfully this morning to a situation of complete calm. A normal, peaceful summer's day. Those daily newspapers which are still appearing published several pages showing the destruction and the horrors of the day before. Scenes of everyday life in summer 1982 ...

But the people of Beirut have gone beyond anger and indignation. They no longer have the strength. The city is in the grip of a kind of gloomy fatalism, a feeling that everything is useless. The Palestinians had just agreed to a whole set of concessions; only a few points of detail stood in the way of final agreement; but still the birds of ill omen came back for eleven hours on end, dropping their bombs on a virtually unarmed population. Just like that, gratuitously, with impunity, in order to kill and maim.

A shrug of the shoulders greets the moral outrage of the outside world. Reactions are a little half-hearted as people hear the news of the disagreements within the Israeli cabinet, the belated anger of America's President Reagan, and the Security Council resolution calling for the lifting of the blockade of Beirut ...

People are confused by Israel's apparent determination. In a way

this has been a phoney war. Israel invaded Lebanon and destroyed its capital city in order to kill an *idea* – the idea of the existence of a Palestinian people. This show of strength has been fundamentally important for Israel. It is by this means that Israel hopes to become one of the world's important countries, hopes to 'join the others'. Leaving aside all political and military calculations, this war has an almost metaphysical aspect. In order to exist, one has to make the other disappear. The problem is that this disappearance can only be symbolic. Whatever may be said by certain people who have lost their sense of proportion, the Israelis as a nation are not unanimous about this war. They are not capable of physical liquidation of an entire people. Therefore, they are obliged to try and annihilate them in moral terms.

What more can one say? The Palestinians have no land, nothing that belongs to them in their own right. They have nothing that can be held to ransom, to force them into an agreement. All they have is an idea in their heads, the idea that they belong to a nation. How can this idea be rooted out? All that you can ask of them is that they disperse. They reel under their blows, but they refuse to comply. The law of the jungle applies. But military force and metaphysics have always made bad bedfellows. Metaphysics plays tricks, and it can sometimes end by turning things into their opposite. Remember the parable of the 'last shall be first'.

By refusing to evacuate Beirut thus far, the Palestinians have shown that they are not about to disappear into nothingness. Perhaps just the contrary. Beirut may be worn out, bled dry, and subjected to a daily pounding, but its Lebanese and Palestinian population are still holding out. Faced with an Arab world that is powerless and defeated, this resistance of the weak has become a kind of challenge for the future. Who can say, who would dare to say, that as from today the Palestinian people is not a reality?

### **The evacuation**

*Beirut: 20 August 1982*

Things go on pretty much as normal. The women stand in an orderly queue at the entrance of the refugee aid office. An everyday routine for the volunteers in charge. While one of them writes down names and checks their papers, another hands over food (sugar, lentils, powdered milk, etc.), and a third fills cooking pots with margarine. A very everyday scene – but, as she goes out, one of the women turns around. She is recognisable by her accent.

'I would just like to say', she says in a low voice, 'that this is the last time I shall be coming for supplies. Next week we will have gone.'

The aid committee has never differentiated between Palestinian and



Lebanese refugees. Food distribution has never been segregated. But the woman's words suddenly draw a dividing line between those who are leaving and those who will stay. Just before disappearing, she adds: 'I wanted to thank you for everything you've done.'

On the balcony of a first-floor flat where they have been living since the start of the war, a dozen young Palestinians have gathered. For two and a half months they have lived the same lives, shared the same privations, run the same risks together.

'Myself,' says one of them, 'I was born in Bourj el-Brajneh. My parents came there in 1948. I'm staying in Lebanon. What the future holds, I have no idea. Whether Gemayel wins the presidency of the Republic, or someone else, it's not going to be easy for us. There's certain to be repression. I shall try to return to my studies, and to start a new life. But I shall still remain a member of Fatah. I think that our conditions of struggle are going to be very different. We are going to have to organise clandestinely ... But the truth is that none of us knows what's going to happen. What guarantees do we have?'

Another joins in: 'I was born in Jordan. I arrived in Lebanon in 1970, after Hussein declared war on us. I have not set foot in Jordan since. How is the Jordanian government going to treat us when we arrive I have no idea. But we have no choice. We have to leave. At least I'll be seeing my relations again, and the places where I grew up ...'

One of them is leaving for Cairo; another for Tunis; a third is going to Amman, and another to Sanaa. Already they are beginning to live for tomorrow. They're still together, but they're already, in a sense, apart. The Israelis' war has not only created a division between Lebanese and Palestinians; it has also divided the Palestinians by countries of destination ...

Everything is ready for D-Day – this August 21st which will go down in history as the end of the Israeli-Palestinian part of the war ...

The problem with historic events is that when they happen, they seem already to belong to the past. At 5.00am, in the port of Beirut, now emptied of Israeli troops, 350 French paratroopers arrive. They are the vanguard of the multinational force. Six hours later, the first fifty PLO fighters to be evacuated embark on a Greek ship bound for Cyprus. All of a sudden it begins to seem like a play which has to reach a conclusion and must provide a symbol for what happened, for an action that is past and gone.

Beirut is now embarking on the next stage. In private, the Palestinians are frankly sad and worried. One more time they must pack their bags. Yet again, they pick up their bundles. They are the region's new Wandering Jews. As for the Beirutis, they are becoming increasingly worried about what is going to happen once the PLO leaves ...

On Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, booby-trapped cars were left in the streets of Beirut. The first one exploded and injured four people.

The other two were defused in time. The second contained 200 kilos of Israeli-made explosives. And it had come from East Beirut that same morning.

So, it is not only for sentimental reasons that the people of the besieged capital view the departure of the Palestinians on their ships with apprehension. Seen from Beirut, Lebanon is a wholly occupied country: 65 per cent occupied by the Israeli army, and the rest by the Syrians. The 2,130 men of the multinational force, whose mandate is limited to thirty days, will only be able to provide relative protection. As the Palestinians start to take their leave, Beirut fears that it will be punished for having welcomed them in the first place, and for having stayed standing when everyone expected it to lie down ...

*Beirut: 22 August 1982*

The floodgates finally broke as the gates of the municipal stadium opened and the first lorries of the military convoy emerged. At once a barrage of gunfire split the air, accompanied by the sound of cheering and weeping, the expressions of anger and of the emotions of brotherhood. At once thousands of hands reached skywards in a defiant V-for-victory salute, a sign of victory, but also a promise that the struggle will continue. Until this point, people had managed to keep their emotions contained ... Until this point, the scenario planned by the PLO – for a dignified evacuation, a disciplined retreat in new uniforms – had been more or less respected. But in the event, emotions proved too strong.

The first lorry to appear carried a living human tableau, a deeply touching scenario. The fighters stood on top of the lorry displaying Palestinian and Lebanese flags, a portrait of Yasser Arafat and raising their Kalashnikovs to the sky. The dam of pent-up emotions broke. The crowd moved and surged as one body, reaching out to the men mounted on the lorry ...

A few metres down the road, a man slips and bangs his head on a car bonnet. He utters an uncontrolled torrent of curses and abuse, not knowing whom to blame. Around him, Palestinian women make no attempt to conceal the tears rolling down their cheeks. They are all dressed in black. The emotion is so intense that even some of the journalists present looked visibly upset and tearful. I saw some cameramen who could not bring themselves to film the scene – at such moments the intrusion of the voyeur would have seemed indecent ...

It's only now that you realise that you have never seen the Palestinians gathered together in such great numbers. Usually they only show themselves in small groups of four or five, ten at most. They don't even gather in large numbers on the war front, having always operated as guerrilla forces. Nor do you ever see them surrounded by their families. Now, though, in the stadium, as they make their final



preparations for departure, you suddenly discover that they have mothers, sisters, wives and children ...

No smiles. Only serious, emotion-wracked faces. No place for pleasantries. Only anger and mourning. 'We held out for seventy-nine days. A lot longer than any Arab country. We held out for seventy-nine days in the hopes that something would happen, that the paralysed Arab world would finally come out of its lethargy, would gather its forces, and would react. A waste of time. The Arab world is fucked. So, since we can expect nothing from them, since this is the way it is, we have no choice but to leave ... But this is only a postponement.' ...

The convoy begins to move off. The city opens up before it, for a last farewell. Men, women and children are gathered all along the roadside. They raise the V-for-victory sign, and shout aloud: '*Saura, Saura, hatta al Nasr!*' (Revolution, revolution, until victory!). This Fatah slogan is virtually synonymous with the Palestinian revolution. It is found at the bottom of all PLO correspondence, even on the credentials issued to journalists. But this time the familiar, almost routine slogan takes on the quality almost of a quietly voiced declaration of war, a feeling at once poignant and sombre. Once again, people's voices can hardly be heard above the rattle of gunfire that accompanies the convoy on its way into the city. Gradually the firing spreads through the whole city. Now it's not just Kalashnikovs. Other guns join in: heavy machine-guns, anti-aircraft guns, and artillery. Beirut is ablaze with gunfire. This deafening din is the city's salute to the departing PLO fighters. So much for the advice given earlier, that people should not fire off their guns because it's dangerous and because it wastes ammunition. Once again, the dam of emotion has broken. Hundreds of thousands of bullets are expended in honour of the evacuees. And the children, armed with plastic bags, run to pick up the cartridge cases from the ground where they have fallen.

By now the convoy has reached the Fakhani district; half destroyed and three-quarters deserted. But there are still women on the balconies, showering the passing convoy with handfuls of rice. On the pavements the menfolk have gathered in a guard of honour for the fighters, to give them heart and tell them that they will not be forgotten. Mazraa, too, the Sunni quarter of Beirut, salutes the travellers. The Nasserites of Morabitoun are in full battle dress. They, too, pay their respects, firing off volley after volley.

One after another, the convoy passes through the various different quarters of Beirut. Mar Elias, the Catholic district, is no less warm and welcoming than the others. The militia of the Progressive Socialist Party (Jumblatt's party) welcome the convoy in Caracol el-Druze. Then come the Kurds in Wadi Abu Jamil, Beirut's ancient Jewish quarter. A little further on, it is the turn of the soldiers of the Syrian 85 Brigade, under their commander Mohamed Halal, seen as a hero

because of his conduct in the battles around the airport. Like the rest of the city, they, too, fire in the air. The crowds are sometimes so thick in the streets that the convoy is forced to stop. Here and there banners and posters are waved. Some are written in English or French: 'Sharon = Nero', 'All roads lead to Jerusalem', 'Beirut is proud of you'. Most, though, are in Arabic: 'Beirut salutes the Palestinian heroes', 'Beirut, the resistance, salutes you', 'From today, no more talk of Arabism'. This last banner also has a string of insults questioning the propriety of the wives and sisters of the Arab nations ... The Arabs. They, at a distance, are the main target for the anger of those who are leaving and those who stay behind. The anger is not directed against Israel. Israel is the enemy and has behaved as such. The full brunt fell on their self-styled 'brothers'!

Standing on the back of one of the lorries, a fighter cracks. With bloodshot eyes he screams in a voice that is hardly human. He curses the Arab nations at the top of his voice, with all the force he can muster, with all the hatred in his heart: 'I am not an Arab!', he shouts. 'I am not an Arab! I am only a Palestinian! And the Palestinians are in league with the devil!' He bawls himself utterly hoarse, and yet manages to make himself heard over the raucous clatter of gunfire. His words are taken up by the swaying crowd and feed their anger, their fury, the tears in their eyes ...

After the battle of Beirut, these Palestinians feel themselves more Palestinian than ever. The Israeli government is under an illusion if it believes that they will resign themselves to the reverse they have suffered, or that now they will accept integration into the Arab nations who have let them down so badly, or that they will participate in any Camp David agreement which gives them nothing more than a vague administrative autonomy on the West Bank.

It was in the aftermath of the 1948 defeat that Arab nationalism flooded into the region, bringing down one government after another. The long battle of Beirut, and the way it has resolved itself in the absence of any Arab presence, may prove more explosive still. In an Arab world that has fallen on its face, there is no doubt that if such a movement emerges anew it will take the example of the besieged Lebanese capital as its starting-point. The image of the Palestinians, under arms, crowded into lorries and driving through the ruins of a half-destroyed city to the thunderous applause of the city's people will not soon be forgotten. Israel has sown the wind ...



## The defence of Beirut: report from the front-line

Defending Beirut against the onslaught of the advancing Israeli forces was a political not merely a military achievement. It involved mobilising the limited capabilities of a people to defeat the enemy's intention of taking over the city. The significance of the battle lies in the fact that an economically and organisationally weaker people, supported by poorly armed fighters and harbouring no illusions about the military and technological superiority of the adversary nor about his intentions, decided to fight rather than surrender or flee.

It has been argued among Israeli and western observers that Israel did not storm Beirut in deference to civilian human life. This is manifestly untrue. The Israelis showed no such deference. In addition to the saturation bombing of densely populated urban areas (millions of kilograms of high explosives were targeted on an area of roughly fifteen square kilometres inhabited by over half a million people for a period of over eight weeks), Israel used internationally prohibited weapons, including fragmentation bombs, cluster bombs and phosphorous bombs. They employed sudden and random shelling during cease-fires – and since at these times the streets thronged with people who had emerged from bomb shelters in search of food, water and missing relations, this tactic ensured heavy civilian casualties. The Israelis also experimented with new weapons, such as the concussion bomb (also known as the Hobo bomb) and with new precision

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*Race & Class*, XXIV, 4(1983)

guidance systems – both of which were directed at buildings known to be inhabited by civilians. The Aker building, in Sinaia district, for example was brought down by a concussion bomb on a Saturday morning when 250 of its inhabitants were still in their apartments. The precision guidance systems, for their part, targeted buildings and more particularly basements in which were gathered thousands of civilians escaping the inferno of the streets. Last, during five of the more than eight weeks of siege, the Israeli army interrupted electrical and water supplies to West Beirut and prevented all food, medicine, fuel and commodities from entering the city.

The Israelis did, in fact, attempt to take the city many times, and failed in the face of a determined resistance. After every failure, they escalated their bombing to soften that resistance. With every escalation, steps were taken within the city to stiffen resistance. As resistance grew and solidified, the Israelis found an increase in the norms used to measure the possible effects of an assault on the city: estimated (Israeli) casualties, estimated loss of military hardware, estimated duration of battle. The strength of the resistance was the major factor in inhibiting the Israeli entry into Beirut. Outstanding work was done not only in the military, political, diplomatic and cultural arenas, but in all aspects of daily life which were restructured to serve the resistance. It is this vast mobilisation that this paper addresses.

### *The military forces*

The Israeli army amassed roughly 50,000 troops directly on the city's perimeter, with over 1,000 tanks. An additional 35,000 troops were within half-an-hour's convoy run from the city. An extensive array of artillery pieces supported these troops, for example, hundreds of 175mm self-propelled howitzers. Throughout the siege the Israeli air force launched sortie after sortie – 220 on 1 August alone; the navy blocked sea lanes to the city, continually shelled it and attempted several amphibious landings.

In contrast, roughly 20,000 fighters defended the city, 8,000 of whom were irregulars who had joined during the war. Their weapons were mainly Kalashnikovs, grenades and rocket-propelled grenades (RPG7). They also held a few heavier calibre machine-guns. A small artillery capability, kept extremely mobile at great risk to their crews, proved exacting to the enemy. Daily, they managed to fire 500-1000 rounds of counter-battery and other fire. A conservative estimate of firepower ratio between defenders and attackers was 1:5000.

The Israeli forces attempted to advance on the city along seven lines of attack. With great difficulty, and high casualties and losses, they managed to advance a sum total of one-quarter of a kilometre along six of these lines. They advanced over a kilometre on the seventh. Moreover, the Israelis attempted no less than a dozen major landing



operations on three points along the Beirut beaches for the purpose of establishing beachheads. Each of these attempts was repulsed.

The Israeli forces pumped several million kilograms of high explosives into the city for the sixty days of siege. The area of the bombed region was less than 15 sq km. Conservatively speaking, this amounted to 150,000kg per sq km of high explosives (0.15 kg per sq metre) or 2,500 kg per sq km per day.

### *The defence of Khalde*

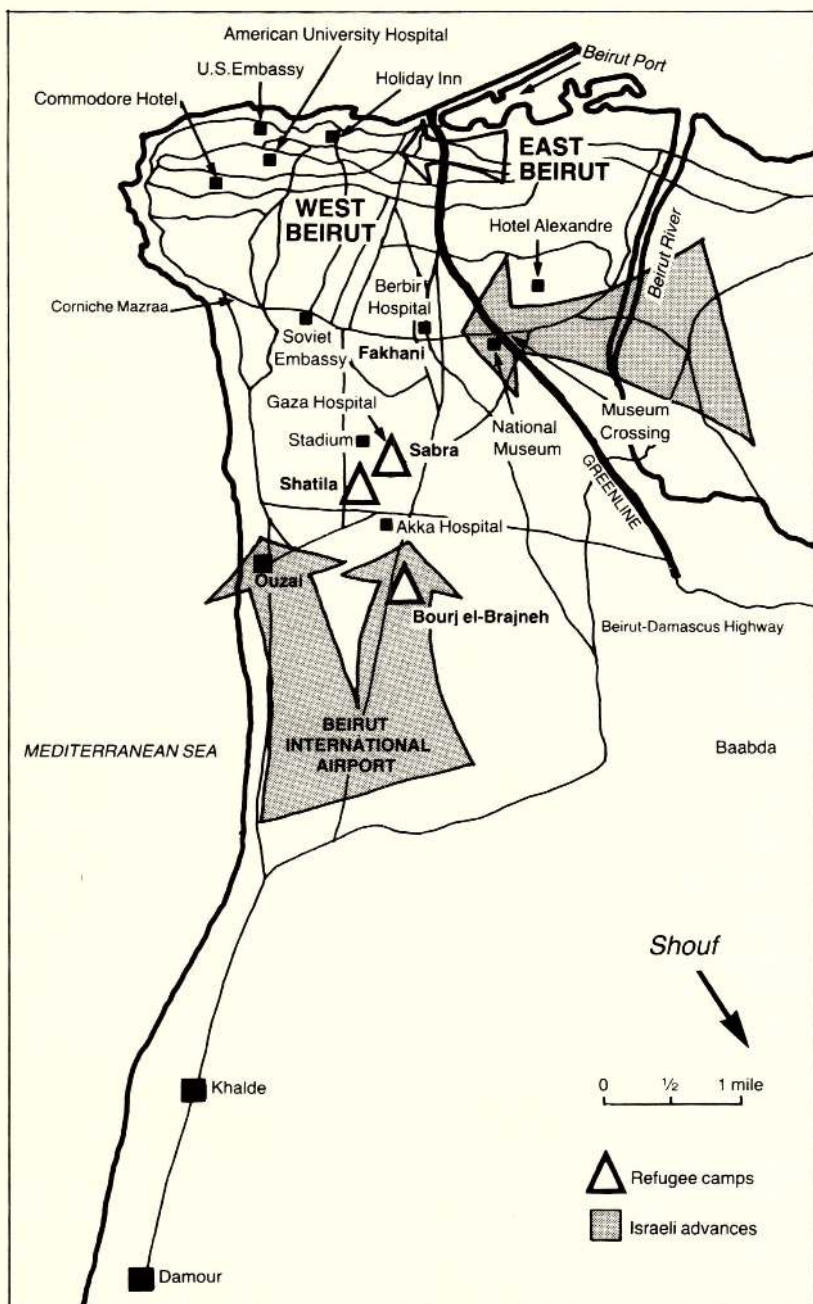
The advancing Israeli forces employed a strategy of rapid forward movement combined with the encirclement of centres of resistance. They arrived at the southern outskirts of Beirut six days after the start of hostilities on 4 June 1982, while fighting continued for over a month in many locations in the south, especially around towns and cities. The Israeli advance was halted unexpectedly in the suburban residential area of Khalde by the Joint (Lebanese-Palestinian) Forces who had stationed a small force there. The battle unfolded over several days, and proved fateful in its implications for the course of the war.

The Israelis pressed on Khalde from two directions, from the south the land forces moved along the Damour-Beirut highway, and from the sea landings were attempted on the Khalde beaches. The Israelis rushed towards the Khalde road junction, less than a kilometre north of which they were brought to a halt. Control of that road junction would have given them – six days after the start of the war – control over the remaining highway connections from West Beirut to the Damascus-Beirut highway, to the east mountains and the Shouf region, and to the south.

The stiff resistance offered the Israelis by the small Joint Forces contingent at Khalde was not only unexpected by the Israelis, but also astounding in terms of the success that the defenders had in beating the much larger, significantly better equipped and far denser firepower of their attackers. Thus, the Khalde battle, along with battles in the south, proved an inspiration for the defenders of Beirut. Furthermore, the Khalde battle provided the necessary few days to complete preparations for the defence of Beirut. The Israelis took Khalde only after they had penetrated the Shouf mountain area and come down from the mountains to add a third east-west line of attack on Khalde several days later.

### *The military defence of Beirut*

The besieged area included West Beirut proper and the southern suburbs, (ie, Bourj el-Brajneh, Sheiah, Hai Al-Sulum, Al-Lailaki, Beir Hassan, the airport area, Sultan Ibrahim, Sabra, Shatila, Harat Huriak, Al-Goubari and Tariq Al-Judida). This area was divided into eight semi-autonomous military sectors, each having its own military





command and field operations. All of these reported to central operations. Each military sector was supplied with sufficient ammunition, food and equipment if the other sectors collapsed. Weapon depots were open to the public. Everyone, irrespective of age, capable of using arms was granted the right to receive weapons, ranging from hand guns to automatic rifles and grenades. The tens of thousands of people who received these served as a people's militia, defending their neighbourhoods and homes.

The mining of the streets, of potential lines of attack, became a collective effort not only for fighters and engineering units but for the whole public. As soon as the shelling stopped and the airplanes disappeared, whether because of nightfall or a temporary cease-fire arrangement, thousands of local residents and fighters, usually helped by one or two previously trained persons, would rush to the streets close by to mine those that were not absolutely needed for the survival of the local population. The setting up of anti-tank embankments was another form of collective action for the defence of the city. Every known means of excavating and hauling soil was employed, from the powerful bulldozer-truck combinations to hand shovels. Children were innovators: the same small tins used to carry water for families from public water pumps, were seen in the afternoon holding a little soil to help set up embankments. Beirut was defended not only by the will and determination of its fighters, but by the innovation of its children.

On the eve of the war, several organisations had small artillery pieces stationed in the city. There were not many of them, and the lack of coordination among the units substantially reduced their combat effectiveness. However, the dedication and experience of officers and gunners was good, and these units participated actively in the city's defence. As the battle extended itself, artillery was integrated under a joint command. The joint command received additional personnel who had withdrawn from the south. The new unit effectively hammered enemy concentrations on the city's perimeter, while eluding the hunter aircraft of the enemy. At many points during the battles, enemy generals made statements to the effect that only one artillery piece was left in Beirut. When the war ended, over 50 per cent of artillery and rocket launchers in Beirut were still operational.

The anti-armour hand-carried weapon known as the RPG7 (rocket-propelled grenade) won the title 'king of the battle'. On the primary lines of attack, the fighters went to within twenty to fifty metres of the attacking Israeli heavy tanks to cripple or destroy them. The very epitome of armed might was thus, on numerous occasions, defeated by the exposed fighter using the RPG7 – fatal at this close range.

In a farewell speech given by Abu Ammar a day before his departure from Beirut, he implored the Beirutis and other Arabs to remember 'that one hundred and sixty-seven fighters perished in the defence of

the Beirut garbage dump'. The garbage dump is a 200-metre stretch located one-half kilometre north of the Khalde road junction, on the Beirut-Ouzai-Damour highway. The highway has six lanes, open to the sea, with no standing structures at the point where the dump is located. The Israelis attempted tens of times to advance along that road with a flood of tanks supported by intensive air and naval bombardment. The fighters awaited the advancing force in the garbage heaps and ducts. At twenty metres range, they defeated the combined efforts of the Israeli infantry supported by the air force, naval bombardments and artillery. The Israelis never took the dump.

### *The civil defence of Beirut*

The main work of defending the city was shouldered by the 'Joint Committee', composed of Lebanese and Palestinians, and joined by other Arab and foreign nationals living in Beirut. The political and financial backing for these committees came from the PLO, the Lebanese National Movement, Amal organisation and such affiliated institutions as the Palestine Red Crescent Society, Al-Najdah Al-Sha'bia (Popular Relief), Al-Haia Al-Watania Li-Al-A'mal Al-Sha'bi (A'amel, The National Board for Popular Work, the Worker), Social Relief (Association Najda), General Union of Palestinian (GUP) Women, GUP students, GUP workers, Democratic Youth-Lebanese, Democratic Youth-Palestinian, Palestinian Youth, Democratic Women-Lebanese, Al-Jarah Youth Scouts, Civil Defence Volunteers organisations and other local youth, women and workers' groups.

The list that follows, while far from exhaustive, highlights the Joint Committee's activities.

During the first week of the war, initiatives were taken by the youth and women's organisations to organise relief work for the thousands of refugees flooding into the city without food, money, shelter or even clothes. At the end of the first week, these organisations, along with other individuals, formed the 'Joint Committee for Relief' (JCR). JCR formed four subcommittees to handle the work: the Social Committee (JCR-SC), the Survey and Statistics Committee (JCR-SSC), the Financial Committee (JCR-FC) and the Housing Committee (JCR-HC). JCR-SC assumed responsibility for dispersing relief funds and distributing food and household goods. JCR-SC further assumed the responsibility for public health and garbage collection along with the Preventive Medicine Committee of the Joint Committee for Health.

JCR-SSC was responsible for registration of refugees and the needy, as well as gathering and processing statistics for overall decision-making and planning. JCR-FC was responsible for finance and accounting, and JCR-HC was responsible for establishing refugee centres in schools, theatres and public places and housing refugees in them.

The activities of JCR and its subcommittees continued well after the



withdrawal of the Palestinian fighters. The defended area was divided into seven sectors, with at least one social and registration centre serving a sector. The sectors were further divided into squares for the purpose of managing relief work.

On the eve of the war, West Beirut boasted one of the best health and medical systems in the Middle East, despite seven years of civil war. The primary health system was in the private sector. However, partly because of the continuing state of war, a strong public health sector had developed parallel to the private sector, spearheaded by the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) and supplemented by institutions affiliated to the Lebanese National Movement, such as Al-Najdah Al-Sha'bi (popular relief), A'mel (the Worker), and the Lebanese Red Crescent Society (LRCS).

When the war began, the public sector pooled resources and formed the Joint Committee for Health (JCH). JCH immediately placed all the hospitals and medical facilities on emergency war footing and opened a number of field processing centres for the wounded. By the end of June, the private medical sector had virtually collapsed, because of either the destruction of hospitals and clinics, or the departure of many of the doctors. The administrative personnel of JCH assumed responsibility for general health, preventive medicine and ordinary hospital services, as well as emergency medical services for war victims. By the end of July, JCH had opened, equipped and managed twenty-five medical facilities, including hospitals, rehabilitation centres, field clinics and emergency processing centres. At the same time, the private sector was reduced to the partial and sporadic operation of three privately owned medical centres.

For the purpose of improving services, the defended area was divided into five medical sectors, each serviced by a medical centre and a set of medical facilities, such as emergency centres, rehabilitation centres and maternity centres.

A Joint Committee for Security (JCS) had existed before the war. It cooperated with existing police forces to ensure the population's safety and order in the area. It was transformed radically at the end of June to meet the challenge of securing an area torn by war, shortages of food, water, power, medical services and housing and interruptions of local market activities. In the third week of July the Joint Committee on Coordination (JCC) was created to facilitate social, medical, economic, relief and security work in the besieged city. Under it, local Joint Coordinating Committees (LJCCs) were also set up at sector level. Their function was to ensure that vital social, medical and security needs (including water, power, garbage collection, etc.) were properly addressed. These committees also provided a self-governing and self-defending mechanism to shoulder the tasks of defending their sector in case other sectors collapsed.

This structure grew out of the work of the various groups involved with medical needs, relief (which was directed at the entire population, not only refugees), social needs and security. In essence, it constituted a first step towards a people's democracy, in which people managed their affairs by themselves, by their own mandate and initiative, and not according to the decisions of others. This included the transformation of one of the social centres, the 'club house', already engaged in major relief efforts, into a Centre for Social Efforts Coordination (CSEC) and the transformation of the JCR-Survey and Statistics Committee into a Joint Committee for Statistics and Planning (JCSP), and the formation (never fully implemented) of a Joint Committee for Utilities and Services (JCUS). Several units to manage utilities and services had existed since the outset of the war. Although JCUS was never fully established, these units maintained Beirut's uninterrupted communications internally, as well as with the outside world, and produced fuel, electric power and water throughout the ordeal.

JCC managed to sponsor the formation of LJCC's in all sectors. On the sectorial level, Sector Social Committees and Sector Medical Committees were also formed. The Sector Security Committees were in the process of formation when the siege ended.

For the sake of brevity, we have not even outlined the superb efforts that took place in the fields of information and media, food distribution, counter-psychological warfare, diplomatic support, garbage collection, the protection of children, conduct of children's programmes, performing arts, preventive medicine and many more fields of human existence. Beirut's was a society determined to assert the human will to survive with dignity and against repressive and overwhelming odds.


### *Conclusion*

The major lesson of Beirut is that the Israeli army can be defeated. Our people can fight and win when collectively they realise that they are fighting for their way of life, values and sense of dignity. Dignity is attained not by decree, but by a daily living experience, a creation and recreation of the elements of life, by people of diverse ethnic, religious, cultural and philosophical persuasions and backgrounds discovering out of their common disasters their resources of strength and innovation. This is the reason that Beirut fought back.

Many have criticised the chaos in Beirut before the Israeli invasion. Indeed, there were excesses which were not handled responsibly. The fact, however, is that it was the wretched of the earth who were learning how to rule, and how to exercise the etiquette of power. They were learning the hard way, the expensive way and often the brutal way, for they had been deprived of their natural right of learning any other way. Only such mass, democratic discourse could produce the iron will to fight the strongest army in the Middle East.



Beirut lives inside us not in the form of a past dream nor as a lost cause. It lives inside us as the embodiment of resistance to that defeatism which prevails over Arab culture, life and thought. On the second day of the evacuation, the convoy of departing fighters passed through the district of Beirut known as Wadi Abu Jamil, one of the most impoverished areas of the city. Joined together by poverty and lack of shelter elsewhere, this population of poor Beirutis, Shi'ites, Druze, Christians from the mountains, Kurds, Turks, Syrians, Iraqis, Jews, Palestinians and Egyptians is perhaps the most ethnically diverse in the Middle East. As the leading truck descended from a hill in the district and crossed into the broad streets leading to the port, a crowd of women and children, gathering in an abandoned structure across the street, began to wave to the convoy. A woman in her late thirties, wearing old torn clothes, tugging two young children behind her, broke from the crowd and ran across the street waving a placard at the departing convoy. Written in an illiterate hand in poor Arabic it read, quite simply, 'I will take your place.'



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## Lebanon: an American's view

On 21 September, the day that the Lebanese army took control of Shatila, I entered Shatila Camp from its southern gate near the Kuwaiti Embassy. Walking towards the camp's centre, I noted an eight-storey apartment building off to my left. This command post for the Israelis enabled them to monitor a relatively large area. Two Israeli Defence Force (IDF) soldiers watched through high-powered binoculars. From this same vantage point that they observed my movements, the IDF had undoubtedly witnessed the 16-18 September massacres. But even before these had taken place, the signs had pointed that way. Here, I will share the perspective I gained from four visits to Lebanon during the critical year from September 1981 to September 1982.

### *Beirut: September 1981*

When we arrived in Beirut on 10 September, the mood was upbeat but tense. The ceasefire of 30 July 1981 between the PLO and Israel, arranged by the US and Saudi Arabia, was intended to prevent hostilities; but it had not ended Israel's aggressive activity. United Nations observers in Lebanon recorded 2,125 violations of Lebanese air space and 652 violations of Lebanon's territorial waters between 30 July 1981 and the end of May 1982. In addition, there were frequent car bombings by Israeli proxies, such as the 'Front to Free Lebanon of All Foreigners'.

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The PLO and Lebanese National Movement were fervently rebuilding everything, from apartment buildings to their fragile political coalition. From West Beirut to Rashidiyeh Camp in South Lebanon, a loose confederation had been formed of Shi'ite Muslims, PLO, leftist Lebanese allies and many others. This experiment in secular democracy threatened Israel and her Phalangist allies.

Our visit to Beirut's Fakhani district left the deepest impression on me. Fakhani was a reminder of Lebanon's peril. On 17 July 1981, Israeli jets (US-made F15s and F16s) had swept in from the Mediterranean. That raid, which occurred at mid-morning when the streets were full of women and children, killed over 250 people and wounded 1,100 more. A young Palestinian woman, eight months pregnant, was killed in the attack when shrapnel sliced into her abdomen. Her child, a premature infant girl, was taken to a nearby Red Crescent hospital and placed in an incubator. She survived, and the doctors and nurses named her 'Filistin' (Palestine).

#### *Beirut: Christmas and New Year's Eve 1981*

Our group of thirty-five American clergy and religious leaders arrived in a tense Beirut on Christmas Day. We met with a variety of political leaders. Amin Gemayel, the Phalangist (fascist) party leader, gave a resounding speech in this 'House of the Future' headquarters and proudly showed us the party's new computer, the largest system in the Middle East. The Phalangist vision of a Christian-Maronite-dominated Lebanon free of all foreigners clashed with the Palestinian ideal of a secular democratic state. Meanwhile, the recurring theme from the other leaders was a plea to the people and government of the United States to stop sending arms to Israel, and encouraging its bullying, and its manipulations of Lebanese politics.

#### *Chicago: spring 1982*

Those who followed the drama in Beirut, even as distant friends, knew that war was simply a matter of time. The Israeli Ambassador to the United States, Moshe Arens, complained that Israel was suffering under PLO guns each week and faced the loss of a 'qualitative edge in the region'.<sup>1</sup> In truth, no PLO guns or rockets had fired into Israel from Lebanon since the July truce. Mr Arens' rhetoric was mentally preparing the world for what Israel was about to do.

The Lebanese Ambassador to the United Nations, Ghassan Tuani, predicted in February, at Harvard University:

The details and variants of the ... scenario are well-known. 'Operation Litani II', we are told, will be much more important than the March 1978 Operation Litani, both in scope and consequences. Geographically, it should go as far as Beirut. Militarily, it will use



land, air and sea forces, and will unfold in a manner designed to destroy completely PLO structures, armaments and bases. Politically it should suck the Syrians into being involved, drive both the Syrians and the PLO out of Lebanon, and open the way for a total reconsideration and redrawing of the map.

Israel launched unprovoked attacks in Beirut and South Lebanon on 21 April and 9 May, but the PLO did not retaliate. IDF Chief Raphael Eitan boasted on 14 May: 'Having built up a military machine costing billions, I must put it to use ... Tomorrow, perhaps, I will be in Beirut.'

Ariel Sharon, Israel's Defence Minister, visited Washington, DC, in the week prior to the invasion, and received seventy-five F16s and further military financing.<sup>2</sup> His message was that Israel must act 'now' to stop Soviet advances through the PLO. He told the *Wall Street Journal*: 'Palestinian terrorism, PLO terrorism, has been one of the main means by which the Soviets are preparing the ground for further expansion in the Middle East.'<sup>3</sup>

#### *Beirut: 4 June – the Rosh Hashanah attack*

I had been travelling throughout Lebanon for several days with a group of American evangelical clergy and relief specialists. Having spent 3 June and the morning of the 4th in East Beirut, we had missed the news of the assassination attempt on Israeli diplomat Shlomo Argov. The PLO had immediately and categorically denied involvement, a fact soon confirmed by Scotland Yard and United Kingdom Prime Minister Thatcher. Under the pseudo-provocation of an assault on its diplomat by the PLO, Israel attacked, violating all standards of International Law, and violating US law (the Arms Export Control Act) by using US weapons in an offensive capacity.

Shortly after 3.00pm, our West Beirut hotel shook from the massive Israeli air strike on 'Sports City', just six blocks away. Schools, hospitals, clinics, the camps and the Stadium were the initial targets, but the bombing was indiscriminate. Palestinian anti-aircraft guns fired uselessly at the F16s, which controlled the skies.

While for many people the war began with the Israeli invasion on Sunday, 6 June, I believe 4 June marks the beginning. Over fifty people were killed in Beirut that afternoon, and nearly 200 injured. The overwhelming number of victims were civilians, a pattern repeated for nearly three months. Also, Beirut was purposely chosen as the initial target because, from the outset, Beirut was Israel's goal. Ironically, a Jewish holy day marked the beginning of a war initiated by Israel and applauded by its devout prime minister.

*Beirut: 5 June – the targets are civilians*

The next morning at the Palestinian Red Crescent hospitals, Gaza (in Sabra Camp) and Akka (near Shatila Camp), we saw the victims from the 4 June bombing – children, women and elderly men. A wing of Gaza Hospital had been damaged during the previous day's attack. One victim continues to haunt me. During the 4 June attack, a two-month-old baby girl was separated from her parents in Sabra Camp. Her arm was broken and shrapnel tore off a large portion of her back and rump. Perhaps she was the youngest of the terrorists Mr Sharon and Mr Begin had their pilots kill in these 'surgical attacks'.

Akka Hospital is the central receiving hospital for the Palestine Red Crescent Society. As we pulled up at the hospital gate, the F16s returned and began bombing the coast road and residential sections within a few blocks of the hospital. Ambulance after ambulance arrived. A UN schoolbus had received an almost direct hit as it was travelling on the coast road from Douha to Sidon. Nineteen teenage girls died, and the remaining sixteen were badly wounded. Lebanese Ambassador Tueni reported on 'the wreckage of Red Cross cars, civil defence automobiles, orphanages, schools, hospitals, warehouses for food supplies – all are there to testify to the unique savagery which characterises this aggression.'<sup>4</sup> Eye-witnesses have testified on Israeli use of cluster and phosphorous bombs (anti-personnel weapons) in Fakhani and the nearby camps.

A colleague and I set out in search of US television reporters in Beirut. We met with two bureau chiefs, and saw footage sent from Beirut by CBS and NBC. The overall reporting reflected precisely what we had seen, with one notable exception – the human dimension. The news teams were risking their lives to obtain footage of the war, yet were having it rejected in the US news offices. The most responsive bureau chief, NBC's Steve Mallory, interviewed us concerning the events at Akka Hospital, perhaps hoping the views of two Americans would strike a responsive chord with his editors. A fifteen-minute report was taped from Akka Hospital; none of it was ever aired.

At Akka Hospital, there was also a press conference with an Israeli F4 pilot, shot down and captured in South Lebanon that morning. A PLO unit had rescued him from angry Lebanese villagers. 'If it were not for the PLO fighters,' he said, 'they would have killed me.' This story, which contradicted the Israeli propaganda of South Lebanese villagers welcoming the Israeli army, also went unreported.

*Beirut: 6 June – at the US Embassy*

Our delegation received the news of Israel's full-scale invasion while visiting US Ambassador Dillon. A complete land, sea and air assault was underway, with the most sophisticated US weapons ever designed, yet there had not been a word of criticism from the president, the



secretary of state or the cabinet. We spent over two hours with Ambassador Dillon, listening to his views and constraints, and telling him what we had seen. We pressed him to bring all pressure possible to stop the Israeli aggression and to begin talks with the PLO. 'The least you could do', we suggested to the Ambassador, would be to visit the Red Crescent hospital and see the wounded. He could not do this, he felt, because of US restrictions on meeting with the PLO.

There was still silence from the US when the IDF moved far beyond its declared twenty-five mile limit. No attempt was made to stop the Israeli onslaught, apart from mild words of concern. Not until 10 June, when Sharon and the IDF were on the outskirts of Beirut, did Reagan order a ceasefire.

*Beirut: 7 June – a policy of 'final destruction'*

We heard reports that the Israeli forces invaded on a massive scale, with upwards of 65,000-75,000 troops. PLO intelligence also noted that the stronghold at Beaufort Castle had fallen and been turned over to Major Saad Haddad, the renegade leader of the Israeli-dominated 'Free Lebanon' enclave.

Reports came from Sidon, Tyre and surrounding camps that massive air, sea and land bombardments had destroyed much of the cities and camps. Survivors fled by the thousands to the Mediterranean shore, as they had been instructed to do in leaflets dropped by the Israelis. All Palestinian men suspected of being PLO sympathisers or fighters were rounded up and many were taken away in trucks. These two IDF tactics would continue to play a brutal role in achieving Israel's goal, which was, according to Foreign Minister Shamir, 'The PLO's final destruction as a terrorist and political organisation'.

Late that afternoon, our group left Beirut on the last two flights before the airport was bombed.

*Chicago: June to September*

During early June, American newspapers explained the invasion in the Israeli terminology of a forty-kilometre 'clear zone', an end to PLO terrorism in Galilee and the creation of peace for the Lebanese. The *New York Times* editorials and reporter David Shipler's stories could have been written by the IDF press department. News photos and television coverage of the war highlighted Israel's dramatic military advances and scenes of the IDF celebrating in Lebanese cafes and swimming pools or receiving haircuts in Lebanese barber shops. The central message was: 'The Lebanese are rejoicing over Israel's crushing defeat of the PLO.'

By mid-June, the lid which Israeli censorship and the US press's anti-Arab bias had placed over the suffering in Lebanon began slowly to be lifted by a succession of reports in the press. The graphic

interview with Dr Amal Shamma of Berbir Hospital in Beirut, on 26 June, demonstrated the shift in press attitudes, paving the way for more balanced reporting in July and August, despite Israeli counter-information. In the course of the summer, many Americans realised that immense numbers of civilians were being slaughtered in Lebanon. The anti-Palestinian bias which had been cultivated for decades by Zionist organisations was being unravelled for the first time.

### *Beirut: September*

After a long journey, accompanied by two relief specialists from a Christian organisation, I reached West Beirut on 20 September – having heard of the refugee camp massacres en route.

The drive along the stately Corniche Mazraa was like a journey into post-war Dresden or Berlin. The tree-tops in the pine woods park were scorched and mangled from saturation bombing.

On 21 September, in Shatila Camp we saw and heard far more than we could comprehend.

Teams of Lebanese boy scouts carried stretchers with dead bodies. A bulldozer pushed the final scoops of dirt over bodies in a mass grave. Before we were far into the camp the stench of death became so overpowering that each of us had to cover our nose and mouth with a handkerchief. One of the boy scouts poured cologne on our handkerchiefs to help us through the morning.

An elderly man who was raising the shutters to his small grocery store was able to tell us what he had witnessed on the previous Thursday. First, in the afternoon, the Israeli tanks near the Kuwait Embassy had shelled the camps for almost an hour. Later, he heard voices, calling out in a distinctive southern Lebanese-accented Arabic. The shopkeeper looked outside to see militiamen open fire on several Shatila residents. He closed his shop and escaped through back alleys, noticing as he ran that the Israeli flares were lighting up the camps for the militias. From a glimpse of the men's uniforms he could identify them as 'Haddad and Phalange'. Before we departed, I asked if we could do anything for him. He walked to the rear of his tiny store, sat down at a desk, buried his head in his hands and wept. 'You must forgive me,' he said, 'things have been so difficult for us.' He opened his desk and wrote two messages on pictures. 'Give these to my two sons.'

We interviewed doctors and medical personnel from Gaza and Akka hospitals (largely American and European volunteers with the Middle East Council of Churches). A physician from Sri Lanka had seen two Palestinian doctors shot to death. The Palestinian nurse with whom he had been working was raped repeatedly and then stabbed to death. On Friday, we were told, the staff at Gaza Hospital had advised Palestinian patients and personnel to walk to the edge of the camp and plead



with the Israelis guarding the entrance to give them sanctuary from the militia. The Israelis refused to allow them to pass and forced them back at gunpoint.

The Imam of the Basra district told us of entire families who had been shot to death around the dinner table or in the living room – their homes were then bulldozed over the bodies.

The Palestinian population has also been attacked through the institutions that support it. Intimidation has been directed at medical personnel who serve Palestinians. At a meeting of the Middle East Council of Churches, we learned that the IDF was making frequent visits to medical facilities and interrogating medical and church personnel.

The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) was dealt particular and deliberate damage. By the time of our visit, every Red Crescent facility in Lebanon (nine hospitals and numerous clinics) had either been dismantled, burned beyond use or completely levelled. Three facilities, including Gaza and Akka hospitals in Beirut, were burned out, but would be able to function after extensive repair. Equipment was stolen or destroyed by Israeli, Phalangist and Haddad forces. All Palestinian medical personnel had been killed, imprisoned or were missing. The majority of Palestinian refugees, in desperate need of medical assistance, were without services.

In September there were reports that the PRCS would not be allowed to continue its work in Lebanon. This was in line with the policy of reducing the Palestinian population and institutions to one-tenth their present size. (By mid-October, the PRCS was allowed a limited operation in Akka and Gaza hospitals, but their personnel were subject to threats by various rightist militias, and medical equipment was stolen.)

The Palestine Research Centre was another victim. On 21 and 22 September, we photographed Israeli soldiers emptying the Centre of its contents. The IDF personnel in charge of this robbery told us, 'We are just following orders.' Another Israeli said, 'These valuable documents will show us, after analysis, how these terrorists think.' The Centre had been the repository of documents relating to pre-1948 life in Palestine. Its purpose was the preservation of the culture and history of the Palestinians. Ironically, several years ago, staff from the Research Centre had convinced the population of Rashidiyeh Camp (eight miles from Israel's northern border) to give their photographs and diaries to the Centre for safekeeping. This material is now captive, much as the Palestinian physicians and countless civilians are Israeli prisoners.

### *Chicago – looking ahead*

For six decades, Palestinians have been warning the world of the destructive potential of Zionism. Sabra and Shatila, combined with the

ruthlessness of the war, have communicated this, at long last.

What occurred in Lebanon is simply one piece of a larger design. The revisionist Zionism of Vladimir Jabotinsky, the political mentor of Menachem Begin, provides the fundamental ideological foundation for the present Likud policy. This ideology threatens the stability of the entire Middle East. Begin, Sharon, Shamir, Eitan and others share a common vision for the region and possess the military capacity (including nuclear weapons) necessary to enact such policies.

Within Israel, a number of new voices are criticising this vision as a result of the Lebanon war. One of the critics served for three decades with the Israeli military establishment, in close proximity to its present leadership. Thus, General Menachim Aviram's voice has particular significance:

What bothers me about the Lebanon war is the underlying ideology. People sometimes focus their attention on a single shocking event, but I contend that everything that has happened ... is a product of this wrong ideology. Those who decided to start the Lebanon war adopted a new concept hitherto unattainable, according to which, by applying force and military right, Israel could obtain goals once considered unobtainable ... The holders of this new ideological concept used the IDF in order to interfere in the affairs of a foreign country and impose on it a government more to Israel's liking ... The events in Sabra and Shatila have been called an accident. The massacre was no accident; it was the outcome of the very concept of the war.<sup>5</sup>

The term 'wrong ideology' and 'Israel obtaining goals once unobtainable' are direct references to the Sharon-military establishment goal of strategic control of the entire Middle East. Both Begin and Sharon have stated in public their designs on the entire region, from Morocco to Pakistan. Their strategy parallels the anti-Soviet paranoia of the present US administration – an Israeli-US linkage which poses the greatest danger for the region.

This policy presumes that Israel will either exterminate or forcibly evict the Palestinians who represent the most serious immediate threat and an ever-present domestic challenge to regional policies. A number of strategies are being employed to remove the Palestinian population from its historic homeland. The attempted destruction of the PLO and the brutal war in Lebanon are simply the most blatant of these. Sharon's 'Iron Fist Campaign' in the occupied territories attempts to destroy the national aspirations of the local Palestinians and also to crush their institutions, take their land, remove elected leadership, unleash terrorism from Zionist extremists and finally depopulate land of its indigenous inhabitants and annex the territories.

The settlement policy reflects the incredible pace of the Judaisation



process. The tactics are not new. They were originally instituted by the former Labour government. What we see now is their amplified form and their employment with total disregard for human suffering and the world consensus which condemns them. The World Zionist Organisation's stated goal for the West Bank is 100,000 settlers by 1985 and 500,000 by the year 2,000. The Israeli government is extending 80-90 per cent mortgages with the possibility of their becoming outright grants if families remain for a stated period. This strategy will literally flood the occupied territories with young Jewish families from densely populated Tel Aviv and other urban areas.

The consequences of these 'facts on the ground', as Begin calls them, are obvious. James Fine, who studied this policy while living on the West Bank, writes: 'After 15 years of acceleration, settlement in the occupied territories is fast approaching [a point] ... beyond the reach of any imaginable political reappraisal whether in Israel or elsewhere.'<sup>6</sup> The effects of the settlements upon negotiations concerning a future Palestinian state need no further comment.

The US may be a potential challenger to the Likud policies in the territories and to Likud designs on the Middle East as a whole. But neither historical precedent nor the present administration, beholden as it is to the Zionist lobby, offers much real hope. Israel receives more economic and military aid from the US than any other nation in the world. It now seeks a 45 per cent increase for fiscal 1984. Begin is confident of receiving it. No party appears equipped to deal with Israel at this stage, and perhaps it is too late for the US, which for over forty years has demonstrated such remarkable impotence in the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. Only the American people's growing sympathy for the cause of four and a half million stateless Palestinians augurs well for a change in US foreign policy.

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Michael Parenti  
 Institute of Policy Studies



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## The medical impact of the siege of Beirut

The invasion of Lebanon in June of 1982 and the bombardment and prolonged siege of West Beirut will probably be analysed for years to come. Political, social and military factors will be considered in making inferences and abstractions in an historical content. But human beings do not live in the abstract. For the individual victims of war and their families, the historic event is all too real, as are injuries and their aftermath.

This report does not claim to be a comprehensive review. It is a description by an individual traumatologist, a surgeon who specialises in the care of the injured, based on care provided in West Beirut during a part of the summer of 1982. The types of casualties encountered will be described, as well as how their care was affected by the siege. The role of medical volunteers will be examined. Finally, the lessons which might be inferred are offered.

First, I will describe the types of casualties I encountered. The majority of the patients I cared for were burn victims. In addition to these, there were a large number with open or compound bone fractures. Blast injuries also caused both obvious external wounds as well as serious internal injuries. I personally cared for very few patients who were victims of collapsed buildings – I suspect because there were few survivors from such massive injury.

Care of the injured was affected by siege conditions in many ways, some of them obvious and others more subtle. Transport of the injured

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to hospitals took place after the attacks had stopped, which meant that patients might spend many hours with serious injuries before ambulances could safely transport them. The multiple bombings of hospitals speak for themselves. Although new facilities were rapidly developed to cope with this problem, it is difficult to describe how many aspects of routine health care were disrupted in a highly urban and densely populated environment.

Perhaps an example of the ideal, contrasted with the real, may serve to explain the complexity of the problems encountered. In an ideal or even normal situation without siege conditions, a burn patient should receive immediate care. Initially, this means carefully monitored intravenous fluids, and immersion in tanks designed to cleanse the wounds and minimise infection. Sterile dressings would be applied and changed daily with a standard but expensive ointment. Patients with severe burns would undergo surgery to remove deeply burned skin, with replacement of extensive blood loss, and subsequent skin grafting. Such a patient would often have daily blood tests and chest X-rays. The staff would wear sterile gloves, gowns and masks until the risk of infection subsided. The rehabilitation process could take weeks and months. This, then, is the ideal.

Let me now describe what such a patient faced in Beirut. Some of these patients were in the Near East School of Theology and the International Centre dormitory (both having been converted to hospital use because of hospital bombardments) and in Gaza Hospital. Although conditions varied somewhat, there was *never ever* hot or warm water with which to bathe these patients. Even on the rare occasions when running water showers were available, the cold water was too painful for most burn patients to tolerate. The cut-off of electricity was partially compensated for by generators, which required fuel. When electricity was not available, there was no running water, hot or cold. Without electricity, a hospital laboratory does not function, and blood for transfusions cannot be stored without reliable refrigeration. Without electricity, elevators do not function, so patients are hand carried on stretchers up or down several flights of stairs, even for emergency surgery.

In standard situations, a burn patient is isolated from others, and the staff is masked and gloved to minimise the risk of infection. At the Near East School of Theology, nearly 100 patients were in three basement and sub-basement rooms; there were no isolation rooms, and there were not enough masks or sterile gloves. Supplies were limited – the standard ointment for burns was not sufficiently available. When sterile bandages ran out, new bandages were made and sterilised – when there was electricity for the sterilising machines.

A patient with major burns or injury requires two to three times the normal nutrition in order to heal and resist infection. Such nutrition



was not available. One day, the hospital meal consisted of potatoes, three slices of tomato and four olives.

Weeks after the last bombing, infected wounds continued to be a major problem – for the patients with imbedded shrapnel, internal injuries and fractured bones. Even after the healing of many injured limbs, these patients would require prosthetic fitting and rehabilitation. Akka Hospital had such a facility, including a highly sophisticated centre for prosthetic manufacture, but reports indicate that the rehabilitation wing of the hospital was burned during the massacres in Sabra and Shatila.

What, then, was the medical impact of the siege of Beirut? Infections, wounds and deaths can be tabulated. Other aspects of life are much more difficult to list. Terror, pain, emotional scars, rage and nightmares defy our quantifying but are very real to the victims who carry them, especially the children. As one physician said, ‘We have seen too much.’

The physicians, nurses and support personnel who rendered care in West Beirut included both those primarily based in the area – the Lebanese and Palestinians – and those who responded from outside the region.

Coverage of the invasion and siege in the western press was extensive. Massive bombings and large numbers of casualties were reported. A number of organisations in the United States attempted to mobilise and organise to meet the medical needs. Some were conducting meetings, taking names of volunteers and raising funds. However, despite a number of volunteers, few were actually sent because of the organisations’ impression that it was impossible to get physicians into the besieged city, or that the risk was too great. While such groups recognised a need, others provided a different impression. One surgeon who contacted a major international relief agency was told that needs were being met and that no further help was needed. In the face of continuing press reports of casualties, he went to Beirut, and once there ‘regretted having listened to so many for so long’.

Physicians volunteering to the Palestine Red Crescent Society hospitals were graciously and courteously received. Initially, there was no rigid screening of volunteers; only later were medical credentials asked of new volunteers. Foreign physicians who had come in, especially Europeans, had considerable latitude in their medical practice. It almost seemed as if there were a reluctance to question such individuals – what one person termed an attitude of ‘reverse colonialism’. It should be pointed out that medical discipline, responsibility and accountability must be striven for in crisis as well as in calm, both by regular staff and by new volunteers.

What, if any, lessons can be learned, both administrative and medical, from the siege of Beirut?

First, the definition of medical need must come from a single authority – the senior physician in charge of the organisation administering health care, who determines what kinds of personnel are needed and what their composition should be.

Second, it is perfectly legitimate to scrutinise the credentials – as well as the motives – of volunteers. Board certification should be considered – even though it does not certify compassion, it should certify completion of training and professional competence. A volunteer's previous location may well be a factor in professional experience. For example, in the US, trauma (from accidental injury or violence) is the leading cause of death under the age of 45, so some US surgeons may have considerable experience. Because of restrictions on weapons in some European countries, very few surgeons may have seen a patient with a gun-shot wound, although they may have experience with other victims of trauma.

Third, physicians working in siege situations must be willing to rely on clinical judgement in the absence of sophisticated or even basic diagnostic adjuncts. Standard treatments developed under ideal conditions must be modified to meet the conditions at hand. If there is no clean running water to wash burns, sterile intravenous solutions are used. If a patient needs skin grafting, it may be preferable to defer this until he or she can be fully bathed to lessen the risk of infection and graft loss. If there is a limited amount of medicine and sterile bandages, the physician must be prepared to make distribution decisions based on need, priority and conscience.

Finally, re-adaptation after crisis must be dealt with, not only by physicians, but just as much by lay people. This entails the recognition of fatigue and emotional shock, the recognition of survivor guilt and the recognition of rage. Transient withdrawal and seclusion in order to work through mourning should be distinguished from genuine clinical depression; both must be dealt with appropriately.

The medical impact of the siege of Beirut warrants inspection, not for a recounting of horrors but in order to determine critically how adaptation allowed survival and how a medical system can compensate internally and externally. I sincerely hope that no one will ever again need to use the lessons learned, but I have my doubts.



## Occupation and resistance: an Israeli press survey

As Israel becomes increasingly entangled in internal Lebanese politics, the operation 'Peace for Galilee' is comparable in its impact and scope to previous Israeli wars. Israel still has about 30,000 soldiers in Lebanon, with increasing Lebanese public and official resentment towards them, and without having achieved any guarantees to consolidate the gains of the war. Israel's military commitment in Lebanon has not decreased substantially. Israeli soldiers in the Eastern Sector are dug in for winter, with prefab houses, running hot water, winter clothes. It is estimated that until now no less than 120 kilometres of new roads have been paved for Israeli military use, and about 2,700 kilometres of existing roads have been repaired or macadamised at the cost of an estimated one billion shekels (35 shekels = US\$1). The static line of defence has been labelled by Israeli soldiers, the 'Rafal Line' (nickname of General Raphael Eitan), evoking negative memories of the Bar Lev line along the Suez Canal.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, it is reported that the average reserve military service for this fiscal year (ending in April 1983) has been ninety days — three times the usual length — and that as long as the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) continue to be in Lebanon no change in the length of service is expected.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the discouragement from the Lebanese government authorities, the extreme caution exercised by the Syrian command and the diversions of ethnic violence stimulated by the Israeli authorities,

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Israeli soldiers and supply lines are being sporadically hit in all areas of their deployment.

Israeli military spokesmen report that since mid-July there have been 261 'terrorist' incidents against Israeli soldiers in the South. Although there was a drop in the incidents between August and October, November witnessed a noticeable increase. In November alone, there were forty incidents. Three were reported in detail.<sup>3</sup> In one incident a rocket was fired at an Israeli unit south of the airport, near the village of Sil, without any injuries for the IDF being reported.<sup>4</sup> In another incident the car of the military governor of Sidon, Lieutenant Colonel Wardi, was attacked in an ambush by 'light fire', at noon on 19 November. The military governor was injured slightly, but a soldier accompanying him was killed and his driver was seriously wounded.<sup>5</sup>

The third incident was by far the most serious, both in terms of its cost and military implications. At 7am on 11 November 1982 an explosion in the eight-storey building that served as the military headquarters for Israeli forces in Tyre levelled the entire building. The human toll was eighty-nine killed, of whom seventy-five were Israeli military personnel, and twenty-eight injured, of whom six were seriously hurt. Fourteen of the dead were Palestinian and Lebanese prisoners detained in the building at the time. Being the only military headquarters in the area, the building served as the headquarters for the Border Guards, the Military Police, the military government and IDF. At least eight of the killed were *shin bet* (secret police), and thirty were from the Border Guards. The highest army rank among the dead was lieutenant colonel, and the highest rank from the police was a chief-inspector.<sup>6</sup>

Following the instruction of the Defence Minister, the Chief of Staff appointed a committee, headed by Aluf (reserve) Meir Zorea, to investigate the explosion, and to present its findings within a week. Responsibility for the explosion was claimed by a new organisation called the 'Armed Struggle Organisation', which declared its objective as hitting against the Israeli occupying forces in Lebanon. Although the official conclusion of the investigation committee was that the explosion was accidental, caused by leaking cooking gas, the committee reported that the gas balloons were brought into the building against regulations, and questions remained unanswered regarding the source of the spark that started the explosion. Nevertheless, Israeli forces are reported to have arrested 500 'suspects' in connection with the explosion, and one of the Zorea committee's recommendations was to bar Arab women from entering such buildings because, it was discovered, women were not searched.<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that the 'Armed Struggle Organisation' reiterated its claim for responsibility following the committee's conclusion.

Whatever the case may be, the explosion in Tyre (or the 'disaster' as



it is officially labelled) was the worst single incident for Israel in terms of loss of military life. In spite of the official conclusion, Ha'aretz said in an editorial that 'deep in his heart, he [Sharon] believes that the disaster was a result of an act of terror'.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, Ha'aretz treated it as such and used the explosion to illustrate the high cost and vulnerability of the Israeli entanglement in Lebanon. It continued that now, 'instead of the citizens of Nahariya and Kiryat Shemona, the IDF soldiers are subject to strikes from the terrorists'. The striking thing about the press coverage of this explosion is that it abruptly ceased immediately after the investigation committee reached its official conclusion only a week after the incident. (Instead, front-page headlines dealt with the Max Frankel article in the *New York Times*!)

Through December 1982 – January 1983 the Israeli press continued to report instances of armed resistance. At least seven Israeli soldiers and officers were reported killed in the two months; dozens were wounded. In one incident, when an army jeep was hit by a land mine, three senior officers (two lieutenant colonels and a major were killed; one was wounded).<sup>9</sup> Since October 1982 over ninety Israeli military personnel have been killed in Lebanon.<sup>10</sup>

The longer Israel remains in Lebanon without achieving its political objectives, and the higher its human losses become, the more will public sentiment turn against the war. In a public opinion poll conducted in November by RORI Institute for Ha'aretz, the percentage of those justifying the war in Lebanon dropped from 65.9 per cent in July to 45.3 per cent.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the percentage of those ready to justify only the 'original objective', i.e. the removal of PLO forces up to 40 kilometres from the border, rose by 16 points, from 23.6 per cent in July to 36.9 per cent in November. It is clear that Israel is 'stuck' in Lebanon, and 'if we remain "stuck" there much longer,' warns Ha'aretz's Zeev Schiff, 'Lebanon will become our Afghanistan ... We are unable to get out of the quagmire before we are guaranteed some security and political conditions...'<sup>12</sup>

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# Notes and documents

## After Beirut, what?: an interview with Yasser Arafat\*

*Amnon Kapeliouk:* Has the moment of truth arrived? A decisive battle with all its consequences, or a retreat from Beirut: how do you see the future of the PLO and the Palestinian people?

*Yasser Arafat:* We have arrived at a final accord with the Lebanese government and with the American envoy Philip Habib on the departure of our forces to several Arab countries – Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Egypt – which have agreed to receive them. We do not exclude the worst: [Menachem] Begin and [Ariel] Sharon could try to surprise us. I have let them know that we have learned the lessons of Masada and of the Warsaw ghetto, and that we are ready to sacrifice ourselves if necessary. I do not fear death; it is my adversaries who must fear the consequences. History cannot be stopped. The war has demonstrated that the Palestinians fight with courage and honour to attain their just purpose.

*AK:* But where will you go?

*YA:* We have forces in Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon and Algeria. The headquarters of the PLO was in Cairo until [Anwar] Sadat's visit to Jerusalem. It was subsequently transferred to Damascus, where I continue to maintain my official office.

*AK:* Does the passive attitude of the Arab world surprise you?

*YA:* Absolutely not. I've expected nothing else since the collapse of the Fez conference. Several Arab countries have offered to receive our forces, but that is merely temporary. Where do we go afterwards? The whole world ought to consider that problem at an international conference of all the countries involved, including the great powers, after the end of this war.

*AK:* You have made overtures in the direction of the United States without

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\* An interview given to Amnon Kapeliouk, an Israeli writer for the French newspaper *Le Monde*, on 9 August 1982. Reprinted, with permission, from *The Washington Post* 15 August 1982.

getting anything. Were you disappointed?

YA: The United States is a great power, and we shall continue to try to influence American opinion. The United States will soon understand that it cannot ignore the will of four and a half million Palestinians.

AK: Many Israelis are asking themselves if the time has not come for a historical reconciliation between the Jewish nation of Israel and the Palestinian Arab people, the latter having accepted a 'peace of the brave' similar to that of which General de Gaulle spoke in regard to Algeria.

YA: In the Israeli military establishment, is there a personality similar to that of de Gaulle's? I strongly doubt it. That said, our national council adopted several resolutions on the opening of a debate with the democratic forces in Israel, and we are ready to establish relations with all those who recognise our right to self-determination.

AK: The Israelis are waiting for your official recognition. Are you ready to grant it to them?

YA: Begin and Sharon have repeatedly affirmed that they don't need our recognition. They said that, even if we recognise Israel, they will never have anything to do with us. They treat us like Nazis, to a point that their actions in Lebanon in the camps of Beirut recall the behaviour of the Nazis. I repeat what I said to [Rep. Pete] McCloskey: we accept all of the UN resolutions concerning the Palestinian question. We do not forget that Israel was created by a UN resolution. Israel, moreover, has everything; we have nothing, and yet it is we who are asked to recognise Israel, which for its part refuses categorically to recognise our right to self-determination. Whatever I have to say regarding recognition, I shall not say it under coercion, with Sharon's tanks surrounding us. I repeat: the question today is, more than ever, our right to exist and self-determination.

AK: Do you include the UN Security Council's Resolution 242 among those which you have accepted?

YA: You undoubtedly know that this resolution considers our problem to be solely a problem of refugees. In 1977, the Carter administration proposed that we should accept this resolution, while taking account of our reservations. We had accepted this proposition under three conditions: the opening of a dialogue between the United Nations and the PLO; the recognition of the rights of Palestinians to self-determination; the creation of an independent Palestinian state. It's hardly necessary to say that the dialogue broke down. Since then, our national council has adopted several statements about this resolution. Moreover, since when has Begin become the big defender of Resolution 242? Let's not forget that in August 1970, he left the Government of National Union to protest against [Golda] Meir's acceptance of Resolution 242, which, according to him, implied the withdrawal from all occupied territories.

AK: Certain Israelis affirm that you wouldn't be satisfied with a state in Jordan and the Gaza, and in such a case, you would constitute a menace to Israel?

YA: Ridiculous! I do not understand these statements. Israel is the strongest military power in the Middle East. Can one be afraid of a Palestinian state that will need more than twenty years to be able to stand on its own feet? The Israeli



military establishment believes that it will be able to rule the region, thanks to its technology and to American dollars. But how long? It will be necessary to search for coexistence with countries in the region and not imagine artificial problems. It is the Israelis who must find some solutions to the Palestinian tragedy, which they created.

*AK:* Your national charter gives ammunition to your political adversaries. Israeli children in school learn the words of this charter, which denies the right of Israel to exist, which does not recognise the Jews as a nation, and which affirms that armed struggle is the only way to have a state.

*YA:* We have already affirmed several times, through our national council, that the armed struggle no longer constituted the only way. Many things have been said about this charter, and people have tried to interpret it in a tendentious manner. To put an end to these ambiguities, I propose today that we organise a conference after the war, bringing together Palestinian, Israeli and Arab thinkers to get to the bottom of all of the problems and to arrive at some conclusions. This conference could eventually be held somewhere in Europe under the aegis of an organisation or a political party that would be chosen by mutual agreement. Among the Palestinians, there exists a clear evolution of understanding of the unexpected changes that occurred during the course of these past years. We are not frozen in these unalterable positions: it's Begin who is completely unyielding.

*AK:* Are you under the impression of having committed errors during this whole conflict?

*YA:* Yes. We haven't been able to explain our cause to the Israelis; we haven't understood the Israeli mentality. Moreover, we don't have the means in the field of information to transmit our ideas to the Israeli people.

*AK:* And the [military] operations directed against the Israeli civilians?

*YA:* I have always been politically and ideologically against those types of operations. While I understand the motivations of certain Palestinians, who have lost hope and resort to those methods, I have always been opposed. I'm telling you this in my capacity as president of the PLO, as much as chief of the Palestinian revolution. In fact, it is necessary to specify that, in certain cases, such as Munich, Maalot and the Savoy (a hotel in Tel Aviv), the death of innocents could have been avoided if the Israelis had not opened fire. What Begin and Sharon did during the Lebanese war – the indiscriminate bombing of Beirut, which last week caused some 500 civilian deaths – will leave an indelible stain on the brow of the Israeli leaders.

*AK:* Have you appraised the attitude of the inhabitants of the territories occupied during the course of this war?

*YA:* The Palestinians of the interior, from Bassam Shaka'a to Karim Khalif, including Elias Freij and Rachada Chawa [respectively, mayors of Naplouse, Ramallah, Bethlehem and Gaza] and several others, demonstrated their devotion to the cause of our people in these difficult conditions.

*AK:* Finally, what do you have to say to the Israelis?

*YA:* I find myself surrounded here, and I'm addressing myself to Israeli soldiers, as well as to the common citizens. And I'm telling them: stop –

military arrogance will not shatter us. I would like to say a word to Colonel Eli Geva, that, in spite of our differences, I appreciate his humanitarian position and his decision to refuse to participate in the assault of Beirut. His noble attitude is derived from true Jewish values. Peace will reign in the Holy Land, despite the arrogance of those leaders for whom brutal force is the only maxim in the life of nations. I invite the militants of the 'Peace Now' movement, of New Outlook, and all those who recognise our rights to self-determination to come to Beirut to see the destruction and the suffering of the people. A day will come when the Israelis will be ashamed and will want to forget what their present leaders did to the Palestinian people in Lebanon during the summer of 1982.

## Southern Lebanon: excerpts from the MacBride Report\*

### *The situation in the refugee camps*

These camps were set up on land put at the disposition of UNRWA by the Lebanese state which undertook to compensate the owners. They were first intended for the reception of those Palestinians rendered homeless in 1948. They also provided shelter for the victims of the events of 1967 and 1970, as well as, especially in Beirut, a large proportion (sometimes more than 25 per cent of the population of the camps) of Lebanese, who were themselves refugees or landless. The numbers involved are poorly documented and in the Commission's view are far in excess of the official figure of 133,000 people given by UNRWA in an information note of July 1982.

The camps were a target for the Israeli forces during the fighting in the south and then in Beirut for the two months of the siege. After the fighting, some of their inhabitants, who had fled to escape from the intensive bombardments, had no choice but to return. The rigours of occupation were felt particularly in southern Lebanon, but the situation of the camps at Sabra and Shatila in Beirut requires special analysis. The situation of the camps in the south of Beirut reveals, in the Commission's view, the main objective of the Israeli occupation policy: the Commission concludes on evidence before it that this was to push the Palestinian people out of the occupied zones and even out of the Lebanon.

The principal instrument of this policy of driving out the refugees was the destruction of the camps.\*\* The inhabitants of the camps had always enjoyed a

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\* The report of the International Commission set up to enquire into reported violations of international law by Israel during its invasion of Lebanon, under the chairmanship of Sean MacBride (28 August-29 November 1982). Published under the title *Israel in Lebanon* (London, Ithaca Press, 1983).

\*\* Elsewhere, the Commission states: 'The extent of the damage to the camps has been assessed by the Commission through personal visits, written evidence from various sources and oral testimony of witnesses to the bombardment. These reveal the following degree of destruction by way of example: Ain el-Hilweh — totally destroyed; Al Bas — one-third destroyed; Bourj el-Shamali — two-thirds destroyed; Rashidiyeh — almost totally destroyed; Bourj el-Brajneh — totally destroyed'. p.31



large degree of autonomy. Inside them social life was largely organised by the PLO. Terror was the instrument to destroy this social existence. The principal events at these camps were the decimation of the male population, the almost total destruction of the dwellings and equipment that belonged to the camps and, finally, the harassment of the inhabitants by the militia.

#### *The decimation of the male population*

The Commission, through its visits to some camps, was able to see for itself the evident disappearance of the men, both adult and adolescent. At the camps of Al Bas near Tyre and Ain el-Hilweh the Commission saw hardly any males between 14 and 60 years of age.

The evidence indicates that most of them had been taken prisoner by the Israelis, but many had just disappeared. The Commission could not establish how many had been killed, how many had fled in order to avoid arrest and how many had gone to join the fighting forces which had retreated to the north or the east, or even abroad. No precise figures exist for these groups.

The Commission recognises that tens of thousands of women, children and old men (92,457 according to the UNRWA report of 15 October) are at the moment deprived of support and sustenance because of the imprisonment or disappearance of the men on whose work they depend.

#### *The destruction*

The evidence provided to the Commission is clear that the camps have been devastated by the combined effect of the intensive bombardments during the period of fighting; the clearances by bulldozer which followed and destroyed anything still standing; and finally of the 'incidents' which befell Mieh Mieh.<sup>1</sup> This camp escaped damage during the fighting, but part of it was later set on fire and partly razed to the ground.

In consequence, only a very small proportion of homes are still inhabitable. They are mostly in an appalling condition. The great majority of the people have no roof over their heads and are forced to find what shelter they can in the ruins. Most of the schools have been demolished or badly damaged. The inhabitants are without the medical services of the Palestine Red Crescent Society, the hospitals and dispensaries of which have been either destroyed or closed. (pp. 137-9)

#### *Hospitals, schools, cultural property and social institutions*

The Commission visited many destroyed and damaged institutions and received evidence, written and oral, from responsible persons who had first-hand knowledge and experience of this destruction. The numbers of institutions affected (even in relation to surrounding areas) indicates at best a lack of concern on the part of the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) — a disregard of the laws of war which require that these civilian objects be protected. At worst, there is evidence of direct and deliberate attacks upon such institutions ...

One specific illustration of a direct attack upon a civilian object was the subject of testimony given to the Commission in Beirut by M. Mohammed Barakat, Director of Social Welfare Institutions, Lebanon (formerly the Muslim Orphanage). The organisation had three main centres in Beirut and south of Beirut. It had fifteen institutions specialising in needy children and

cared for some 3,000. M. Barakat's testimony concerned primarily the Development Organisation for Human Abilities (DOHA). This was a centre located at Aramoun, south of Beirut, constructed in 1981 during the International Year of the Handicapped. It housed four institutions for the blind, deaf, physically handicapped and mentally retarded in a number of buildings. There were 650 handicapped children at DOHA. It was very well known and, indeed, almost unique in the region. M. Barakat supplied us with photographs of the centre as it was before the Israeli invasion.

The DOHA was a target of IDF bombardment. There were nine raids over the 10 and 11 June. There were 650 children at the beginning; all but sixty-two were evacuated. These sixty-two stayed in an underground car park. Other people from the area fled to the centre because they thought it would be a safe area. No one, staff or children, saw any soldiers or weapons during the two days. The centre was completely destroyed. At the time of the Commission's visit, there were still unexploded bombs on the premises. M. Barakat supplied us with photographs of the centre as it was after the bombardment. The Israelis arrived four to five days after the bombing. The staff and sixty-two children had fled. Nobody had returned. He was the first person to visit it, and the Israelis were already there.

M. Barakat testified that the DOHA Centre is unmistakably marked and well-known. The organisation was very far from PLO or other political or military activity. It was and is totally non-political. All during the civil war of 1975-76 there had been no external interference. 'If even a policeman comes in, he removes his weapon.' The buildings of the centre had the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) signs on them. They had the Red Cross flag. The nearest Syrian army post was 400-500 metres away on the main road. There was no military activity near the buildings. The organisation chose the area because it was a first-class residential district. There are villas and houses around the DOHA. They themselves were bombed. M. Barakat's view is that the DOHA was the target, and that the other houses were attacked because of their proximity to the centre. The damage to the DOHA is estimated to be about \$7-8m...

Other illustrations abound: the Lebanese Minister of Agriculture, M. Moustafa Durnaiqah, testified to the Commission that a number of Agricultural Research Centres in the south had been destroyed by the IDF. The head of the Amal movement, M. Nabih Berri, testified to the Commission that the Director of the Movement's orphanage and crafts training centre in the Bourj el-Shamali camp near Tyre (comprising seven floors and 400 children) was threatened with destruction of his institution by the Israelis. The Director, M. Mohammed Saad, and some of the older children lay down on the dynamite placed by the Israelis to blow it up. They were beaten (M. Saad had a disc in his back broken), but the building was not blown up ... M. Hassib Abdul Jawad, a senior trade union official in Sidon, testified to the Commission on the destruction of the trade union cooperative and health centre in that city by bombardment. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) Report on Sidon, dated 12 July 1982, lists schools and hospitals in Sidon (excluding Ain el-Hilweh) destroyed or damaged in the attack on that city:

*Schools:* St Joseph School; Makassad Secondary School (completely destroyed); Sidon Takmilieh Government School; Al Madkhal el Shamali



Government School 'Al Zein'; Elementary Government School 'Shehab'; Al Madkhal El Janoobi Government School; Government Teachers' Training College; Al Ittihad Secondary School 'Ste. Nafisseh' (completely destroyed); Sidon School Majdelyoun; Alexandra School, Old Sidon; Vocational Training School; Faisal School; Government School; Khan el-Frenj – French School and Orphanage, Old Sidon; Morjan Government School; and Aisha School – Ryad el Solh Street.

*Hospitals:* Rashid Khoury Hospital; Labib Medical Centre; Shoaib Hospital; Elias Elia Hospital; Ramzi Shaab Hospital; Dalaah Hospital; Hammoud Hospital; Al Hajj Hospital; and Osseiran Hospital. (pp. 39-42)

The initial report of a Lebanese Technical Commission appointed to investigate the damage done to buildings as a result of the Israeli invasion of Tyre found the following:

*Damage to:* Tyre Primary School; Tyre Official Primary School; Al Jaafariya School; Teacher Training College; St Joseph Convent School; St Thomas School; The Anglican School; Al Ittihad School; First Official Secondary School; Second Official Secondary School; Al Najat al Ramali School (completely destroyed); Government Hospital (completely destroyed); Jabal Amel Hospital; Palestine Red Crescent Hospital (not allowed to enter); Dr Ismail Bahr Hospital (completely destroyed). (p. 32)

#### *Attacks on property*

The Commission has received evidence that, after the fighting had stopped, the Israeli forces took measures which caused harm to the civilian population because they limited or even paralysed activities. For example, at Sidon, according to Mr Hassib Abdul Jawad, the fishermen were not allowed to leave port up to 20 August. By the beginning of September only thirty-five out of 250 had been given authorisation to fish at sea, and then on condition that they painted their boats yellow and returned to shore between 5pm and 5am.<sup>2</sup> The Israeli forces and their Lebanese auxiliaries proceeded to destroy or confiscate property of various kinds.

#### *Civilian objects and structures*

In the area of Tyre, the occupying authority invoked the risk of ambushes against its armed forces as the reason for pulling down walls, trees and less solid structures over a strip 50 metres wide on either side of the roads. As a result, orchards, especially orange trees, were considerably damaged.<sup>3</sup> This happened mostly to the south of the town, but the Commission saw for itself on 5 October the extensive damage over several hundreds of metres on the north side. Evidence was given to the Commission that the Israelis had stopped the destruction very quickly after Archbishop Georges Haddad had intervened. These events took place on a relatively limited scale, although they caused very heavy losses to the owners concerned. They happened near the end of the fighting, when the security of the Israeli forces did not seem complete, and the Commission therefore considers that they do not constitute a violation of Article 53 of Convention IV.

The Commission reaches different conclusions regarding other acts of

destruction, the effects of which the Commission was able to assess. These were stated in evidence to have occurred after the fighting had ceased.

Underground shelters which had been used by civilians in the main, as well as combatants or officers of the PLO, were blown up without regard for neighbouring structures in, for example, the refugee camps of Al Bas and Rashidiyeh near Tyre. (p. 132)

*The resort to local 'auxiliary' forces*

There is one widely known fact to which almost all the Lebanese witnesses before the Commission gave special emphasis, including members of the government.<sup>4</sup> This is the fact that the Israeli army is closely linked to two different Lebanese militias which were in existence when the invasion of June 1982 was launched.

First, there is the 'Lebanese Forces', composed almost entirely of Christian Maronites and drawn mainly from the 'Phalange' of the Kataeb party. They were usually to be found in the Christian areas of the north and in East Beirut.

Second, in the frontier region of the south there is the 'Army of Free Lebanon', 60 per cent of whose strength is made up of Shi'ite Muslims, but whose officers are almost all Christian. This body is commanded by a former Lebanese officer convicted in his absence of high treason and discharged from the Lebanese army, Major Saad Haddad.

Evidence before the Commission establishes that when the invasion began, each of these militias had set up in its own territory a mini-state carved from the Lebanese state. Each was armed by Israel, but their degree of dependence and, as a result, their role differed. This was attested by many witnesses.<sup>5</sup>

It was established to the Commission's satisfaction that whereas the Lebanese forces enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy, the 'Army of Free Lebanon' was strictly controlled by Israel. The latter force has increased in numbers since the invasion because, according to the evidence received, every village has had to supply a contingent of 'volunteers'.<sup>6</sup> It has considerably extended its area of operations in the wake of the Israeli troops, and has been deployed as far as the River Awali, north of Sidon. On the heels of the invading army, these Lebanese forces also penetrated areas which up till then had been closed to them, to the south of Beirut, where they re-occupied villages which had formerly been Christian, and in the Shouf.

This process of creating militias is still continuing. Recent newspaper reports revealed that the Israelis are forming Druze militias in the south-east of the country and Shi'ite militias in the south. The various auxiliary forces have two kinds of tasks.

It was obvious to the Commission that they assist in keeping a check on people and in maintaining order. In particular, they check identities at the numerous roadblocks set up jointly with the Israeli army.

Again, they carry out, apparently independently, harassing operations against the civilian population and in particular against the inhabitants of the refugee camps. Harassment consists of seizure of property, physical maltreatment, kidnappings, assassinations and actual massacres ...

The Commission has evidence that although the Israelis knew about the numerous abuses committed by these different militias, they often refused to intervene to stop them and have always denied responsibility.<sup>7</sup> The Israelis



contend that these are Lebanese matters and that Israel had no wish to involve herself in Lebanese internal affairs. For example, this was the attitude adopted officially and forcefully on the occasion of the Sabra and Shatila massacres. According to witnesses, it was also the attitude towards other less spectacular criminal acts.<sup>8</sup> These facts contradict the Israeli government's denial of the fact of occupation and its emphatic insistence that the Lebanese authorities had reasserted their authority in the zones where the Israeli army was stationed.

In the Commission's view there is a link between the legal propositions and the 'political' explanations of the Israeli government and military authorities. According to the former, the Israeli army was not occupying the country and did not therefore have any responsibility in law for public order. According to the latter, the Israeli army had nothing to do with the Lebanese settling their accounts with other Lebanese or with foreigners: all this was exclusively the concern of the local authorities.

In the view of the Commission, this Israeli argument is legally unacceptable. By making use of the militias which it controlled, and by leaving them free to do what they liked, or by permitting the activities of smaller groups which were not under its control, the Israelis as the occupying power bear responsibility for the acts they have committed. The Commission has established that the Israeli policy was to make the Lebanese auxiliaries carry out tasks which Israel did not wish its own army to execute — a policy of which the Commission found numerous examples. Such a policy cannot relieve the occupying power of its legal obligations, which apply in the case of operations conducted by the militias as much as by its own units. (*pp.* 118-20)

### *The role of the militias*

The Commission received evidence that much of the suffering inflicted on the Lebanese and Palestinian civilian population was caused by the local militias who acted as auxiliaries of the Israeli army.

According to this evidence, these auxiliary militias harassed the inhabitants of the refugee camps. They were also responsible for kidnappings.<sup>9</sup> The kidnappings led in some cases to internment — according to the Minister of Agriculture, Mr Moustafa Durnaiqah, 'tribunals' and 'prisons' were set up by the Lebanese Forces (Phalange) — and to summary execution.<sup>10</sup> According to these testimonies, twenty Druze were kidnapped and possibly assassinated by the Phalangists on 2 September at Kaffer Mattar; the same happened to thirty-eight young people taken away at Bhamdoun on 12 or 13 August.

The Commission was also informed of numerous instances of brutality committed by the militias when carrying out checks and searches. For example, according to two American witnesses who gave evidence on 5 October at Sidon, a Palestinian woman and her Lebanese taxi driver were stopped at a road-block in Sidon on 16 August and then robbed and tortured. On 1 August, a doctor was attacked in his clinic by armed militiamen who wanted to force him to examine a child.<sup>11</sup> On 15 August, and the days following, some of Saad Haddad's men tried to take over a school in Sidon where sixteen families had taken refuge and which was serving as a nursery for more than sixty children. They only gave up the attempt on the orders of the Israeli military authorities, which were finally given, according to witnesses, because foreign observers had been alerted.<sup>12</sup> On 25 August, two shops belonging to Palestinians were set on fire in the old

town. On 29 September, an old man was struck down in the Ain el-Hilweh camp in front of the premises of the ICRC, whose staff were prevented by force from going to his aid and who had to watch his death agony for an hour and a half.<sup>13</sup>

The Commission concludes that, given the clear links between the Israeli army and these auxiliary militias and the fact that the army was occupying and controlling the whole area where these events took place, Israel must be held directly responsible for the actions of the militias. (p. 124)

## References

- 1 Statement by David McDowell, submitted to the Commission, 4 September 1982.
- 2 Testimony to the Commission of Hassib Abdul Jawad, Sidon, 5 September 1982.
- 3 Testimonies to the Commission of Georges Howi, Beirut, 1 September 1982; and Moustafa Durnaiqah, Minister of Agriculture, Beirut, 3 September 1982.
- 4 Testimonies to the Commission of Shafik Al-Wazzan, Prime Minister, Beirut, 2 September; Marwan Hamade, Minister of Tourism and Information, Beirut, 12 September; Moustafa Dournaiqah, Minister of Agriculture, Beirut, 3 September; Walid Jumblatt, Beirut, 3 September; Moustafa Saad, Sidon, 5 September; and Israel Shahak, Jerusalem, 9 September 1982.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Testimony to the Commission of Israel Shahak, Paris, 26 September 1982.
- 7 Testimonies to the Commission of Mona Saad, Sidon, 5 September 1982; and two Palestinians from Sidon, Beirut, 5 October 1982.
- 8 With regard to the responsibility for the checkpoints, see the *Guardian*, 7 July 1982, David Hirst; and for the fate of the homeless, see the *Guardian*, 30 July 1982.
- 9 Testimonies to the Commission of Moustafa Saad and Mona Saad, Sidon, 5 September 1982; Walid Jumblatt, Beirut, 3 September 1982; and Marwan Hamade, Beirut, 3 September 1982.
- 10 Testimony to the Commission, Beirut, 3 September 1982.
- 11 Testimony of Dr N, submitted to the Commission by Jim Fine, 4 September 1982.
- 12 Testimony to the Commission of Mona Saad, Sidon, 5 September 1982.
- 13 Testimonies to the Commission of two US relief workers, Sidon, 5 September 1982.

## Palestine Red Crescent Society: a report by an observer

The Israeli invasion of West Beirut on 15 September and the consequent massacre of Palestinians has drastically changed the situation in Beirut. The Palestinian community in general, and camp residents in particular, have found themselves totally unprotected and vulnerable to different acts of hostility. Fear, despair and total helplessness is the atmosphere in which the Palestinian lives. This is further complicated by the fact that the very existence of Palestinian camps in Lebanon now appears to be in question. The future role of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS), which in the past provided innumerable services and facilities, is likewise in question. *Immediate* mobilisation on all fronts is *urgently* needed to ensure the safety of Palestinian civilians, as well as the preservation of the Palestinian institutions that serve them.



This paper is an attempt to provide interested agencies and individuals with both background information regarding the PRCS, as well as information on present conditions in general. While it will focus predominantly on the situation in Beirut, reference will be made to the situation in the south, where the situation is similar, if not worse.

### *The PRCS prior to the Israeli invasion, June 1982*

The PRCS, which was founded on 26 December 1968, has been operating in most Arab countries hosting Palestinians. It has provided both Palestinians and the local population with free medical care, including specialised surgery, hospitalisation and rehabilitation services.

Prior to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982, the PRCS operated a total of ten hospitals and eleven socio-medical centres and clinics, representing both curative and preventive medicine. The number of hospital beds available was 600 and approximately 3,000 patients were seen daily. The eleven centres, distributed throughout the camps, also included maternal and child-care divisions; at the same time, primary health education was provided to all camp residents. The PRCS also set up vocational training centres in the south and in Beirut. A nursing school, which also provided paramedical training for lab technicians and pharmacy assistants, was established in Beirut in 1976. Tuition was free and two types of diploma programmes were available: a three-year programme for staff nurses and a one-year programme for practical nurses. Graduated nurses and trainees generally staffed PRCS hospitals and clinics. Haifa Hospital (Beirut), which had 100 beds and an active out-patient department, also provided workshops in pottery, furniture-making, carpentry and iron work for the physically and mentally handicapped and disabled. Finally, Ramleh Centre functioned as a rehabilitation clinic for the physically disabled, providing prosthesis to those in need. Social services provided by the PRCS included a centre in Beirut for the preservation of Palestinian folk tradition and art: young women were taught local and regional embroidery patterns. Income from the sale of items they sewed was used for modest social development programmes related to the women themselves.

### *The PRCS and the siege of Beirut*

The PRCS played a significant and important role during the siege of Beirut, quickly and effectively mobilising to face the almost insurmountable and adverse conditions. When the shelling and aerial bombardment throughout the city made it impossible to move freely, the PRCS relocated in several parts of the city. Despite the constant and heavy shelling in that area, Akka and Gaza hospitals remained open and maintained emergency facilities, while twenty-five different centres, including six with operating facilities, were established in other neighbourhoods. The largest hospital established was located at the Near East School of Theology (NEST) in Ras Beirut; almost overnight, this institution was converted into a 150-bed hospital, with a fully equipped operating room, emergency facilities and qualified staff. In addition, the PRCS helped in garbage collection and disposal, as well as in the distribution of water, whether through the drilling of artesian wells or by providing power for the pumping of water. All these facilities and services were available free of charge, to Palestinians and Lebanese alike.

*The present situation*

The present social and health conditions of Palestinian residents in the camps in both South Lebanon and Beirut is catastrophic. The three PRCS hospitals, as well as the clinics that had operated in the south, have ceased to function. Most of the PRCS staff in the region are unaccounted for: large numbers are being held in Israeli prison camps, while others have been reported killed or missing. Camp dwellers are treated in small clinics, where they are available, run by local and international voluntary agencies. In Beirut itself, following the Israeli invasion and the massacre of Sabra and Shatila residents, which also caused the death of fourteen PRCS staff members including two physicians, the situation is equally disastrous. Haifa Hospital, which in the past had operated at a capacity of 100 beds, is presently occupied by some of the homeless. One room has been vacated and is being used as a temporary clinic, run by volunteer doctors provided through the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC). Akka Hospital, which had a capacity of eighty beds, has just re-opened with a limited, but courageous, Palestinian staff. Gaza Hospital has also been re-opened and, like Akka, is temporarily under the protection of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC): it is being staffed by members of the PRCS and doctors provided by the MECC. Although it had a capacity of 120 beds, it is now functioning at the level of forty beds only.

Both Sabra and Shatila camps have been severely damaged, with large portions of them being totally demolished. Approximately 20,000 persons have been left homeless; the minimum in terms of sanitary conditions is almost non-existent. Since the rainy season has already started, health conditions have deteriorated further. The need for shelter has become more urgent, while hygienic and health conditions need immediate attention.

*Immediate needs*

1. Palestinians, whether in Beirut or in South Lebanon, need some kind of guaranteed protection. *This is absolutely urgent.* At the same time, their future status in Lebanon must be determined as soon as possible. Rumours quote a figure of 50,000 Palestinian residents remaining in Lebanon. While local Muslim leaders have insisted that Palestinians will remain, the anti-Palestinian atmosphere is overwhelming and extremely discouraging.
2. Housing and shelter for camp residents is equally urgent. While it has been suggested that tents be set up for the Palestinians of the south, pressure needs to be placed on all fronts to avoid the same fate for Beirut's Palestinian population.
3. The future of the PRCS needs to be clarified. Present conditions have made it almost impossible to function properly — decisions are often not taken because of uncertainty with regard to the future. At the same time, the administrative and organisational difficulties faced every day are debilitating and intolerable, and have caused a great deal of stress and tension. It is also important to stress that PRCS staff members, who are more than willing to continue their work, are doing so at their own personal risk, since there are no guarantees for their safety. Should it be decided that the PRCS will remain to continue its mission, an itemised list of all necessary equipment will be forwarded to interested parties. A large part of PRCS equipment has been either stolen or destroyed.

*Beirut, 11 October 1982*

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## Beirut massacre: the four days\*

*Beirut, Lebanon, 25 September:* The massacre of more than 300 Palestinian and Lebanese men, women and children at the Shatila refugee camp by Christian militiamen has left many unanswered questions.

The slayings, which began Wednesday, 15 September and continued until Saturday, 18 September, raise questions that focus on the role played by the Israeli army in what is certain to be regarded as one of the most important events in the modern history of the Middle East.

Much is at stake in the answers to these questions. The relations between the Israeli people and their government, the relations between world Jewry and Israel, the relations between the United States and Israel and the relations between Israelis and Palestinians will all be affected by the truth of what happened in Shatila.

### *The aftermath of the slayings*

The full truth may never be known. Too many people have already fled the scene. Too many people were killed on the spot. Too many people are now under pressure to hide their deeds.

There has been no announcement of any investigation in Lebanon of the militiamen who actually did the killing. In Israel, Prime Minister Menachem Begin rejected the idea of an independent judicial commission of inquiry into the Israeli involvement in the massacre. On Friday, he proposed an investigation of lesser scope, but it was unclear whether the Chief Justice of Israel's Supreme Court would accept the invitation to head it.

What follows is a reconstruction of events as it could be pieced together at this time from interviews with witnesses and statements by participants. It is not the final word. Information is still coming to light. But, on the basis of the evidence so far, some conclusions may be drawn.

### *The role of the Israeli army*

First, the Christian militiamen entered the camp with the full knowledge of the Israeli army, which provided them with at least some of their arms and provisions and assisted them with flares during night-time operations.

Second, the Israelis had to have known that there was deep and pervasive fear of the Christian militiamen among the Palestinian residents of the camps because of past atrocities committed by the Christians and Palestinians against each other during the Lebanese civil war.

Third, the Israeli Army began to learn on the evening of Thursday, 16 September, that civilians were being killed in Shatila, since the moment these armed men entered the camps, they began murdering people at random, and those who fled told the Israelis what was happening.

By Friday morning, there was enough evidence of untoward acts by the militiamen to move the senior Israeli commander in Lebanon to order their operations halted, according to the Israeli government. Yet, according to Defence Minister Ariel Sharon, the militiamen doing the killing were told by the

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\*Reprinted, with permission, from the *New York Times* (26 September 1982).

Israelis they could stay inside the camps until Saturday morning, and the murders continued until they left.

Fourth, there is every indication that, when the Israeli army entered West Beirut earlier in the week, it encountered no serious resistance from the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. The vast majority of people in the camps appear to have been resigned to the Israelis coming into their area and disarming them.

#### *Evidence of Haddad's role*

Finally, there is still no solid information on the precise make-up and command structure of the Christian militia force, which also apparently included some Shi'ite Muslims. But there is ample circumstantial evidence that members of the Israeli-armed and trained militia of Major Saad Haddad and members of the Christian Phalangist militia – also known as the Lebanese Forces – were in the camps. Whether they were there under orders from Major Haddad or the Phalangist military and political leadership is not clear. The possibility of breakaway elements being involved cannot be ruled out at this point.

#### **Beirut in flux: Palestinian fears are voiced**

Once Yasser Arafat, the PLO chairman, decided in early July that he would be leaving Lebanon, his major concern was to make certain that the Lebanese government and the special United States envoy, Philip C. Habib, provided proper security guarantees for the thousands of Palestinian civilians who would be left behind without PLO protection.

During the talks on ending the Israeli siege of Beirut, PLO officials and the Sunni Muslim leaders of West Beirut – notably Prime Minister Shafik al-Wazzan and former Prime Minister Saeb Salam – repeatedly expressed the view that Israeli tanks could not be permitted to enter West Beirut with Phalangist militiamen in their train. The reason was fear.

This fear, which the negotiators repeatedly expressed in public and which was surely known to the Israelis, was rooted in a series of mass killings and attacks – perpetrated by Lebanese Christian militiamen against Palestinians and Muslims, and by Muslims and Palestinians against Christians – that dated from the Lebanese civil war of 1975-76.

#### *A preventative measure*

It was to prevent such bloody incidents, according to Mr Salam, a key figure in the talks, that the Muslim and Palestinian representatives insisted that United States, Italian and French troops be deployed in West Beirut until the Lebanese army was prepared to take over the enforcement of law and order. Mr Salam said that this was 'precisely why we asked, and received, assurances from the United States that the Israelis would not enter West Beirut'.

State Department officials have made clear their support for Mr Salam's view that these assurances were an integral part of the Habib agreement. American officials believe Israel violated the agreement when it moved into West Beirut on 15 September, after the assassination of Lebanon's president-elect, the Phalangist leader Bashir Gemayel.

On 2 September, with the PLO gone and French, United States and Italian peacekeeping troops in place, the Lebanese army began to deploy its forces all



over West Beirut and in the southern suburbs, where the Palestinian Fakhani district and refugee camps are situated.

For the most part, the Lebanese army's deployment in West Beirut and the adjacent suburbs went smoothly. Although the army was then in the process of establishing control over West Beirut, the Israeli army maintained a toehold in the Muslim sector of the capital, near the traffic circle at the Kuwaiti Embassy. Israeli forces also held positions to the south, towards Beirut's international airport, which they controlled. The airport is very close to the Shatila, Sabra and Bourj el-Brajneh camps.

There are about 500,000 Palestinians in Lebanon, and many of them have lived in refugee camps such as Shatila since 1948. While the term 'camps' may evoke images of tents and other temporary shelters, these settlements actually consisted of more permanent structures: concrete houses, streets and twisting alleyways.

### *A brief period of calm*

On 11 September, both the Shatila and Sabra camps were quiet and, according to residents, there was no apprehension over the prospect of the Lebanese army moving in. It seemed almost as though life in West Beirut was about to return to what passes for normal here. The Sunni Muslim leaders were making their peace with president-elect Gemayel, and businessmen with reconstruction projects in mind were beginning to survey the devastated city centre.

On Tuesday 14 September, the situation began to unravel very quickly. That morning, Mr Gemayel convened a meeting in East Beirut of the commanders of the Phalangist militia – whose formal name was the Lebanese Forces. It was the same militia Mr Gemayel commanded before Lebanon's parliament elected him to the presidency. Since the civil war, Mr Gemayel's Phalangist party has been the dominant element in a coalition of Maronite Christian parties that has controlled East Beirut and a Christian enclave to the north.

In the middle of the meeting called by Mr Gemayel, a huge bomb, apparently placed on the roof of the building by someone familiar with Mr Gemayel's schedule, exploded. It brought the entire structure down on the president-elect and his aides. Mr Gemayel perished.

According to a statement by Ariel Sharon to the Israeli parliament, moments after the president-elect's death became known, the Israeli Defence Minister contacted Prime Minister Menachem Begin and the two men decided that the Israeli army should enter West Beirut.

### *Sharon sees a threat*

Mr Sharon argued that the Israeli presence was required, because as long as PLO guerrillas and Lebanese leftist Muslim militiamen remained armed and in the refugee camps, control over West Beirut by the Lebanese government would be tenuous, and there would be a potential for the PLO to re-establish itself.

Although the Israelis confiscated the arms of all the Muslim groups in West Beirut, they made no attempt to disarm the Christian Phalangist militiamen in East Beirut. Under the terms of the Habib agreement, those militiamen constituted an illegal force.

The stage had been set for the massacres.

**Wednesday: stage set for entry of militias**

At 3.30am, Wednesday, a meeting was held in Beirut between the Israeli Chief of Staff, Lieut. Gen. Rafael Eitan; the commander of Israeli units in the north, Maj. Gen. Amir Drori, and the general staff of the Phalangist militia. At this meeting, a Phalangist 'entry into the camps was mentioned', according to Mr Sharon's later account to the Israeli parliament.

Throughout the early hours of Wednesday, Israeli troops poured into West Beirut from Hercules transport planes that were landing at the international airport. At the same time, tanks and armoured personnel carriers were arriving from surrounding areas.

*Israelis seize intersections*

The Israelis began to enter the city proper around 5am, according to Mr Sharon's subsequent statement to the Israeli parliament. His troops quickly began seizing key intersections. At some locations fierce gun battles erupted between Israeli soldiers and Muslim militiamen.

The Israelis skirted the Palestinian refugee camps, making no attempt to enter them. There appear to have been exchanges of fire between the Israelis and some individuals in the camps, but these were minor. Witnesses say there was no organised resistance from the Sabra or Shatila camps to the Israeli invasion of West Beirut.

*'We Were Not Afraid'*

'We were not afraid of the Israelis', Zaki F, a 30-year-old Palestinian in the Sabra Camp, said in an interview last week. 'We know most of them are not bad people. Most of us just locked ourselves in our homes and waited for them to come. We figured we would wait to turn over our arms and that would be it.'

And so, camp residents said, they buttoned themselves into their homes on Wednesday and waited for the Israelis to arrive. They did so probably for the same reason that Palestinian guerrillas preferred to flee across the Jordan River into Israel during the Jordanian civil war in 1970 rather than allow themselves to be captured by the Jordanian army: a basic belief that the Israelis were not 'monsters'.

However, according to Mr Sharon's testimony in parliament, as well as interviews with Israeli soldiers, the Israelis had no intention of going into the camps. What Mr Sharon described to parliament as a process of 'checking and clearing out' the refugee camps was, he said, a job that was to be performed by the Phalangists or the Lebanese army.

By Wednesday afternoon, sniper fire and Israeli shelling had begun around the Sabra and Shatila camps, and it was intensifying.

Dr Per Maehlumshagen, a Norwegian orthopaedic surgeon at Gaza Hospital, not far from the Shatila Camp, recalled that 'there was a lot of sniping and some shelling' around the hospital. 'Around noon on Wednesday', Dr Maehlumshagen recalled, 'the first wounded started to be brought in. That was the first time we began to hear — I don't remember how — that the Israelis were surrounding the camp and setting up checkpoints.'

Zaki F, a Palestinian whose concrete-block home is only a few hundred yards from the hospital, said that by Wednesday afternoon, 'no one was moving in or out of the camps'.



*The Israelis make a request*

At roughly the same time — the precise hour is uncertain — Mr Sharon said that the Israeli command in West Beirut contacted the Lebanese army operations chief for the sector to ask whether the Lebanese were willing to go into the camps on what were termed search-and-destroy missions.

A Lebanese colonel, Michel On, rejected the Israeli proposal. This was corroborated in Mr Sharon's subsequent statement. Colonel On explained in an interview that his refusal was based on the fact that the Lebanese army was just then reconstituting itself as an organisation. He said it was also then beginning to win the confidence of the Muslim militiamen, Muslim residents and Palestinians of West Beirut.

According to the colonel, the army wanted to follow its own agenda and its own style in seeking to bring order to the camps. According to a plan set out by Prime Minister Wazzan, the army had already taken over control of the Bourj el-Brajneh camp to the south. But on Wednesday, it was not yet ready to move into the Sabra and Shatila camps.

Meanwhile, in the camps themselves, Dr Eivinu Witsoe, a Norwegian surgeon working at Gaza Hospital, said things were beginning to quiet down. By nightfall, he said, the shooting and shelling had subsided; and about twenty-five wounded people had been brought into the hospital.

On Wednesday evening, according to Defence Minister Sharon, General Drori met with Colonel On and pressed the Lebanese officer 'to persuade the political echelons in the Lebanese government to approve the entry of the army of Lebanon into the camps'. The colonel consulted Prime Minister Wazzan about the Israeli request. Mr Wazzan turned it down.

'The Israelis had surrounded the camp', the Prime Minister recalled in an interview. 'If the army had agreed to go in and remove arms and Israelis killed Palestinians, everyone would have blamed the Lebanese army and government.' The government and army, he added, did not want to be used 'as an instrument of Israeli policy'.

Throughout Wednesday night, according to people in both Sabra and Shatila, it was quiet. No one felt any overwhelming sense of fear.

**Thursday: Israelis encircle the camps**

By Thursday morning, the Israeli army had the entire area around the Sabra and Shatila camps sealed off. No one could move in or out.

A spokesman in East Beirut for the Israeli army, formally known as the Israel Defence Forces, issued the following statement that day: 'The IDF is in control of all key points in Beirut. Refugee camps harbouring terrorist concentrations remain encircled and closed. The IDF calls on citizens to return to normal activity and on all terrorists and other armed persons to lay down their arms.'

Around 6am, Thursday, shellfire and gunshots could be heard in the Sabra Camp in the vicinity of Gaza Hospital, according to Dr Witsoe. Although the night had been calm, new groups of wounded people were streaming into the medical centre.

*Israeli shelling reported*

The artillery fire, many of these patients later said, appeared to be coming from

Israeli positions overlooking the camp to the west. Armed elements inside Sabra may also have been firing at targets outside the camp.

According to Mr Sharon, after another meeting was held on Thursday between the Phalangist liaison officers and General Drori, 'it was concluded that the armed force of Christian militiamen would enter Shatila from the south and west, would look out for and clear out the terrorists'. 'And', Mr Sharon added, 'it was stressed that civilians — especially women, children and old people — should not be harmed.'

The full story of what happened after the meeting between General Drori and the Phalangist officers is still not known. Phalangist officials said that by 3 o'clock Thursday afternoon, they had a large force of men at the airport. However, they contend that these men never left the airport area.

#### *Militiamen begin to move*

Most interviews with survivors of the massacre indicate that at least some of the 1,500 Phalangists at the airport — but by no means all — moved north towards the Sabra and Shatila camps along a road leading through Ouzai, up past the Henri Chehab army barracks and into the Kuwaiti Embassy traffic circle, just down the main road from the entrance of the Sabra Camp.

There the militiamen established makeshift headquarters in a building that housed the Lebanese University's School of Business Administration, on the south-west corner of the traffic circle.

There are a whole series of what appear to be traffic signs pointing the way from the airport to the rotary, which overlooks Shatila and Sabra. These signs, spray-painted on walls, have a round circle with a triangle inside and the letters 'MP' under them. They are the symbol of the Phalangist military police.

#### *A question of identity*

But the Phalangists were not the only Christian militiamen moving out of the airport Thursday afternoon. There is also a sizeable body of circumstantial evidence suggesting that members of the militia of Maj. Saad Haddad, armed and trained by Israel, were also at the airport and may also have moved up to the staging area, despite Israeli denials that they were involved in any way in the slayings.

The evidence includes interviews with Lebanese soldiers who were on duty in the traffic circle, and had been on duty there since 3 September. They said they saw Haddad militiamen there, dressed in uniforms readily distinguishable from those of the Phalangist militiamen. They also said the Haddad men were noticeable because they lacked the Phalangist insignia on the left breast pocket reading 'Lebanese Forces'.

#### *Southern Lebanese accents*

Further, scores of survivors from the camps said in interviews that some of the militiamen spoke with southern Lebanese accents and addressed one another by such names as Ali and Abbas. Both are Shi'ite Muslim names. Roughly half of Major Haddad's 6,000-member militia are Shi'ites from the south.

Finally, Major Haddad said in an interview with *The Times* of London that some of his men 'may have been serving with other forces in Beirut' when the massacre in the camps occurred.



It seems clear that there were militiamen from Major Haddad's group in the strike force that entered the camps on Thursday afternoon. What is not clear is whether the Haddad militiamen could have reached the camps — far from their normal area of operations in the south along the Israeli border — without the knowledge or active cooperation of the Israelis. At the least, the circumstantial evidence indicates that some members of the Haddad militia passed through Israeli lines in an apparent effort to join up with the Phalangists going into the Palestinian camps.

According to a Lebanese army soldier, the militia force going into the camps was composed primarily of Phalangist units consisting of men from Damour, Saadiyat and Nameh. These are three Christian villages that were sacked by Palestinian forces during the Lebanese civil war in retaliation for attacks on Palestinians by Christian militiamen.

The Lebanese soldier said that one Phalangist militiaman told him before going into the camps, 'We have been waiting a long time for this day.'

#### *A key Israeli decision*

Sometime around noon on Thursday, General Drori, having received another negative response from the Lebanese army to his request that it move into the camps, met with the commander of the Phalangists. Judging from all available evidence, it was at this point that the Israelis made a decision to send the militiamen into the camps. Mr Sharon does not say who the Phalangist commander was, but it is believed to have been the Phalangist chief-of-staff, Fadi Ephram.

According to Phalangist military sources, an order was then issued for an estimated 1,500 men to assemble on the runways at the airport.

According to residents in Shuweifat, a junction town just south of the airport, there was a steady stream of trucks and armoured personnel carriers moving into the airport during the afternoon. All carried Christian militiamen, the residents say. Their accounts were corroborated by Lebanese army sources.

#### *Another meeting is held*

The militiamen, the witnesses said, appeared to be coming from both southern Lebanon — the area of Major Haddad's stronghold — and East Beirut.

According to what Defence Minister Sharon has told the Israeli parliament, another meeting was held at roughly the same time on Thursday afternoon that Phalangist troops were assembling at the airport. The meeting was held between the commander of the Israeli army division deployed around Beirut, Brig. Amos Yaron, and Phalangist liaison officers. The aim of the meeting, Mr Sharon said, was to 'coordinate the entry of the Phalangists into the Shatila camp'.

Sometime around 4pm on Thursday, according to residents of the camps, armed men began moving in.

#### *Israelis had view of camp*

Mr Sharon says the attack began at night. The Israeli army had an observation post, equipped with binoculars and a powerful telescope, atop a five-storey apartment building in the north-west quadrant of the Kuwaiti Embassy traffic circle. From that position it is possible to see into at least part of the Shatila

Camp, including those parts where piles of dead bodies were found later.

All available evidence, including testimony by witnesses, suggests that it is probable that Israeli soldiers were manning the post during the time of the massacre. The strongest evidence found by reporters who visited the observation station was in the form of Hebrew-language newspapers found on the floor. They were dated Thursday and Friday.

According to a witness living in a two-storey house about half a mile into the Shatila Camp from the southern entrance, the sounds of heavy fire and shelling began to be heard around 4pm. The din was coming from the southern gate.

#### *A 'softening-up' process*

Judging from the way buildings were destroyed at the southern entrance of the camp, Lebanese army officials say it appears that the militiamen attempted first to 'soften up' the area, using heavy-calibre weapons — possibly recoilless rifles.

This appears to have been what the witness, who identified herself as Mrs Hashem, the wife of Abdul Hadi Ahmed Hashem, was hearing around 4pm. An hour later, Mrs Hashem recalled, she and her husband grabbed their children and rushed from their house, running northwards to escape the gunfire, deeper into the Shatila Camp.

At one point, Mrs Hashem recalled, her husband, Abdul Hadi Ahmed, decided to go back to their home to retrieve some food and milk for the children. He never returned. His bullet-riddled body was later found in the house.

From the moment they entered the camp, witnesses said, the militiamen made no apparent effort to distinguish between Palestinians and Lebanese, let alone between men, women and children.

According to Col. Marcel Prince, the Lebanese army surgeon-general, as well as medical workers, those people whose bodies were found towards the southern entrance of Shatila were killed at random while others appeared to have been lined up against walls and shot. In other cases, what appeared to be entire families had been slain as they sat at the dinner table. Others were found dead in their nightclothes, apparently surprised by the militiamen who burst in on them on Thursday evening. Some people were found with their throats slit. Others had been mutilated with some kind of heavy blade, perhaps axes.

But according to Colonel Prince, most people died from gunshot wounds and 'the killings were done very quickly'.

#### *Some fled to adjacent camp*

With people running to get out of the path of the militiamen, it was natural that many would seek refuge in the Sabra refugee camp, farther north, towards the Gaza Hospital. Others fled to the south, to the Akka Hospital, across from the Shatila Camp.

Taleb Alouki, a 26-year-old carpenter, and his brother Fawzi, 22, recalled that they were sitting with a group of men drinking tea in their homes in the middle of Shatila around 6pm Thursday when they heard a great deal of noise and shooting coming from the southern end of the camp. Two men in the group were dispatched to find out what was going on, they recalled later. They returned with a story that Haddad militiamen were killing people in Shatila Camp.

Meanwhile, Zaki F was in his home near Gaza Hospital on Thursday



afternoon when he heard the first reports from people rushing through the neighbourhood that members of the Haddad militia were sweeping through Shatila 'cutting people with knives'. As Zaki remembers it, sometime around 4pm on Thursday he decided to go to the Israeli army position, just over the hill across from the stadium, and find out what was going on. By now it was well known in the camp that the area was surrounded by Israeli forces.

According to Zaki, he spoke to a blond, Arabic-speaking Israeli officer who identified himself only as Rami. They spoke near the Bir Hassan post office, across from the stadium. The Israeli perimeter around the camp ran through this area. 'I told him I saw a woman shot in the hand who said Haddad men were killing people', Zaki recalled. 'I admitted we had guns in our homes but we did not want to fight and were prepared to give them to the Israelis. He told me to go back to the camp and have everyone from age 13 to 50 to bring his weapons here and that I had until 5pm.'

Michel Gerti, a reporter for the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*, also quoted Israeli soldiers as saying that people were coming out of the camps as early as Thursday evening with tales of a massacre. Mr Gerti wrote in *Ha'aretz* that at one point he had been approached by Israeli soldiers stationed outside Shatila. They told him that on Thursday evening, several Palestinian women ran out of Shatila crying hysterically that their children were being butchered.

At this point, early Thursday night, the story is best picked up by the doctors and nurses inside the Gaza and Akka hospitals, situated on the north and south ends of the Shatila Camp.

### *An increase in casualties*

According to Drs Maehlumshagen and Witsoe, beginning Thursday afternoon, a large number of casualties began flooding into the hospital: mostly men, women and children with gunshot wounds in the head, chest and stomach as well as a variety of shrapnel injuries. From 8pm on Thursday until 5am on Friday, the physicians said, they were busy treating patients.

The doctors said the first indication they had that a massacre might be taking place was when an 11-year-old boy, Milad Farouk, was brought into the hospital with three gunshot wounds. He told the doctors that Christian militiamen had burst into his house in Shatila and shot his mother, father and three siblings, one an infant. Then they shot him.

### *Hundreds flee the scene*

At the same time as these wounded people were being treated on Thursday evening, hundreds of people – the doctors estimate that there were anywhere from 1,000 to 2,000 of them – began flocking to the hospital and the nearby buildings to seek safety.

Pandemonium reigned everywhere. In the operating theatre, the physicians said, Palestinian nurses were breaking down in tears in the middle of surgery out of fear for their lives. In the streets of Shatila, people were rushing about in terror. The dead and dying were being carried to the hospital by families, as no ambulance drivers would go out.

The scene was made all the more frightening, the doctors said, by the illumination flares that were being fired by Israeli troops over the camps and dropped by Israeli aircraft.

*A sky aglow with flares*

Mr Sharon said the 81-millimetre flares were requested by the Phalangists to light their way. Residents in the camp say the sky was aglow most of the night.

'I was here throughout the siege of Beirut', said Tineke Uluf, a 30-year-old Dutch nurse who was working in the Gaza Hospital, 'and I never remember the sky being lit up that brightly over the camps. It was like a sports stadium lit up for a football game. It started about 7pm and continued late into the night.'

Sometime around 8pm on Thursday, men from the Sabra and Shatila camps came to the Gaza Hospital looking for arms to defend themselves. It is believed from accounts pieced together from various sources among residents in the camp that a last stand of sorts was organised by some of the Shatila men at about this time. It took place about a mile down the main street of the camp, near a building with a blue-green wall, and apparently lasted for most of [the] night. Buildings in that area are heavily pockmarked from bullets and shellfire, and reporters who visited there Saturday morning found many piles of M-16 shellcases evidently fired by the militiamen. On the ground in the area, reporters found boxes that had contained M-16 bullets. The boxes were printed in Hebrew. Elsewhere, there were wrappings from Israeli chocolate wafers on the ground, as well as remnants of United States army C-rations. Witnesses say the detritus may be evidence that some of the militiamen had been provided with both food and ammunition by the Israelis.

On the southern end of the Shatila Camp, at the Akka Hospital, the scene on Thursday evening was equally grim, according to an Asian doctor who was working in the hospital at the time but declined to be identified.

*Bodies all over the street*

The doctor said he had spoken to a boy who said he had seen bodies lying all over the main street of Shatila. At one point, the doctor said, about 500 people crowded into the hospital's basement bomb shelter, where they were working themselves up into a frenzy as each one told the other what he or she had seen on the way to the hospital.

Hirsch Goodman, the military correspondent of the *Jerusalem Post*, reported that he had been shown a cable sent at 11pm on Thursday from the head of the Phalangist units in Shatila to the Israeli command in East Beirut. It said, Mr Goodman wrote, 'To this time we have killed 300 civilians and terrorists.' The cable was immediately distributed in the command and sent to Tel Aviv, he reported.

**Friday: terror spreads to two hospitals**

There is a good deal less information on what happened beginning Friday morning in the camps. Most people were either in hiding or had fled.

Early Friday, at Akka Hospital, according to the Asian doctor, a young boy came rushing in saying his mother had been knifed and his sister taken away by militiamen.

At about this time, the people in the hospital shelter were unable to control their fear any longer and almost all of them fled from the hospital in a panic, scattering in all directions. What happened to some of them is not known.

The Asian doctor said that in addition to himself, the only medical personnel



left behind at Akka Hospital were five Palestinian staff members and six foreign nurses. He said there were also some patients in their rooms. None of them could walk.

#### *A hospital is invaded*

At about 10.20am, witnesses said, militiamen came to the hospital. Speaking Arabic in a southern Lebanese dialect, the witnesses said, they ordered everyone to come out with their hands up. Three foreign nurses left the hospital under a white flag, according to the Asian doctor. He said they were accompanied by a Palestinian physician who worked at the hospital, Mohammed Ali Osman. As they were leaving, a shot rang out, and the Palestinian doctor fell to the ground, dead.

At 2pm on Friday, a different group of militiamen came, wearing different uniforms, according to the Asian doctor. He said they started to molest one of the Lebanese nurses, whose name was Friyal. They stopped after she started screaming. 'Shortly after that we went down to the shelter', the doctor said, 'and found that one of the Palestinian nurses down there had been raped repeatedly and then shot.' He identified her as Intisar Ismail, 19 years old.

#### *Two physicians are abducted*

Around the same time on Friday, two Palestinian doctors at the hospital, one named Sami Katib, were abducted by the militiamen who entered the hospital. A Palestinian patient was kidnapped with them.

At approximately 3.45pm, witnesses say, yet another group of militiamen arrived at the Akka Hospital. Their arrival suggested to the Asian doctor that there was very little coordination between these men, especially since they all tended to ask the same question. The militiamen said they wanted to see the nurses. He told the men that the nurses had all fled.

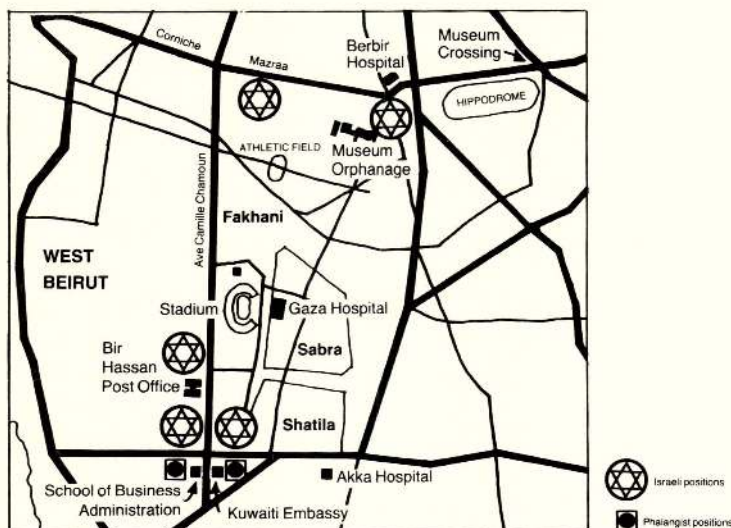
At this point, according to the doctor, the militiamen asked to search the hospital. During the course of their work, they found a photograph of Yasser Arafat in the Asian doctor's room. 'You are a terrorist', one of the militiamen said to him. At that point, the doctor said, he began to beg for his life. He was told to bring the nurses back to the hospital by 7pm, or else, the militiamen said, they would blow his head off.

Fortunately for the physician, by about 5pm on Friday, an International Red Cross convoy made it to the hospital and evacuated everyone left there. The doctor said that at about 5.30pm, as he was leaving the hospital to seek safety, he saw at the southern end of Shatila what he estimated to be eighty to ninety bodies. They had been mixed together with sand and were being pushed by bulldozers. This area can be seen very clearly with the naked eye from the Kuwaiti Embassy traffic circle — the site of the telescope and binocular-equipped Israeli observation post. Whether the Israelis actually looked down and saw what was happening is unknown.

#### *Crisis at Gaza Hospital*

At Gaza Hospital, on the other end of the camp, matters were also beginning to unravel on Friday morning.

Just after dawn, a nurse on the eighth floor was shot and killed by a sniper, according to witnesses.



At about noon, a woman who was director of the hospital called a meeting of the staff in light of the stories being told by the hundreds of people who were gathered around the facility, and by the wounded who had been brought inside. Her message was simple: If you are a Palestinian you would be well advised to run for your life, towards Israeli lines and Hamra Street.

About twenty foreign doctors and nurses and two Palestinian male nurses stayed behind to tend to the thirty-seven patients who could not be moved. Everyone else fled. Among those who ran were Taleb Alouki, the carpenter from Shatila, and his brother Fawzi. Earlier in the day, they managed to get back into the camp, to the shelter where they had left their neighbours the night before. Outside the shelter they found the bodies of fifteen men who had been tied together with a rope, shot and scalped.

### *500 people flee the area*

The two brothers ran back to the Gaza Hospital, through the maze of buildings and alleyways that make up the refugee camps. When everyone fled at around noon, they recalled, they and about 400 to 500 other people dashed north, towards Corniche Mazraa, the main boulevard separating West Beirut proper from the Palestinian-controlled southern suburbs.

This was also where the northern Israeli perimeter around the camps was situated. They sought refuge in the Warda al-Yazigi School, just south of Corniche Mazraa. It was by now early Friday afternoon.

Sometime, either in the morning or early afternoon, the precise time cannot be established, a CBS News cameramen was on the perimeter of the Sabra Camp, where he filmed a middle-aged Palestinian woman appealing to two Israeli soldiers to stop the killings going on inside the camps.

Some of this information had clearly filtered up to the Israeli command by this time. According to Mr Sharon's statement before the Israeli parliament, at about 11am on Friday, the Israeli division commander, Amos Yaron, met with



General Drori and 'raised suspicions concerning the method of operation of the Phalangists'.

#### *An order to halt operation*

According to Mr Sharon, General Drori then ordered the Phalangist liaison officer to halt the operation. It is clear from all accounts that by Friday afternoon things did quiet down somewhat in the camps, but there were still fires raging and shooting going on, according to people who were on the scene.

What happened next was probably the most controversial decision taken by the Israeli high command, save for sending the Phalangists into the camps in the first place.

At 4.30pm on Friday, after General Drori was said by Mr Sharon to have ordered an end to the operation, Generals Drori and Eitan met again with the Phalangists. At that time, Mr Sharon said, it was 'agreed that all of the Phalangists would leave the refugee camps on Saturday morning'.

#### *An apparent contradiction*

At this point, officials in Lebanon note, there appears to be a serious contradiction in Mr Sharon's account of what happened. He said the Phalangists were ordered to stop their operations in the camps at 11am on Friday. Yet at 4.30pm they were told that they could stay in the camps until Saturday morning. Repeated efforts to interview General Drori to clarify this point were unsuccessful.

The available evidence suggests that the operation was not halted on Friday, but that it may have been slowed down somewhat. Israeli officers in East Beirut said that what happened at the 4.30 Friday meeting was that the Phalangists told the Israelis that they needed more time to 'clean up' the area.

The Israelis said that instead of moving troops in to stop the militia operation, the Israeli command decided to give those militiamen already in the camp time to finish what they were doing. But at the same time, the Israelis decided to keep additional militiamen from moving into the camp.

#### *Some Phalangists begin leaving*

Lebanese army sources confirmed that by Friday afternoon Phalangist units with trucks and halftracks began moving out of the airport back to their home bases, just as Mr Sharon said. Inside the camps, the militiamen already on the scene continued with their work.

At some time between 4 and 5pm on Friday a Reuters correspondent, Paul Eedle, spoke to an Israeli colonel at the Kuwaiti intersection and asked him about the operations taking place in the camp. The colonel, who declined to be identified, told Mr Eedle that his men were working on the basis of two principles: that the Israeli army should not get involved, but that the area should be 'purified'.

Sounds of gunfire and explosions could be heard emanating from the northern end of Shatila, witnesses recalled, and they could also be heard by Taleb Alouki and his brother Fawzi. They, along with 400 to 500 other people, had fled from Gaza Hospital in the afternoon when word came that the militiamen were advancing in their direction. They took shelter at the Al-Yazigi school, cowering in courtyards and classrooms.

Some of the Palestinian civilians who tried to flee the camps for the safety of

downtown say they were prevented from leaving by the Israelis outside the camps. The following account by the two brothers was corroborated by the testimony of five other people who were later interviewed separately and independently of each other.

*Palestinians decide to run*

On Friday afternoon, with the sound of gunfire seeming to get closer to the school where they were hiding, the Alouki brothers and the others decided to make a run for Corniche Mazraa and the Israeli lines. The throng, showing a white flag, moved from the school up Rue Mohammed Ali Beyhum to Corniche Mazraa.

As they approached the Israeli checkpoint on the main boulevard, kitty-corner to the Berbir Hospital, they were stopped by an Israeli soldier. The soldier, by all accounts, was clearly surprised and probably frightened to see all of these people coming at him. The soldier shouted in Arabic to the crowd to stay back, then went into crouch position at the corner of a building and aimed his gun at the people, who immediately started shrieking and turned around.

*Crowd chooses a spokesman*

The soldier, members of the crowd recalled, then told them to send one person forward to explain what they wanted. A man was chosen and sent to speak to the Israeli.

According to the people, the spokesman told the soldier that Haddad militiamen were slaughtering civilians in the camps and that they were trying to escape. The Israeli soldier told the spokesman that there was nothing he could do, and added that if they remained in the area, he would open fire.

People began protesting; women started weeping. The Israeli soldier then reportedly fired two volleys into the air to scatter the crowd. At that point, witnesses say, an Israeli tank rolled from Corniche Mazraa on to Rue Mohammed Ali Beyhum and chased the people a few hundred feet back towards the camps.

Reporters who went to the intersection last Thursday afternoon found a Lebanese man who lived in a first-floor apartment who said he had seen the entire episode from his balcony. He confirmed the refugees' story without any prompting.

If the refugees' account is true, it would appear that by Friday afternoon the Israeli commanders had given no order to allow civilians fleeing the scene to pass through the perimeter set up around the camps by the Israeli army. 'If we went one way we ran into the Israelis; if we went the other way we ran into the Haddad men', Taleb Alouki said, 'so we all just decided to turn around and hide in the school.' Almost a week later they were still there.

*A first inkling of the horror*

It was on Friday afternoon that officials at the United States Embassy in Beirut first got an inkling that something was terribly wrong in the Palestinian refugee camps.

A group of American journalists happened to stop by the embassy around 3pm to speak with a member of the staff. In the exchange, one of the journalists mentioned that he had heard rumours that Phalangists had entered the Shatila



Camp. The chargé d'affaires, Robert Barret, who was in Baabda, was immediately alerted, diplomats say.

The diplomats said that Mr Barret contacted Amin Gemayel, who had succeeded his slain brother as Phalangist party leader. They said Mr Gemayel said he did not know if Phalangist militiamen were in the camps, but that he would check.

This and other evidence suggests that the Phalange party leadership, including Mr Gemayel, now Lebanon's president, may not have known what the militiamen were doing.

### **Saturday: US confirms the killings**

At 9am on Saturday, a member of the US Embassy staff entered Shatila, established that a massacre had taken place and informed his superiors.

Sometime between late Friday afternoon and Saturday morning, the militiamen in the camp appear to have made a concerted, but somewhat sloppy, attempt to cover at least some of their tracks. Many buildings were bulldozed on top of the bodies inside them. Some bodies were bulldozed into huge sand-piles, with arms and legs poking out in spots. In some areas the militiamen made neat piles of rubble and corrugated iron sheets to hide the corpses.

It is also possible, judging from the number of buildings that had their façades ripped off them, or huge bites taken out of them by bulldozers, that the militiamen were seeking to make many buildings uninhabitable so the surviving residents could not return.

Zaki F, the Palestinian living near Gaza Hospital, and a neighbour, Um Fat-mi, 40 years old, and her four daughters had locked themselves in their homes in the Sabra Camp when, around 6am on Saturday, men with bullhorns came through. The men identified themselves as Israelis and said that people had to come out. They added that no one had any reason to be fearful.

### *'Come with me'*

The figures with bullhorns turned out to be militiamen. 'When I came out,' Zaki recalled, 'I could tell the man was speaking with a Lebanese accent and was not an Israeli at all. He said, 'Come with me or I will shoot.'

Men, women, girls and young boys were all rounded up by the militiamen. Some 500 to 600 people, possibly even more, were then herded together and marched at gunpoint down to the main street of Shatila, where they were forced to sit along the road. Beside them were a number of corpses that had already begun to decay.

Zaki recalled that one of the militiamen said to another, 'Why are you bringing them all at once? Why not bring them few by few so we can finish them off today? The one he was speaking to answered that the Israelis are going to ask about all the people in Shatila so why not give them to them and say they are from Shatila', Zaki said.

Saleh H, 55 years old, was part of the group. One of the things that he said struck him was how some of the militiamen called each other by Christian names, such as Butros, while others addressed one another as Ali and Abbas, which are Shi'ite Muslim names and further circumstantial evidence that some of them may have been members of Major Haddad's militia.

*Hospital is ordered evacuated*

With all these refugees now collected in Shatila, the final act was about to take place at the Gaza Hospital, where some twenty foreign doctors and nurses and two Palestinian medics were still caring for thirty-seven patients.

At about 7am, members of the medical staff recalled, six or seven militiamen came to the hospital and ordered everyone out. 'We told them that we could not leave the patients,' said Miss Uluf, the Dutch nurse, 'so they said two of us could stay behind to look after them.'

'They were very well equipped', she recalled. 'Some of them had those Israeli kind of helmets with the webbing on them and, in fact, at first we thought they were Israelis. They said we had to march with them. As we got closer and closer to Shatila, we saw more and more of these militiamen, some of them in black berets.' Some Phalangist militiamen are known to favour black berets.

Hiding with the group of foreign medical workers were the two Palestinian male nurses who were trying to slip through the net of the militiamen. 'They were very frightened', Dr Maehlumshagen recalled. 'When we entered the Shatila Camp, we discovered all of these people sitting along the main street. As we marched along, one of the militiamen pulled one of the Palestinian nurses out of the line and asked his identity.'

'We asked them what they were going to do with him', the doctor said. 'The militiaman said, "You do your job and I will do mine." They then took the man around a corner and we heard shots. That is all we know.'

Along the way, the other Palestinian male nurse was pulled out of line as well, witnesses said. His fate is also unknown.

*An execution in the street*

Several witnesses said that at one point, a man wearing a blue hospital uniform in the group of foreigners from Gaza Hospital was stopped by the militiamen and asked his nationality. When he replied 'Syrian', the militiamen gunned him down in the middle of the street, in front of everyone.

'Somewhere along the way,' Miss Uluf said, 'we came upon an Israeli officer who asked where we were being taken. The militiaman in charge, wearing a black beret, told the Israeli, "First they come with me and then they go with you."' That is what happened, according to Miss Uluf. The doctors and nurses were taken to the Phalangist outpost at the business school near the traffic circle and were made to sit on the floor.

*A lecture from a Phalangist*

A militiaman gave them a lecture, saying, 'We are not fascists or racists, but respect the Geneva conventions.'

At one point Miss Uluf said, while their passports were being checked and they were being berated for working in a 'terrorist hospital', an ambulance drove up. 'They took this trembling Palestinian boy out of the ambulance and said to us, "See how well we treat Palestinians",' the nurse said.

When each member of the medical team had had his or her identity papers checked by the militiamen, they were allowed to cross the street to the Israeli lines, where they were given fruit, food and water and released. Two of them were subsequently allowed to return to the hospital to help care for the patients still there.



Meanwhile, back in the Shatila Camp, the militiamen were busy separating Lebanese and Palestinians they had taken prisoner, with men forced to sit along one part of the main street; the women along another. It was about 7.30am.

#### *Women begin screaming*

According to Um Fatmi and her four daughters, a number of men were taken off, their arms behind their heads. Some were taken behind piles of sand. Shots were heard. When the women began screaming, some of the men would be brought back to quiet them down.

According to both Colonel Prince, the Lebanese army surgeon-general, and a United Nations observer who saw the more than 300 corpses discovered in Shatila so far, it was clear from the relative states of decomposition that some people had been slain as early as Thursday and others as late as Saturday morning.

Some bodies were found bloated and already decaying, the blood that covered them congealed in a dark stain. Others looked as though they had just been shot and had barely decomposed at all, such as a 90-year-old man, Hada Nouri, who was found at the side of the road, his cane at his side.

#### *Diplomat describes a scenario*

One western diplomat who viewed the corpses said that what he found especially horrifying was that people had evidently been 'marched up to a wall and confronted with the horror of what they were going to look like moments before they themselves were shot'.

Around 8am on Saturday, according to Zaki F, the men were ordered to march out of the camp and up the hill. Just outside the gate, he said, was a land-rover with Christian militiamen inside. Each man had to pass by the vehicle in single file, apparently for purposes of identification. Some were pulled out of line and forced to sit in a ditch.

According to people in the camps, some of the men who were massed there that morning have not returned. As the men marched out of the camp, they saw about a dozen trucks full of militiamen lining the side of the hill up to the Kuwaiti Embassy traffic circle, apparently preparing to leave the area.

#### *A difficult story to confirm*

At some point, according to the testimony of the women who went into a panic when the men were marched off, two men they thought were Israelis came to the gate of the camp and said the men were being taken to the stadium and that all the women could go home.

Given the semi-hysterical state some of these people were in, this story proved difficult to confirm. One thing is certain: the women and children were all released, and most of the men were marched off to the sports complex.

On the way to the stadium, according to several people in the crowd of men being delivered by the militiamen to the Israelis, an explosion took place, killing a man and his young son and wounding several others. No one seems really sure of what happened. One story is that a grenade was thrown into the group; another, that someone stepped on an unexploded cluster-bomb shell near the stadium.

*A feeling of reassurance*

All that is certain is that there was an explosion, and some of the men were killed and injured. 'When we got near the Kuwaiti Embassy we were very relieved because we saw Israeli soldiers and knew we would not be killed', Zaki F said.

At some point on the way to the sports stadium, the militiamen moved away and turned the men over to the Israelis. The Israelis asked the men to sit under a stadium tier, tended to the wounded and gave everyone food and water.

In his statement to the Israeli parliament, Defence Minister Sharon said that on Saturday morning, the Phalangist forces left the areas of the refugee camps, which jibes with the eyewitness accounts. Then, Mr Sharon said, information began to arrive about the killings in the Shatila Camp. On the basis of this information, he said, General Drori ordered the Israeli army to take up positions in Fakhani district and later in the Sabra Camp in order to protect the population and 'put them at ease'.

*Israelis say they were greeted*

Both Mr Sharon and reporters who watched the Israelis move in said the Israeli army was greeted warmly by the local Palestinian populace. Mr Sharon said General Drori ordered the Israeli Defence Forces to stay out of the Shatila Camp so that it 'would not be linked to the events that occurred there'.

According to the men gathered at the stadium, while they were sitting there, awaiting interrogation, an Arabic-speaking Israeli asked them through a bullhorn whether there was anyone there from Shatila. No one answered. The Israeli soldier then asked whether the men understood Arabic and repeated his question. No one answered. The men say that there were some present from the Shatila Camp but that they were afraid to speak up.

*Invitations to a private chat*

Finally the Israeli soldier asked if there was anyone there from around Shatila. Several elderly men raised their hands and were asked to come out for a private chat, with an officer and translator.

According to witnesses, two Israeli soldiers spoke with the men for some time. What they discussed is not known, but say the Arabic-speaking Israeli who did the translating threw down his hat in disgust when the interrogation ended, while the Israeli commander slapped his hands together in apparent anger. It is possible that this was the first time these two Israelis learned the full extent of what had happened in the Shatila Camp.

Whatever the Israelis knew about the massacre by Saturday morning, and however disturbed they were by the events, some of the Palestinians say the Israeli soldiers threatened to turn them over to the Phalangists if they did not cooperate.

Saleh H quotes an Israeli soldier as telling him at the stadium: 'You are now under the protection of the Israeli Defence Forces. Don't worry about anything, just be honest with us. If we find out you are not honest ...' He said the soldier added, 'the Phalangists are here.' Mr Saleh said the Israeli soldier then motioned towards the area from where the Phalangists had brought them to the stadium.

Finally, Ahmed, 27 years old, a teacher at the school of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Sabra Camp, was asked



by an Israeli if he knew any guerrillas. 'I told him I knew a lot but they left when the PLO guerrillas left', he recalled. I told him I did know some of the Palestinian militiamen still in the camp. I said all this after he promised not to take me to the Phalangists.'

On that Saturday morning, a reporter arrived at the sports stadium and observed the men, apparently from Sabra and Shatila, sitting under the concrete stadium tier. They all looked very worried but also very quiet. A few miles away, around 9am the first outsiders were entering Shatila and discovering the bodies.

The Israeli officer in charge of the stadium interrogations, Col. Naftali Bahiry, was asked if there was any truth to reports that Phalangists were in the area of the camps. 'We asked the Phalangists to leave', said the colonel. 'We don't need anyone to do the job for us.'

*New York Times*

THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN

## Sabra and Shatila: testimonies of the survivors\*

*The F family used to live in Tel al-Zaatar. When the camp was destroyed in 1976, Sobhia F lost her husband and one of her sons. She then went to live in Shatila with her remaining children. Today, Sobhia F is still living in Shatila with what is left of her family: her eldest daughter, Wasfia, who has three children, her other three daughters, Khadija, who is 22, Sawson, 12, Zeinab, 11, and the only boy who was not killed, Adel, aged 7. Her mother-in-law was present throughout the interview. Three generations of women gave their testimonies.*

**Q:** Tell me what happened.

**A:** On Thursday evening we were sitting down at home when the camp was lit up by flares. A man burst through the door to tell us that 'the Phalangists are carrying out a massacre'. We didn't believe him and went to bed. The next day somebody else arrived and shouted: 'The Phalangists are massacring the people in the camp!' My brother-in-law, Sobhi F, who lives nearby, got dressed very hurriedly and went out to see what was happening. He saw dozens of corpses in the narrow side-streets nearby and a number of wounded. He decided to take them to the Akka Hospital not far away. When he went to fetch his car, he caught his first glimpse of armed men near the Kuwaiti Embassy. He ran back to the house and told us: 'Get up, come on, you can't stay here, you've got to get out.'

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\*These six eye witness accounts are extracts from a large scale study carried out among the survivors. They were first published in the *Revue d'Etudes Palestiniennes* (No. 6, Winter 1983), an independent journal published by the Institute of Palestine Studies with the help of the Diana Tamari Sabbagh Foundation. They are here translated and reprinted with permission.

Just then we heard loud speakers ordering everyone to assemble at the Sports Stadium. They said: 'If you come there, you'll be safe.' We'd only just left the house when three armed men appeared from nowhere and stopped us in our tracks: 'Don't be afraid, we're Phalangists. Are you Palestinians?' We told them we were Lebanese. They said they didn't 'touch' Lebanese. Then one of them who was leaning against the wall and wore khaki trousers approached and asked one of our menfolk to prove his identity. He did so saying: 'I swear on Sheik Bashir's life that I'm Palestinian.' Then the other man said: 'So you're all Palestinians, then follow me.' When they'd rounded up all the menfolk — that is, my two sons, Khaled and Amr, my brother-in-law Sobhi and our two neighbours, Abu Farid and Abu Chihab — they ordered us to start walking. We were one of five families living in this locality called Horch Tabet opposite the Akka Hospital. We began walking, men on one side, and women and children on the other. They had opened up a route through the camp by making large holes in the walls, which made it possible to move from one house to another.

We walked with them along this route for quite some time. Suddenly they ordered the men to stop and told us to go on, so we started shouting and crying. They told us: 'If you go on shouting, we'll kill you too.' When we'd gone a little further on, we heard shots and we realised that we would be next, so we began to shout even louder. One of the armed men said: 'What do you think is happening? Do you imagine we're running riot or something? We're not here to kill people. We interrogate them then we pass sentence.' We pleaded with them, we told them: 'For the love of Allah, for the love of the prophet Mohammed, don't kill them.' They replied: 'You killed Sheik Bashir.' We swore that we had no hand in his assassination. We even said: 'May God kill the person who killed him ... We're peace-loving people, we're unarmed, we're surrendering without putting up any resistance ... Why are you doing this?' One of them answered insultingly: 'Allah doesn't exist, nor does Mohammed. We are Allah and Mohammed, come on, move, you cows ...'

We went on walking until we got to a house which had been partially demolished. That's where I saw a tank carrying Israelis. They were inside the camp opposite the Kuwaiti Embassy. They said: 'Take them to the Sports Stadium.' But I did manage to catch sight of a deep ditch full of corpses, and so did the other people with me. They\* were killing people and throwing their bodies into the ditch. This ditch was close to the Kuwaiti Embassy and ran parallel to the road. Before they let the women go, they lined us up and one of the armed men said to another, with a wink: 'Choose one — which one do you think deserves to have her throat cut?' The other one answered: 'No, we don't want to kill them right now.' And they made us walk all the way to the Sports Stadium.

When we eventually got there, three armed men in a jeep threatened us and ordered us back. We complained that we were being given conflicting orders. Nevertheless, we were forced to turn round and go all the way back to the Kuwaiti Embassy from the Sports Stadium. At one point, a mine or a bomb blew up in front of us. Some people were hurt and we were shot at. People were running in all directions. We ran towards the Arab University. There was a car

\* The referent here is not clear in the French: The Israelis or the armed Phalangists (translator's note).



going in the same direction and we stopped it. It was carrying foreign journalists and one of them spoke Arabic. They took photographs of us and asked us what was happening. We told them that there'd been a massacre, but they didn't believe us. We explained that we were the first survivors to leave the camp. That was on Friday morning at about six o'clock.

*Q:* How do you know that your children were killed? Simply because you heard the shots?

*A:* My cousin went back the following day to look for the children and their uncle. He didn't find them and he was obviously relieved not to come across their bodies. But when he heard whistling, he was frightened and ran off. Later I described to him the exact spot where we'd been separated. He went back there the following day, a Sunday, and found their bodies. They were lying some distance away from the spot where we'd left them, near a pink-coloured house. All six had been lined up against the wall. Six men ... and they shot them down. My son, Amr, was shot in the face, then hit with an axe. His uncle, Sobhi, was killed in the same way. The body of my other son, Khaled, was found leaning up against the wall with his arms apart as if he'd tried to resist. Their cousin didn't recognise them they were so disfigured. He only identified them by their clothes.

*Q:* How many children did your brother-in-law have?

*A:* Six daughters and three sons. The eldest son was 17. My brother-in-law was 43 and a mason.

*Q:* And your children?

*A:* Khaled was 19 and Amr, 15. They were both welders.

*Q:* How old was your first son when he died at Tel al-Zaatar?

*A:* He was 16 at the time. He would have been 22 today. After Tel al-Zaatar, we went to live in Damour for a while, then we came here to Shatila. We've been here for four years now.

*Adel, the 7-year-old boy present at the interview, refused to answer any questions. He clung to his mother and remained completely silent. He was with his mother on the day the militiamen came to look for them. Also present was Sobhia's mother-in-law, the children's grandmother. She is 70 and it was she that took them in. I put these questions to her:*

*Q:* When did you all come to Shatila?

*A:* In 1948, from Jaffa. There were blackberry bushes here. We moved in with one of my male cousins. Then the camp director\* refused us permission to remain in Shatila. Then someone told my husband: 'Don't stay here — they're setting up a new camp in Tel al-Zaatar.' He took us there and showed it to us. How can I describe it? There are brambles in Tel al-Zaatar and snakes, and that's all. I cried when I saw what state it was in. I complained to my poor husband: 'You've made me leave my home — to come here, to a place infested with

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\*The camps were run by the UNRWA (Office of the United Nations for Palestinian refugees) who chose the camp administrators.

snakes!' At Shatila, there were at least some tents, but at Tel al-Zaatar there was nothing. The camp director was called Abu Youssef. We moved in there with our children: Selim, Sobhia's husband, who was killed there, my son Arafah, my son Abed and my other son Awad, the youngest, who was 3 months old at the time. There was also my daughter, Malabee, who is married now. So I had five sons and one daughter when I came to Tel al-Zaatar.

Then the UNRWA built houses, how can I describe them? Not wishing to be vulgar, they looked more like cowsheds than houses. But beggars can't be choosers. In summer it was like an oven and in winter we were flooded out. Anyway, we settled in. We were given only one room to begin with, although there were eight of us. And we spent three years like that — eight of us to a room. Then they began to enlarge the houses and we were given two rooms. My husband built on a yard, and we lived there for twenty-five years, until the 1976 massacre. My children were married in these two rooms — Selim, Arafah and Sobhi. After that they set up their own homes. My sons chose well and I get on well with their wives. My husband died a natural death. He ran a cafe for truck drivers at Mkallès near the camp. After he died, the cafe closed down.

*Q:* What did he do in Palestine prior to the 1948 exodus?

*A:* He was a fisherman. We lived in Jaffa, in the Ajami quarter of the old city. He had a boat, and we used his boat to escape from Jaffa during the war. They were shelling the town from the village of Al-Bireh. We were frightened and we left Jaffa just before the Zionists arrived.

*Q:* Sobhia, how did your husband and your eldest son die at Tel al-Zaatar?

*A:* After the Phalangists had the camp under siege for fifty-four days, the people in the camp surrendered. They told us to 'surrender and your lives will be saved'. Just like they did here. My husband and my son were killed in front of the International Red Cross, which was responsible for evacuating us. My son, Mohammed, was 16. He'd been wounded in the thigh and I was carrying him to the Studio Fawzi Cinema which is in Dekouaneh, a few kilometres from the camp. On the way there, they took his father and shot him there and then, and I saw that with my own eyes. He fell with his face to the ground. I let go of my son and ran towards him, but he was already dead. I went back intending to carry my son who'd been wounded, but he was nowhere to be seen.

There were ten children with me. Mohammed, who was wounded, was the eldest. I lost him at exactly the same moment that they shot down his father. I started to collect the other children together as they had run off in different directions. Adel was only 7 months old at the time. I put him down on the ground and ran after the others. His sister picked him up and then I came across a young man who'd also been wounded and I carried him. Allah helped me to carry him. They had taken his father away, shot him and tossed his body into the stream. I managed to locate my children, and we went to live in Damour with the other survivors of Tel al-Zaatar. But we only stayed there one year, then we came to live in Shatila.

My sons who have just been killed were my only source of support. Now all I have is my son who is 7 and four daughters. The eldest daughter is married and has to look after her three children, and my second daughter is epileptic. My



two other daughters are 12 and 11.

*Q:* Weren't you frightened when the Israelis invaded Beirut?

*A:* The day Bashir Gemayel was killed, we had the feeling that something terrible was going to happen. We went to spend the night with relatives in Hamra. My sons were still alive then, and they were with us. The next morning the Israeli army entered the city. They were looking for armed men, and left civilians alone. So we thought it would be safe to go back home. We returned to Shatila on Thursday and on Friday morning armed men came for us at 6 o'clock in the morning.

*Khalil Ahmad is Lebanese. On the day of the massacre he spent the night with his mother who lives in Sabra. Like most of the other men, he was taken away to the Sports Stadium and later set free. The Sports Stadium was used as an interrogation and detention centre.*

*Q:* Where were you when the militiamen invaded the camp?

*A:* I was at my mother's, in Sabra, opposite the Gaza Hospital. My own house is near the Martyrs' cemetery in Ghobeyreh. When the bombing was very bad, I got my wife and father-in-law away to a safer area, and then I went to my mother's at Sabra, and every so often went back to see if my house had been hit. A few days earlier the Lebanese army had set up a post not far from the house. Together with some neighbours I decided to seek their protection. We asked them: 'Why don't you go into the camp to stop the foreign militiamen from coming in?' They told us that they'd received the order to withdraw. And, true enough, by the next day they'd gone. That was on Wednesday, September 15th. On Thursday the 16th I stayed the night at my mother's. There were terrible rumours going round that people were being massacred in the camp, but we didn't believe them. There were a lot of people in the neighbourhood who were relaying the same news.

*Q:* Who were these people?

*A:* Palestinians from the Shatila camp. They were running away from their homes. We sheltered as many as we could in the basement of the building. Most of them left at dawn. They were women, children — civilians. That night the sky above the camp was lit up by flares. We still went to bed without any clear idea of what was happening.

On Saturday morning at about 6.30am my nephew gave me the news: 'Uncle, the Israelis are here — they're outside!' I got up hurriedly to speak to them and to explain that we were civilians and that we were unarmed. I wanted to speak to them nicely and politely, as after all this was a regular army which had no reason to harm civilians. One of the soldiers standing at the door of the building yelled at us: 'Get out, all of you out, out of the building.' I told the neighbours: 'Come on, these are Israelis. They won't hurt you.' When we got nearer we saw the Lebanese cedar on their uniforms and the Arabic wording: 'Lebanese Forces'. That was the end of the discussion. They told us to move forward towards the square. We thought they meant Sabra Square, so stayed where we were. But they shouted: 'Not here, the other square further down.'

They were very vulgar and extremely violent, and insulted us right and left

while trying to get us to move on. When we protested that we were Lebanese, they retorted: 'What are you doing here, then, among the Palestinians?' We explained that we lived in this area, and that these were our homes. They then said: 'That's your fault — you should have kicked the Palestinians out.' We replied: 'How could we have done that? They live here. And where could they have gone if we had kicked them out?' They lined us up in the square and then ordered us to move off again. There were old people, as well as women and children. Some of the old people couldn't walk, so they had to be carried. Those of us who couldn't walk fast enough were hit with rifle butts. A number of women were carrying the youngsters in their arms. Some Palestinian women tried to pass their babies to the Lebanese to hold. But the soldiers saw what they were doing and snatched the babies away.

When we crossed through the camp we saw corpses everywhere. It was only then that we realised that the rumours that we had heard the night before were true. We believed them then — because we saw bodies with our own eyes, bodies of old people in particular, of men aged 50 or more. We saw bulldozers being used. There were still human remains attached to the bulldozer tracks, including legs and entrails, as the bulldozers swept away the heaps of corpses. We were ordered to go on until we reached the camp exit. When we got there the soldiers shouted: 'Women stand on one side, men on the other.' We then started shouting: 'What are you going to do to us? We are Lebanese! What are you going to do to us?' They shouted insults back: 'Shut up, you bastards ... You've done plenty to us!' I said: 'But we're Lebanese!' They replied: 'How is it that you're living among them then? You've become Lebanese overnight, have you? You bastard ...?' They lined us up and made us walk towards the Kuwaiti Embassy. On the way there they picked on individuals and threw them to the ground. They were forced to lie down with their faces in the sand and put their hands on their heads. Then one of their heavies would run up behind and jump on the back of the man lying prone. He'd yell with pain. Then they'd do the same to someone else.

*Q:* Did someone select the individuals to be singled out?

*A:* No, it wasn't like that — it was quite arbitrary. One young man I'd never seen before made the unfortunate comment that he didn't know of any resistance fighters among us. They came down on him very hard: 'You bastard — so you don't know anyone here, is that so?' The unfortunate man was wearing a gold chain and carried a key ring. These were snatched away from him. An old man in front of me was having difficulty in keeping up. One of the soldiers punched me and told me to 'move on'. I didn't react. I didn't even look at him for fear he'd throw me to the ground and jump on me like the others. I saw that incident repeated some forty times. They jumped on their back threatening to break their backbone ... All along the road there were soldiers of the 'Lebanese Forces' in jeeps. They swore at us and yelled after us as if we were cattle. We were scared to death, and frightened that they'd shoot us if we dared to protest. So we said nothing. When we reached the Kuwaiti Embassy, they handed us over to the Israelis.

*Q:* Did the Israeli soldiers see what was happening?

*A:* Of course, because the Israeli army was occupying the Kuwaiti Embassy



overlooking the camp, and from there you have a perfectly clear view of the camp entrance and particularly of the road we were forced to take to get there. When we reached the Kuwaiti Embassy, it was the Israelis who took over. They made us walk in lines. We asked them where they were taking us, they said: 'You'll see', and they too insulted us. A bomb exploded along the road leading to the Sports Stadium. A mine or a bomb, I'm not sure. About ten of us were hit. Three remained on the ground, and the rest were wounded. The Lebanese soldiers shouted at us to lie flat on our stomachs. Those who'd been hit but survived and were bleeding were running frantically in all directions. The soldiers were shooting and still they were running. We lay flat on our stomachs. Then we were told to get up and continue walking. We said: 'But what about the mines? — We don't want to get blown up.' The soldiers replied: 'You bastards ... You knew there were mines here.' 'No, we don't know, but we've just seen one explode.' Some Israeli soldiers who were stationed nearby saw us and wanted to help the wounded. The soldiers of the 'Lebanese Forces' tried to prevent them and shouted to them to go away. Nevertheless, they managed to carry off the most seriously wounded and dying. The others had to carry on with us.

*Q:* How many of you were there?

*A:* About 2,000 when we set off. But when we reached the stadium there were about 1,300. The rest were either killed or taken off somewhere in lorries. And then there were those who landed on the mine. There were also some people who tried to escape behind the sand dunes when we got as far as the Riding Club, just before the Sports Stadium. At that point, the Israelis used a megaphone: 'Don't run away now, Saad Haddad's men will catch up with you and kill you. Stay here — we'll stamp your papers.' We were thirsty and hungry — we'd been standing up for hours on end. It was 10.30. They promised to give us something to eat and drink when we reached the Sports Stadium and told us that it would be better to stay with them, or otherwise they couldn't be held responsible for our lives because of the presence of the armed Lebanese militiamen. We finally agreed to follow them.

When we were inside the stadium, they brought us water in a container. The Israeli soldiers looked around at the results of the bombing, of their bombing. They admired their handiwork. Then they gave us some sweet-tasting bread. There wasn't enough to go round — only one loaf to share among some twenty people. They then asked the old people to go and fetch the young ones who had remained in the camp. About 100 were brought back. They came in the hope that, once their cards had been stamped, they would no longer face arrest. The Israelis then began to interrogate the men one by one. The officer who interrogated me had a beard and spectacles. He wanted to know my name, my nationality and what I did for a living. He was an Israeli officer, but he spoke Arabic with a Palestinian accent. Because I was Lebanese, he left me alone. But the Palestinians were questioned much more closely, and if they were young and strong they were taken off to some unknown destination. Then one was brought back to denounce those in league with the fedayeen or who had fought on their behalf. Those men who were denounced, some twenty or thirty, were taken away and I don't know what happened to them.

At about 2.10 in the afternoon they told us they were going to let us go and

that they'd pardon us even if we were 'terrorists'. And they let us go without stamping our papers. In my case, I was reunited with my wife who was waiting outside for me crying. We went home via Fakhani, so as to avoid passing in front of the Kuwaiti Embassy.

*Q:* And the others?

*A:* That depends. My neighbour, who's a grocer, and left the camp before me, told me that he and his son had been thrown to the ground and beaten. I asked him how he managed to get out. He said they wanted to take him away in a truck. There were already two truckloads but there wasn't enough room for everybody, so they told the remainder to join them in the Sports Stadium.\* Someone else told me that he'd been taken into one of the rooms underneath the stadium steps, and that he'd been beaten with a crop.

*Q:* And your wife?

*A:* She came to meet us at the Sports Stadium, along with about sixty other women. The soldiers didn't allow them in the stadium. They waited outside for a long time and they were crying because they didn't know if we were still alive or not. Then an Israeli officer drew up in a jeep and told the women: 'We shall set your husbands free providing each of you hand over a resistance fighter from your area.' Of course, they told him that there were no resistance fighters in the camp. The officer then told them to wait.

*Oum Ahmed Farhat is the mother of ten children. Four of them aged 1, 2, 6 and 13, have been killed and so has her husband. Her eldest daughter, aged 18, is permanently paralysed. Oum Ahmed Farhat was shot twice in the back, but she still resumed her housework the day after the massacre. She had great difficulty speaking and she couldn't stop crying.*

*Q:* What happened, Oum Ahmed?

*A:* All of us were asleep in the bedroom — my husband, eight of my children and me. Our neighbour was also sleeping at our house because of the bombing the night before. At about 5 in the morning a group of armed men arrived and ordered us out. We went out in our pyjamas and each of us grabbed hold of a child. I've young children — aged 1 and 2. When we were outside, they asked my husband what his nationality was. He said he was a Palestinian from '48\*\* and that he was a telephone mechanic. He also said that he'd lost the use of one arm. The bloke lifted up his machine-gun to hit him and at the same time he insulted him and called him a 'terrorist'. Then he ordered us to face the wall and to look straight ahead, and then they shot at us several times. I had my 2-year-old son in my arms. I heard him say 'Yaba' ('Father!') just before his skull was shattered. I was shot twice in the shoulder. There's still a stain in the wall from my son's brains. And his little sister's too — she was on her big sister's shoulder and she too was shot in the head.

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\*Those taken away in trucks have not been seen since. The exact number is not known, and there is no proof that they are still alive.

\*\*The Palestinians of '48 are refugees living in Lebanon after the 1948 war. According to the Habib agreement, they had the right to remain in Lebanon.



**Q:** How old were the children?

**A:** Leyla was the youngest. She was just a year old. Then there was Sami, he was 2, then Farid, 6, and then Bassem – he was 13. My husband was killed too. He was 47. The others were wounded, and that goes for me too. I fainted, but when I came to, the armed men had left. I was losing a lot of blood. My eldest daughter was badly hurt and couldn't walk, and my other daughter, Salwa, was hurt in the shoulder, but she could walk. And the rest were dead. So Salwa and I got up, and with great difficulty we managed to walk towards the hospital. On the way there, thank God, we ran into a young woman and she helped us to the hospital via the back streets, so that we wouldn't run into the armed men. They gave us first aid at the Gaza Hospital, then there were rumours in the cafe near the hospital that Saad Haddad's men or the Phalangists had arrived. I decided that, whatever happened, I couldn't remain at the hospital. I remembered my niece at Saida who had taken refuge in a hospital which the Israelis destroyed over the heads of the inmates. So I ran off carrying my daughter on my back. I was bleeding, but I'd made up my mind not to stay there and wait for them. We took refuge in the doorway of a building and while I was waiting for the bleeding to stop, a young man who knew my son recognised me and helped us.

**Q:** And what about the others?

**A:** Souad, my eldest daughter, who was seriously wounded, lay in front of the house until help came on Saturday morning and she was taken away on a stretcher. She spent all day Friday and the whole night lying on the ground bleeding. Nobody could come to take care of her because the massacres were still going on. She's still in hospital. Most of the shots had entered her spine, and the doctors say that she'll remain ... paralysed ... (*Oum Ahmed's voice broke and tears fell slowly down her face.*) Souad is very energetic and did everything at home. I daren't go to see her, I daren't look her in the eyes and lie to her.

**Q:** Have you any other children?

**A:** Yes, two young men of 19 and 20, and two younger boys of 8 and 12.

**Q:** Where were they at the time of the massacre?

**A:** The elder ones were at home on Thursday afternoon and from the flat they saw a group of armed men coming down the hill overlooking the camp. They came running to us with the news. Their father told them to find somewhere else to sleep in town because the Israelis always accuse the young men of being members of the resistance. We had no fear for ourselves because we thought that the Israelis wouldn't attack us because we were civilians, and women and children. The two little boys stayed with us, but they managed to hide in the toilet. When they came out, their father and their brothers were dead. Then the armed men caught them.

**Q:** (*Speaking to the 8-year-old boy*) Where did they take you to, you and your brother?

**A:** They took us to the Kuwaiti Embassy, then to the Sports Stadium. Then they separated the Lebanese from the Palestinians. They took the young men away and killed them. They killed some Lebanese too. And they told us that if we spoke, they would kill all of us one after the other.

**Q:** Who were they? Lebanese or Israeli soldiers?

**A:** Both.

**Q:** What happened then?

**A:** After that, they let us go. I went to my parents' house near the camp, and that's where my mother was.

**Oum Ahmed:** He still wakes up every night and asks for his father.

**Q:** How will you manage to live?

**A:** We have some savings. Seven thousand pounds.\* We hid them in the babies' nappies on Thursday evening, thinking that we'd take them with us if we had to escape.

**Q:** You didn't hear anything the night before?

**A:** Yes, we heard some groaning in the night. The children were watching TV at the neighbours'. I told them to come home. The sky was lit up with a lot of flares. We were frightened to go and see what was happening. We were wrong to trust the Israeli army. They managed to conceal the atrocities they committed in the camps in the South in Rashidiyeh, Ain el-Hilweh and in Bourj el-Shamali. They carried out massacres there too. We didn't know anything about it at the time, but since then, some relatives who were there have come here and told us about it. I have relatives at Bourj el-Shamali. People were buried alive in the ruins. Poison gas was used too. But they've managed to keep all that from world opinion.

*Ibrahim Moussa is 30. He lived in Shatila with his wife and three children. His wife was killed in the massacre, and it is a miracle that he survived. He received twelve gun-shot wounds and not all the bullets have been removed. The interview took place at the hospital where he is currently receiving treatment.*

**Q:** What do you remember exactly?

**A:** I was woken up on Wednesday morning by the noise of planes which was deafening. I thought they were going towards the Bekaa. I was at my workplace, which isn't far from the camp. News was already coming in: 'The Israelis are at the Cola crossroads'. 'They've reached the Arab University.' I went home immediately. I stayed home all day with my wife and my children. By the evening the Israelis had the camp under siege. On Thursday morning the planes flew low over the town a second time. Everyone was terrified. There was some sporadic firing on the camp from Israeli positions.

The shelling began at 4 in the afternoon. I took my wife and children to a shelter just a few yards from the house. The houses in Shatila are not very solid, so I thought that we'd be safer in a shelter. Quite a few local families had the same idea. The women and children went below, and the men and old men stayed out on top. There was a lot of movement, and a great deal of going into the shelter. People came and then immediately left to look for another shelter when they saw how overcrowded it was. There were about 150 people in this

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\*Approximately £100.



shelter which was about three yards by four. Most of them were women and children. At about 5 in the afternoon a shell fell very close to us, and our neighbour, who was pregnant, was hit. She was taken to the Gaza Hospital. We then heard the first news about the Israeli advance. We thought we'd give ourselves up and that we'd be treated as civilian prisoners. There were rumours of a massacre in the camp. We listened to the radio, but there was no mention of it.

At about 7.15 we heard shouting, but we thought it would be better to stay inside the shelter. My children were asleep. At about 7.30pm my landlord shouted to the men to come out of the shelter. In the doorway stood a man in Israeli uniform and another man who spoke to me: 'Who are you?' I said, 'I'm a plumber.' 'I'm asking you your nationality.' 'Palestinian,' I replied. Then one of them said: 'Come out, come outside.' I obeyed, and in the street there were a lot of young people and old men lying flat on their stomachs with their hands on their heads. About fifty in all. He ordered me to do the same. I lay on the ground face downwards. Then I heard arguments between the women and the armed men, and these were followed by shots fired in the air. The soldiers threatened to kill them. I then heard one of the armed men say: 'Take the women to the Red Cross headquarters.' I knew there was no Red Cross in the camp, but this led me to think they would be spared. I wanted to believe that they wouldn't kill them.

When the women and children had gone, they ordered us to stand up and empty our pockets. They took my wallet and my identity card, which they then discarded on the ground. They then lined us up against the wall and began to shoot. At that moment armed men from our camp suddenly appeared about twenty-five yards away, and there was an exchange of fire. Making the most of the panic, I looked and saw that I was at the end of the line of men, and that the others were lying on the ground either dead or wounded. For a moment I panicked and didn't know whether to run or stay where I was. I felt a very warm sensation in my leg which was spreading upwards to my arm. Then a grenade exploded and I threw myself to the ground. I thought I was dead or dying. I looked all around me and couldn't see any armed men, but there were a lot of dead and wounded, and I could hear groans. A 13-year-old boy with his back to the wall was bleeding from the chest. He was choking and coughing because he was swallowing blood. One of the people who'd been wounded called out to me: 'Help me ... Have they gone?' With great difficulty I managed to move my wounded leg, which was in his way, then he went off, leaving me there with the others. Another wounded man who knew me called out my name and asked me to help him. I told him I was hurt and couldn't get up. I asked him where he was hurt and he said: 'In the back.' I replied: 'At least we can talk to each other — and then we'll see who dies first, you or me.' We talked a little, then he tried to sit up leaning against the wall. He cried out in pain, then brought up a lot of blood, and his body suddenly went limp. He must have died. I wanted to shout out, but managed to control myself.

Night began to fall, and I was surrounded by corpses. There was an open door near the wall where they fired at us. I dragged myself there and went in the house. I found a mattress, lay down and covered myself with blankets. I was certain that I was going to die and I didn't want the rats to eat my body. I remember that there were a lot of flares, but I couldn't see where they were coming from. I tried not to move so as not to lose any more blood. I heard

voices outside. They said there were a lot of bodies on the ground; then a woman said: 'Let's go before they kill us.' I shouted for help but got no answer. I saw a jug in a corner of the room. I managed to drag myself as far as the jug to get a drink. It was virtually suicide because I knew that severely wounded people shouldn't drink. But I told myself that I'd know soon enough whether I'd survive or not. I stayed there all night. I took off my shirt and made a tight bandage with it that I tied just above my wound to stem the bleeding, and then I soaked a cloth in water and laid it on my forehead and lips.

By dawn I was exhausted as I'd lost a lot of blood. Suddenly, I heard someone coming. My first thought was that the militiamen had taken over the entire camp and had come to finish off the wounded. I was frightened of being tortured, and that they'd use my body for fun and games. I dragged myself into the darkest corner and covered myself with whatever I could find. Then someone said: 'Let's go into the house to see if there's anyone there – I can see blood on the ground.' I began to shake, and was sure that they were going to finish me off. The steps drew nearer and I felt someone lift off the covers. I opened my eyes and saw a familiar face – an old man I knew by sight. I was very relieved, and begged him to help me, and explained that I couldn't move. He told me to be patient and wait for him, because the armed men were still around. He came back later with three other men and asked me if there were any other wounded. I told them I didn't know. They wrapped me in a blanket and carried me through the back streets of the camp. There were snipers about, so they had to move very carefully. And I was carried by various people as far as the Gaza Hospital. I told people there what had happened. After treatment, I was told that I was to be moved into town because the armed men might still attack the hospital.

*Q:* And your wife and children?

*A:* My mother came to see me at the hospital. I asked her about my wife and children. I told her that I'd heard the talk about the Red Cross. She said there was no Red Cross in the camp, and that she didn't know where they were. When my mother-in-law came she told me: 'Your wife and children are well. They're resting in the hills.' I didn't believe her, and I told her that if they were alive, they would have come to see me in hospital, and that if her daughter didn't come here within forty-eight hours, I would know that she'd lied. The next day I saw a photograph in a newspaper showing my mother and mother-in-law trying to identify corpses.\* When she next visited me, I insulted her by telling her that she'd lied and that I'd seen her photo in the newspaper. She burst into tears and admitted that there was no trace of my wife and children. My mother asked me what clothes they were wearing on the day the massacre took place. My wife was wearing jeans and my daughter wore a red dress. She then told me that a woman's body had been found which was difficult to identify because of her injuries, but the description of her clothes corresponded to what my wife was wearing. The bodies of a number of our neighbours had been found who'd been with my wife and children at the time, but not the bodies belonging to my family. A lot of bodies haven't been found yet. They must be in the common graves which haven't yet been opened.

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\*Every day the camp inhabitants were invited by the first-aid people to identify the corpses that had been found.



**Q:** How old were your children?

**A:** Rana, the eldest was 5, Moustapha 4, and Marwan, the baby, was 10 months. My wife was 23. The two eldest went to school and I have their exercise books here. They worked hard and I used to help them at home in the evening. I used to tease Moustapha, telling him that he couldn't read without the pictures, so he used to try even harder in order to impress me. Marwan, the youngest, was very tender. He would wake me in the morning by stroking my hair. I can't believe that I shan't see them again. I was happy with my wife.

**Q:** What will you do now?

**A:** I don't know. I've always lived in Shatila, this is where I grew up and got married – and it's here that I've lost everything.

**Q:** How were you wounded?

**A:** I was shot five times in the hand. They were explosive bullets, so that all that's left of my hand is just bare bone. I was also wounded in the waist and chest. That bullet hasn't been removed and they can't take it out. I was also shot in the foot and thigh. I had a dozen bullets pumped into the right side of my body from my shoulder down to my right foot. What saved me was the fact that I was last in the line, and the shots only entered the right hand side of my body.

**Q:** Did you stay in Shatila during the war?

**A:** I'd sought refuge elsewhere and I came back not long ago at a time when things were quiet. I didn't think that the Israelis would enter West Beirut and that they'd bring in these men so consumed by hate that they would go so far as to massacre children. We had no idea that the Israelis would return to the camp because there were American, Arab and Lebanese guarantees. The Lebanese army was in control of the city so we didn't think that the Israelis would enter.

**Q:** Who committed the massacre in your opinion?

**A:** All I know is that the Israeli army escorted them, that they spoke with a Lebanese accent and that they wore military uniforms.

*Mounir is 13. He was the only member of his family to survive, and this is his story:*

On Thursday afternoon there was heavy bombing and we went down to the shelter. I was with my family, and there was my uncle on my mother's side and his ten children, and also our neighbour and their children. There were a lot of people, especially women and children. Some armed men arrived and forced us to come out. They lined up the men against the wall and killed them, then they took the women and children away to Doulchi's.\* There was some trouble there. One of them lost control and shouted, 'They've killed my brother, my brother has been hit.' And he began firing at us. My mother, brother and sisters were hit. I was hit in the leg, and one shot just skimmed my head, but I wasn't hurt.

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\*Grocer in Shatila in the main street of the camp.

*Q:* How many were there in your family?

*A:* My father, my mother and my three sisters. My eldest sister was 6. There was also my uncle, his wife and their six children.

*Q:* What happened to them?

*A:* My father was shot. My mother, who was lying close to me and my sisters, was hurt. Then the armed men said: 'Will the wounded stand up — we're going to take you to hospital.' I was hurt and so was my mother. I whispered to her not to believe them and to stay where she was. But when she saw the others get up, she did the same. They lined them up against a wall and shot them.

*Q:* And your sisters?

*A:* One of them was wearing earrings. They asked her: 'Are they made of gold or copper?' She said they were copper. This made them angry and they insulted her: 'You little bastard — you call that copper?' They then told her to shut her eyes, they then tore off her earrings and finished her off on the spot. They killed my cousins, too, together with other children who were with us. I heard them say: 'They'll be resistance fighters when they grow up — they have to be killed.' And they pulled the trigger.

*Q:* And what about you?

*A:* I pretended to be dead. Then they went away and I fell asleep. They came back later and one of them carried an electric torch. He saw that I was still breathing, so he shot at me again aiming at my head. I covered my cheek with my hand so my finger was shot off, but he missed my head. I stayed there all night in a pool of blood. They came back the next morning and one of them said: 'Look at that one there. He's still alive and he's shaking.' So they shot at me. One bullet hit the ground and the other hit me in the arm. I pretended to be dead. One of them wanted to shoot at me a third time, but his friend said: 'That's it he's dead.' When they'd gone I took refuge in an empty house. I took off my clothes, which were drenched with blood, and I put on others that I found there. Then men were not far away trying to steal cars. I stayed in the house waiting for the pain to ease and for the bleeding to stop. Suddenly they broke into the house where I was hiding and said: 'You're still here? We're going to kill you.' They took hold of their guns, but one of them said: 'Wait — I want to ask him something. Are you Lebanese or Palestinian?' I told him I was Lebanese. He then told me to go and sit in the bedroom. The moment they left, I escaped via the back streets. I know these streets well and that there is a way of getting to my uncle's house. I ran into a boy who knew me and he carried me as far as the Al-Shark cinema. Then I got a lift in a car to the Gaza Hospital.

*Q:* Did you see or hear anything while you were in hiding?

*A:* Yes, I heard them say: 'What an awful stink, it's the dead bodies.' And I heard the sound of tanks or bulldozers, I'm not sure which, from near the Kuwaiti Embassy.

*Mounir was very weak. He had lost a lot of blood and was in considerable pain as a result of his injuries. His voice was scarcely audible and I preferred not to tire him any further.*



*Oum Hussein, who was carrying a pale-looking 2-month-old baby in her arms, is now living with her children in a classroom belonging to a secondary school in East Beirut. Hundreds of families from Shatila and Sabra are living like this in schools that have been converted to deal with the emergency. Oum Hussein lost her husband and two of her sons in the massacre. Her house was destroyed by a bulldozer.*

**Q:** Are you Palestinian?

**A:** I'm a Palestinian of '48. I'd been living in Shatila for five years. Before then, I lived near the Sports Stadium.

**Q:** When did you leave Shatila?

**A:** On Thursday, when the Israeli planes were flying over Beirut making a terrible noise. They surrounded the camp and their tanks began to fire at us. At about six o'clock the bombing got worse. We went down to the shelter with the neighbours. Later on, about thirty armed men arrived and started killing people. We ran away and hid. We were just going to shut the door when they burst in: 'Why are you shutting the door in our faces? Where do you think you can run to?' Then they lined us up against the wall, separating the men from the women and children. They killed the men while we looked on. There was my husband, Hamid Moustapha, who was only 47, my son, Hussein, who was 15, and my other son, Hassan, who was 14. There was my neighbour's only son and brother and they weren't all. They killed seven men altogether and then piled up their bodies in front of the house. Then they went through their pockets and stole their watches and anything else they had. After that they dug a ditch and buried them.

**Q:** What did they use to dig the ditch?

**A:** Bulldozers. The Israelis gave them bulldozers. They lit up the camp for them the entire night and brought them food as well.

**Q:** And what did they do to the women and children?

**A:** They took us away to the Sports Stadium and we were forced to spend the night here lying on the sand without any blankets. There were Phalangists and Israelis. They questioned us at intervals: 'What does your husband do? Where is your husband?' I told them that he'd just been killed in his home along with the rest. 'And your children?' 'My children have been killed too. All I have left are my three little girls and four little boys. This is the youngest boy, he's only two months – don't you want to kill him too?'

**Q:** Didn't you have any weapons in the camp to defend yourselves?

**A:** The weapons were taken out of the camp, and the resistance fighters were evacuated. We were left unarmed and unable to put up any defence. There were so-called guarantees that we wouldn't be attacked. But they lied to us.

**Q:** Who do you mean, 'they'?

**A:** The Americans, the Europeans, the Arabs.

**Q:** Why didn't you move somewhere else, why didn't you run away when the Israeli army arrived?

A: When the death of Bashir Gemayel was announced, a lot of people decided to run away from the camp. They were frightened something would happen. In our case, we'd just returned to the camp the week before. We'd spent the three months of the Beirut siege in this same school. And my baby was born here in this classroom. There was no water, and no kitchen or bathroom. We were so glad to be back home in Shatila after the bombing stopped. We just didn't feel like wandering again in the streets of Beirut to find shelter. So we stayed on here thinking that as we didn't have any weapons and because there were no more resistance fighters, the Israeli army would leave us alone. We certainly didn't think we'd be made to pay for the assassination of Bashir Gemayel, especially as the Palestinians didn't do it. It was a settling of scores among themselves. They\* quarrelled and they\* killed him. Why are we held responsible? We handed over our weapons, putting our trust in the Lebanese authorities, and Abu Ammar [Arafat] signed an agreement with the government to the effect that the camps should be left alone after the resistance fighters had gone.

We trusted them — and what happened? They tricked us. They're even killing women and children. I saw with my own eyes a baby less than a year old lying in her mother's arms. She was dead and the baby wouldn't stop crying. So one of the armed men lost his temper, snatched the baby from his dead mother, on the pretext that he was taking the baby to hospital. When he got further away, he strangled it and threw the baby's body on to the sand. I saw it on the ground when I passed. I also saw a woman with her hands tied who had possibly been raped. Her clothes were torn and she'd been dragged a long way by a rope before being finally killed by a blow from an axe. It was a really awful sight.

Q: How did you eventually manage to get out?

A: After our first night at the Sports Stadium, they ordered us to walk on the main road. They knew it had been mined and they wanted us to be blown up when we set foot on it. But we were very careful not to walk on any wires. After that they let us go. To begin with we tried to hide in a building in Fakhani, but the Lebanese inhabitants were frightened and begged us to go somewhere else. So we moved on, and on the main road we stopped a car which took us as far as the main park in Sanayeh, where we were picked up by the International Red Cross and brought back to this school, the same one in which we'd taken shelter during the bombing of Beirut in July.

So that's the story of my life from one exodus to another. But today I'm here without my husband and sons. I've eight children. What will happen to them? I've no one to help me and my house was destroyed. Where can I go? Is that what America wants? Is that what Israel wants? Do the Arab countries agree to that? They have forced our resistance fighters to move out. They have killed our menfolk — what can they still have in store for us?

Q: Where do you come from? Have you any family in Lebanon?

A: I'm from Albin, in the Haifa region. I left my village in 1948. I have a brother in Lebanon, but he was declared missing at the beginning of the war, both him and his family, and I've not heard from them since. They lived in Jiyeh.

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\*The 'they' here is ambiguous in the French text (translator's note).



**Q:** Your baby is very pale ...

**A:** What do you expect? He was born here during the siege of Beirut and since then he hasn't led a normal life. With all these terrible things going on, I haven't had enough of my own milk to feed him and I haven't the money to take him to see a doctor.

I said goodbye and hoped her son would get better.

She replied: 'And why do you want him to live? — so that they'll come back later and kill him when he's 20?'

*Interviews and investigation carried out by LAYLA SHAHID BARRADA.  
Translated by GILL SEIDEL.*

## Israel in Lebanon: excerpts from the McBride report\*

### Conclusions: summary

The Commission, having considered the evidence and the relevant rules of law, concludes, in relation to the questions posed in its terms of reference, that:

1. The government of Israel has committed acts of aggression contrary to international law.
2. The Israeli armed forces have made use of weapons or methods of warfare forbidden by international law, including the laws of war.
3. Palestinian, Lebanese and prisoners of other nationalities have been subjected to treatment forbidden by international law, including inhuman and degrading treatment. In addition, there has been a violation of international law arising out of a denial of prisoner-of-war status to Palestinian prisoners or detainees.
4. There has been deliberate or indiscriminate or reckless bombardment of a civilian character, of hospitals, schools and other non-military targets.
5. There has been systematic bombardment and other destruction of towns, cities, villages and refugee camps.
6. The acts of the Israeli armed forces have caused the dispersal, deportation and ill-treatment of populations, in violation of international law.
7. The government of Israel has no valid reasons under international law for its invasion of the Lebanon, for the manner in which it conducted hostilities and for its actions as an occupying force.

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\* Report of the International Commission (28 August 1982-29 November 1982) to enquire into reported violations of International Law by Israel during its invasion of the Lebanon, under the chairmanship of Sean McBride. Published under the title *Israel in Lebanon* (London, Ithaca Press, 1983).

8. Israeli authorities or forces were involved, directly or indirectly, in the massacres and other killings that have been reported to have been carried out by Lebanese militiamen in the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila in the Beirut area between 16 and 18 September. (*pp.191-2*)

### **Recommendations**

1. The Commission recommends the immediate withdrawal of all foreign armed forces present in Lebanon without the consent of the government of Lebanon and recommends the replacement of the United States/France/Italy multilateral force by an adequate security arrangement under United Nations auspices.
2. The Commission recommends that all refugee camps in Lebanon be protected in the future by adequate United Nations forces. The Commission considers that the international community through the United Nations should urgently examine what further measures are necessary to ensure the better protection of refugees, especially those who are victims of armed conflicts, by such means as the clarification and elaboration of principles of refugee law. The recognition of the special status of refugee camps will provide greater protection as would the wider acceptance of the basic principles for the protection of civilian populations in armed conflicts as laid down by General Assembly resolution 2675 of 9 December 1970.
3. The Commission recommends, in the spirit of the Geneva Convention and Protocols, that adequate steps be taken to implement the solemn obligation of states to uphold the law of war in all its aspects. In pursuit of this end, given the grave breaches of the law of war committed by Israel during the Lebanon war, it is recommended that the Secretary-General of the United Nations appoint a special expert body to advise on the best steps to improve compliance with the existing law of war by all states.
4. The Commission recommends that all Parties to the Geneva Convention carry out their legal obligations to prosecute individuals guilty of grave breaches of the laws of war. Such obligations seem particularly relevant to the apprehension of Israeli and Lebanese political and military leaders and participants involved in the massacres at Shatila and Sabra. The Geneva Conventions require the Parties to use their national courts to carry out this responsibility and the Commission recommends that this requirement be honoured in the present instance.
5. The Commission recommends that the government of Israel make reparation for all damage done in Lebanon by violation of international law. This obligation includes a duty to compensate victims and their survivors.
6. The Commission recommends the payment by Israel of a full indemnity to the government of Lebanon in respect of the damage inflicted on Lebanese property arising from and incidental to the invasion and occupation of Lebanese territory by Israeli forces. In default of the agreement as to the amount payable to the government of Lebanon, the matter should be submitted to international arbitration.
7. The Commission believes that Israel should pay to the International Committee of the Red Cross and other voluntary bodies compensation adequate to reimburse such voluntary organisations for the cost of supplies and services



provided by them arising from the Israeli invasion and occupation of the Lebanon. In default of an agreement, the amount in each case should be determined by an assessor appointed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

8. The Commission recommends that the United Nations set up a special international tribunal to investigate and prosecute individuals charged with crimes of state, especially in connection with the Shatila and Sabra massacres. Such prosecutions should be carried on the basis of due process and fairness to the accused.

9. The Commission recommends that a competent international body be designated or established to clarify the conception of genocide in relation to Israeli policies and practices towards the Palestinian people.

10. The Commission proposes the suspension of all financial support and of all supplies, direct or indirect, to Israel of any arms or other military equipment (including aircraft, tanks, lorries, bulldozers, etc.) by any member state of the United Nations until the government of Israel accepts and complies with such of the Commission's recommendations as are applicable to Israel. (pp. 192-3)

*A.K. Asmal, B. Bercusson, R.A. Falk, S. MacBride, G. de la Pradelle, S. Wild.*

### **Genocide and ethnocide: Appendix I**

One of the most serious allegations which can be made against a government is that it is either guilty of the crime of genocide or that its policies are genocidal in intent. The emotiveness of such an accusation, in the context of the invasion of Lebanon, is increased when it is recognised that the development of international rules and a moral sensitivity arose largely because of the experience of the Holocaust and the mass extermination policies of the Nazis towards racial or national groups.

The Commission is aware that Israeli policies towards Palestinians have been described as 'genocidal', either in relation to the overall policies of the Israeli state towards Palestinians in general or because those adopted in the occupied West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem since 1967 and the attempts to remove the Palestinian presence in Lebanon from 1967 onwards.

The particular form of genocide as applied to the Palestinians does not appear to be aimed at killing the Palestinians in a systematic fashion. It could be argued that if this was the intention, many more could have been killed. The specific form of genocide which can be said to apply is the adoption of all kinds of measures, short of killing, to destroy the national culture, political autonomy and national will in the context of the Palestinian struggle for national liberation and self-determination.

The definition of genocide is not limited to the formula adopted by the Convention of 1948. The legal concept of genocide is quite consistent with identifying policies designed to destroy the identity and will of a national group, as well as the Nazi paradigm of the Holocaust.

Governments rarely, if ever, declare and document genocidal plans in the manner of the Nazis. It is from the effect of governmental policies and, on occasion, articulated reasons for particular behaviour, that intent and objective can be identified. But the notion of genocide was never meant to cover simply

the physical extermination of a people. Long before the adoption of the United Nations Convention on Genocide in 1948, Raphael Lemkin, who coined the word, explained that genocide was intended to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves.<sup>1</sup>

The Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal in 1946 saw the first international illustration of the use of the word, in the indictment constituting crimes against humanity. The General Assembly of the United Nations, in a resolution adopted unanimously (Res. 96-1 1946), laid down that the crime of genocide could also occur independently of war crimes or a war of aggression.<sup>2</sup>

The formal legal basis of the crime of genocide is that provided for by the United Nations Genocide Convention,<sup>3</sup> adopted by the General Assembly in 1948 and ratified by Israel, among a large number of states. Genocide is confirmed as a crime under international law whether committed in time of peace or in time of war (Article I).

Article II defines genocide, *for the purpose of this Convention* (emphasis supplied), as the enumerated acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such. The acts enumerated are:

- (a) killing members of the group;
- (b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Article IV imposes liability on individuals 'whether they are constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials or private individuals'. Genocide, conspiracy to direct and public incitement to, attempt to commit and complicity in genocide are punishable offences.

The Convention reflects customary international law, and the World Court, in the *Barcelona Traction Case*, in 1970 gave genocide as one of the examples of *jus cogens*, fundamental or basic norms of international law, which cannot be varied by treaty or the development of a customary rule of international law.<sup>4</sup>

The definition of genocide in the Convention was the result of a compromise. The definition provided by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the General Assembly, prior to the adoption of the Convention, referred to 'any deliberate act committed with the intent to destroy the language, religion or culture of a national, racial or religious group on grounds of the national, racial or religious belief of its members, such as:

- 1. prohibiting the use of the language of a group;
- 2. destroying or preventing the use of libraries, museums, schools, national monuments, places of worship or other cultural institutions and objects of the group'.

In contemporary writing and attitudes, cultural genocide or 'sociocide' is increasingly playing a prominent part. This development takes into account, in addition to those features described by the Ad Hoc Working Group, acts depriving a group of the right to create art, maintain basic social institutions,



preserve memories and traditions, work in cooperation towards social goals,<sup>5</sup> which may also be referred to as 'ethnocide'.

The massacres that took place at Sabra and Shatila in September 1982 can be described as genocidal massacres, and the term 'complicity in genocide' is wide enough to establish the responsibility of Israel for these acts. But the denial of nationality to Palestinians has resulted in all Palestinian social institutions being considered to be part of the apparatus of the 'terrorists of the PLO'. The borderline between Mr Begin's claim to 'eliminate the PLO' and the total destruction of the social organisation of the Palestinian peoples in Lebanon is a very narrow one, and the constant reference to the need to 'purify' the territory of the Lebanon of PLO elements has been conducive to attacks on the autonomy of the Palestinian people.

The Commission has been provided with evidence of the large-scale social, economic and political organisation of the Palestinians in Lebanon. Since 1975, a considerable infrastructure has been established to provide not only an economy, jobs, education, training, sophisticated medical services and transport for Palestinians, but also basic social institutions to 'preserve memories and traditions' had been established.<sup>6</sup>

The evidence covering the destruction of schools, training centres, museums and, in some cases, hospitals has been clearly presented to the Commission.<sup>7</sup> The effect of this destruction, especially in the South, has been devastating. Associated with the refusal by Israel to accept the status of the Palestine Red Crescent Society as a humanitarian body, has been the systematic destruction of or transfer to Israel of the records, documents, artefacts, books, etc., associated with the Palestinian people. The total destruction of the work of the Centre for Palestinian Studies and the removal of their archives, as with the Palestinian offices in Beirut, has been clearly documented.<sup>8</sup>

The Commission considers that there is evidence to show a relationship between Israeli policies in the West Bank and the treatment of Palestinians in other areas occupied by Israel in Lebanon. There has been a conscious attempt to disrupt the social organisation of the Palestinian people to ensure that through their disposal, their sense of identity and group loyalty would be weakened, if not destroyed.

In any event, Israel is in breach of the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict of 1954, and its associated Protocol.<sup>9</sup> This UNESCO-inspired treaty has been described as the first systematic international agreement for the protection of intellectual property, which is defined very broadly. Apart from the expected reference to property of great importance to the 'cultural heritage of every people', such as monuments of architecture, works of art, etc; Article I refers to 'manuscripts, books and other objects of artistic, historical or archaeological interest; as well as scientific collections and important collections of books or archives or of reproductions of the property defined above'.

This definition of cultural property, which also covers buildings whose 'main and effective purpose is to preserve or exhibit the moveable cultural property such as museums, large libraries and depositories of archives', is stated to cover items '*irrespective of origin or ownership*' (the Commission's emphasis).<sup>10</sup>

The Parties to the Convention 'undertake to prohibit, prevent and, if necessary, put a stop to any form of theft, pillage or misappropriation of, and

any acts of vandalism directed against cultural property. They shall refrain from requisitioning moveable cultural property situated in the territory of another High Contracting Party'.<sup>11</sup> Article IV lays down other duties, such as non-reprisals against cultural property and the need to protect such property.

The Protocol of 1954 obliges High Contracting States to prevent the export from a territory occupied by it during an armed conflict, of cultural property. Where this has in fact occurred, then states are further obliged to take into their custody property imported into their territory directly or indirectly from any occupied territory.

High Contracting Parties have to return, at the end of hostilities 'to the competent authorities of the territory previously occupied', cultural property illegally exported. Such property cannot be retained as war reparations.

Israel ratified the Convention in 1957 and the Protocol in 1958, while Lebanon ratified both these instruments in 1960. These provisions oblige Israel to return to Lebanon 'cultural property' as defined in these texts which were appropriated and removed from Lebanon during and after the invasion and which form part of the patrimony of the Palestinian people.

The majority of the Commission adopts the view that this pattern of activity dealt with in the Report substantiates the allegation of the deliberate destruction of the national and cultural rights and the identity of the Palestinian people and that this constitutes a form of genocide. It should be emphasised that this conclusion does not suggest an Israeli intention to exterminate in a physical sense the people of Palestine as a whole or in part. What the majority of the Commission has in mind is a different form of genocide which is of sufficient gravity to warrant the most serious concern and censure.

Two members of the Commission are of the view that while Israeli policy and practices in Lebanon are a violation of international humanitarian law, they do not amount to the crime of genocide. Similar policies and practices, apparent in the actions of other states, are not condemned as genocidal. In the view of these two members, the legal conclusion of genocide, a crime so special and particular, which requires so horrible an intent, cannot be applied to Israeli actions, however gravely they violate humanitarian standards and although many Palestinians perceive these actions as genocidal. (pp. 194-8)

## References

1. Cited in Leo Kruper, *Genocide*, (Penguin, 1982).
2. Resolution 96-1 of 1946 (General Assembly). See A. Roberts and R. Guelff (eds), *Documents on the Laws of War*, (Oxford, 1982), pp. 153-6.
3. Full text of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide can be found in *Documents on the Laws of War*, *ibid.*, pp. 157-168.
4. International Court of Justice Reports 1970.
5. Beardsley 1976, cited in Leo Kruper, *op. cit.*
6. E. Said, *The Question of Palestine* (Routledge Kegan Paul, 1978).
7. Testimonies to the Commission of Marwan Hamade, Beirut, 3 September 1982; M. Barakat, Beirut, 2 September 1982; meeting with 2 doctors and the hospital Director General at Barbir Hospital, 1 September 1982; and Petra Croll, Oslo, 19 October 1982.
8. Testimonies to the Commission of Walid Jumblatt, Beirut, 3 September 1982; Marwan Hamade, Beirut, 3 September 1982; David McDowell, Beirut, 2 September 1982, Mya Shone and Ralph Schoenman, Oslo, 30 October 1982.



9. Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, 1954, Protocol; as quoted in *Documents on the Laws of War*, op. cit., p. 339.
10. Ibid., Art. 1, para. 1.
11. Ibid., Art. 4, para. 3.

## American arms in Israeli hands\*

Israel's June 1982 invasion of Lebanon has once again brought the horror of war to the front pages of our newspapers. Every day we encounter photographs depicting the suffering of children and civilians in Lebanon. Each new war has brought with it a new technology of destruction. So it has been in Lebanon, where effects of the latest anti-personnel weapons are more lethal than ever before ... These weapons are the latest in sophistication, sold to Israel by the United States, and manufactured by American corporations such as Honeywell, Aerojet-General, and Bulova ...

The use of US-made anti-personnel weapons is restricted by arms agreements between the United States and Israel. Israel claims that it has tried to refrain from using such weapons in areas with heavy concentrations of civilians. Inevitably, however, given the proximity of PLO forces to civilians, the bombs have wounded non-combatants. Press reports from Beirut indicate that cluster bombs were used against civilians in Palestinian refugee camps and that an Armenian hospital in the Bekaa Valley was bombed.

(*Philadelphia Inquirer* 30 June 1982)

### Anti-personnel weapons

#### *Cluster bombs*

The Israelis use two kinds of cluster bombs purchased from the United States, the CBU 58 and the Mk 20 Rockeye. Each of them consists of a seven-foot aluminium canister. The CBU 58 contains 650 bomblets, each slightly larger than a golf ball. The Rockeye contains 247 six- to eight-inch dart-shaped bomblets designed to pierce armour. A nose fuse on the canister is detonated either by a timer or a radar transmission. After the fuse explodes, air resistance causes the canister to open, releasing the bomblets in a doughnut pattern about 400 feet in diameter. Ribs on the CBU 58 bomblets cause them to spin rapidly, which arms the firing mechanism. The bomblets explode on impact. The CBU 58 is no longer being manufactured in the US.

Honeywell is one of the major manufacturers of parts for cluster bombs. That corporation sold 23,200 rounds of the Mk 20 Rockeye to the air force this year for about \$60m. In July 1982 Honeywell was awarded a new \$8.9m contract by the army to manufacture fuses for a new cluster-type artillery shell. The

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\*Excerpted from the pamphlet *A plea for the innocent*, American Friends Service Committee (Middle East Program), July 1982.

shell will contain a cluster of mines designed to destroy either tanks or personnel. Another type of anti-armour cluster munition is being developed by Honeywell and Avco Corp. of Greenwich, Conn. The bomblets in these weapons would have individual sensors enabling them to zero in on specific targets.

According to a letter from the Southeast Asia Resource Center, a non-governmental organisation based in Washington, DC, dozens of Laotian farmers are still being killed or maimed when they accidentally dig up bomblets in their fields, ten years after the bombing has ceased. How many innocent Lebanese and Palestinians will continue to be terrorised by these weapons a decade from now?

The US government claims that the kinds of cluster bombs used by Israel are primarily designed as anti-tank weapons and would not normally recommend them for use as anti-personnel weapons. Israel signed an agreement with the US in the early 1970s restricting the use of cluster bombs. The weapons, according to a US official, are not to be used against civilians or in or near cities. A 1978 agreement re-affirmed Israeli's commitment to use cluster bombs only against 'fortified military positions' and only if attacked by more than one country.

#### *White phosphorous*

White phosphorous is an incendiary used in bombs and shells. The phosphorous is thrown from the projectile when it hits, sticking and burning in the flesh. It is particularly insidious because the fire cannot be put out. Water only spreads it. Reports from doctors at the Gaza Hospital, which was hit by phosphorous shells, describe patients who came in with pieces of the chemical still smoking in their skin. The only way to stop the burning is to remove the fragments. Even then, wounds from phosphorous burns take longer than usual to heal. Bits which are not removed may be absorbed into the body, causing systemic poisoning, and possible renal or heart failure leading to death. With the new high velocity shells, more powerful explosives and new technology for plasticising the phosphorous, the effects are even more lethal.

#### *Anti-personnel mines*

Several kinds of mines have been used by the Israelis in Lebanon. One type of mine described in newspaper reports is shot through shells and scattered on the ground, where it hides in the grass or on the street. They have aluminium casings with metal alloy pop-up wings which hold the detonators upright. After the shelling has stopped, a person happening by may touch it off.

#### *Tank and artillery ammunition*

New technical developments in ammunition include more sensitive fusing systems, more versatile multi-option fuses, more powerful explosives to increase velocity, extend range and increase penetrating power, and anti-personnel fragmentation warheads. When fragmentation warheads pierce tank armour, they may ricochet and pass through human flesh several dozen times at all points of the body and from all directions simultaneously. Most howitzers and field artillery guns use either high explosives designed for a specific target or anti-personnel fragmentation rounds. There are also M143 ICM cluster weapons designed for 155mm guns. They are highly explosive artillery shells which expel 88 grenades that burst into tiny, lethal fragments. The US army has awarded \$237m in contracts for fiscal year 1983 for 428,000 rounds of the M143



ICM. Ammunition for most of these guns is relatively cheap. A 105mm HE howitzer round went for \$170 in 1977. In 1976 Israel bought 40,000 rounds of 155mm ammunition for \$522 each.

#### *Aircraft*

Some of the most technologically advanced weapons obtained from the US by Israel are F-15 Eagles and F-16s. The F-15 can reach speeds up to Mach 2.54 (1,676 mph), and is capable of carrying a variety of air-to-air and air-to-ground missiles and bombs, including demolition bombs and fire bombs, and has a capacity for 15 CBU-532/B 680-pound anti-personnel fragmentation bomblet dispensers. The F-16 can reach speeds of Mach 2 (1,400 mph) and is armed with a 1 x M61A1 Vulcan 20mm cannon and can hold 2 x AIM Sidewinder AAM on its wingtips. The Sidewinder is one of the most lethal of this model ever developed. In the 1973 Yom Kippur War, this weapon achieved 92 per cent kills per engagement.

The sophistication of these aircraft was borne out several times in engagements with Russian-made Syrian MiGs and SA6 missiles. Israeli fighter-bombers wiped out Syria's missile batteries in the Bekaa Valley and downed 22 MiG 21 and MiG 23 warplanes. Few of the Israeli planes were harmed in the exchange.

#### **The balance of forces**

American-made and Israeli weapons used by Israel in the invasion of Lebanon are by far the most sophisticated and lethal of any in the conflict. There is nothing in the Syrian air force which can match the American aircraft, according to a British air expert. MiG 25s, the best of the Syrian aircraft, are described as 'a capable aircraft but a little more elderly than the 15s and 16s'. They were clearly no match for the Israeli fighter-bombers. The most advanced anti-tank guided missile in the Syrian arsenal, the Soviet AT4, is about eight years behind the US in technology. Israeli troops are some of the best-trained in the Middle East, according to some reports.

The PLO owns no air force or navy. They are solely a guerrilla presence. Their weapons consist primarily of Soviet anti-aircraft guns, anti-tank rockets, heavy machine-guns, 130mm artillery and Kalashnikov rifles. They reportedly receive some American-made weapons through Saudi Arabia. The *New York Times* said Israel's capture of PLO weapons stores revealed that the guerrillas had far more weapons than they could possibly use. The PLO have about 5,000-7,000 troops in west Beirut and perhaps a maximum of 22,000 in all of Lebanon ...

Since 1974, the US has provided \$20 billion in various kinds of aid, including loans and grants, to Israel. Israel has bought \$9.9 billion worth of arms from the US in the same time period. These same weapons are responsible for the latest violence in Lebanon on the part of Israel. Representative Clement J. Zablocki (D. Wis.), chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, has stated that Israel has clearly broken the law but the administration neglected to inform Congress of the violation. Senator Henry Jackson said, on CBS News' 'Face the Nation', that Israel technically violated the law barring offensive use of American weapons. Congressman Mark Hatfield has suggested that the US suspend all further military aid to the Israelis until that country can

demonstrate adherence to arms agreements. Eight members of the House of Representatives have introduced Resolution 359 calling for an investigation of possible violations and supporting the recommendations of UN Security Council resolution 509.

As of 19 July 1982, President Reagan suspended the delivery of 4,000 cluster shells which were due for shipment to Israel by the end of July. The weapons were to be delayed pending the President's review of Israel's report on its use of cluster bombs. The bombs described in Israel's report, however, are different from the ones due for shipment. July's delivery was to consist of 155mm artillery shells, not the cluster bombs dropped from aircraft. Delivery of other kinds of weapons was not suspended.

### **Who makes anti-personnel weapons?**

#### *Cluster bombs and shells*

Aerojet Corp, Akron Ohio; Avco Corp, Greenwich Conn; Hamilton Technologies, Lancaster, Pa; Heckethorn Mfg. Co., Dyersburg, Tenn; Honeywell Inc., Minneapolis, Mn; Melpar, Inc., Fairfax Va; Motorola, Schaumburg, Ill.

#### *Phosphorous shells*

Industries Inc, Carburetor Div, St. Louis, Mo; Alcan Aluminum Corp, Riverside, Cal; American Technical Machinery Corp, Mt. Vernon, NY; Bulova Watch Co, American Standard Div, Providence, RI; Chamberlain Mfg, Corp, Elmhurst, Ill, New Bedford, Mass, and Waterloo, Iowa; Day & Zimmerman, Inc. Philadelphia, Pa; Eisen Brothers, Lodi, NJ; Engineering Research, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana; G.I.E. Corp, Buffalo, NY; Independent Lock Co, Defense Products Div, Fitchburg, Mass; Kennedy Van Saun Corp, Danville, Pa; Keystone Mfg. Co, Boston, Ma; Lear Siegler, Inc, Anaheim, Ca; Mattatuck Mfg. Co, Waterbury, Conn; Walter Kidde & Co, Inc, Belleville, NJ;

AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE

## **Prisoners of war: a report**

*Al-Ansar is a large prison camp built by the Israelis in southern Lebanon (near Nabatiyeh) to house the thousands of Palestinians and Lebanese the Israeli army rounded up during its occupation of the South. In mid-September, after the Israelis invaded Beirut, in breach of their international commitment not to do so, thousands more were seized by the Israeli Defence Forces. In these mass arrests, the Israelis targeted all Palestinian men between the ages of 14 and 60, but they also arrested many Lebanese and anyone else suspected of a connection to a Palestinian political or service organisation, including foreigners working in hospitals, schools and other social service institutions. The exact number of those arrested is not known, but according to Red Cross officials, 15,000 is a 'very realistic' figure.<sup>1</sup>*



*Al-Ansar is but one Israeli prison camp. There are others in undisclosed locations in northern Israel. The following report by an Israeli soldier stationed at the Ansar camp gives a vivid description of the inhumane conditions existing at the camp. There are other frequent reports, appearing even in the Israeli press, that prisoners are routinely beaten, denied basic needs and kept in degrading and overcrowded conditions.<sup>2</sup> Repeated efforts by international agencies to obtain a complete list of prisoners from the Israeli authorities have been unsuccessful. Israel also refuses to grant prisoner-of-war status to its detainees, in defiance of international law.<sup>3</sup>*

### **'A shot on the last day'**

*Testimony of an Israeli soldier given to Ha'aretz columnist, Amnon Danker, Ha'aretz (5 November 1982), translated by I. Shahak.*

After 2-3 days I already knew: something bad will happen here. I didn't imagine it will be just this, but I was sure that something, something, will happen. When a whole military unit falls into deep depression within forty-eight hours, everything presses on you, and you know that somewhere, sometime, this whole thing will explode. Maybe the best sign of this depression is that the guys didn't speak about politics. You know how it is now nowadays in reserve service. You just settle and the arguments begin: Ma'arach, Likud, Begin, Peres, for the war, against the war, etc. But here: not a word. Believe me, the soldiers were so depressed, no one had either the strength or the desire to argue about these things. And in any case, even the most enthusiastic Likud supporters were not too happy with what we were doing there, and there was no point in getting on their nerves.

You can say that the depression actually all started because of the material conditions: we were already used to different conditions – kitchen, a not too bad food, some sort of housing. But here – living in tents, field lavatories stuck away somewhere, lousy showers and food made of combat rations only. The same canned meat everyday – one day cut this way, the other day cut the other way, one day fried with an egg, the other day fried alone. This is very depressing. But there is always the question – what are you doing in these conditions? Why are you there? And this time we really had it.

What shall I take home with me from this reserve service? This feeling of the stink rising from their camp, from the 'enclosure', the spotlights and the noise of the armed cars patrolling all night between the enclosures. Four bloody hours on the control tower: you sit, lean on your rifle, looking down. Seven thousand people in the tents moving and whispering down there, from time to time someone goes to the lavatory, dressed only in his underwear, and returns to his tent. Someone throws a stone wrapped with a note from one enclosure to the other.

The armed vehicles drive all the time among the enclosures, the spotlights paint the tents and the figures around the tents in bright colours. And the smell, that terrible smell of 7,000 sweaty bodies and their secretions stinking in the lavatories, the smell of the chemicals that are poured into those lavatories\* to prevent diseases. This smell surrounds you all day and all night, accompanies

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\*The 'lavatories' are open buckets, put in the open.

you while you are eating, while you are asleep, when you wake up, until you get used to it and accept it and it becomes part of you, and only when you return from a vacation at home, at the approach to the camp, it hits you and you are surprised and feel sick, until you get used to it once again.

They are called the 'brought in' [*muva'im* in Hebrew — a non-existent term in the language]. Not prisoners, because according to the law they are not prisoners. Not 'prisoners of war' either. 'Brought in'. Why? I don't know. Because they have been brought in, so they are called by that name. It always begins with the language. When the language can't cover all the evil acts, then it is time to be careful. Seven thousand 'brought ins' in an area the size of a football stadium. What is called a weak day in Blumfield (the Tel Aviv stadium). And we look over them from the sand walls built around the camps, from the watch towers. We look at them, they look at us, and we have no opportunity to test ourselves, to be cruel or merciful, to speak with them or curse them.

We are far from them, guarding them from a distance, no contact. We only know that if something happens, if they break the fences, if they go wild, we are supposed to open fire, from the watchtowers, from the military vehicles. And so, eight hours every day, day and night, and a sort of depression comes out of the camps and sticks to us, like the smell, and our faces turn grey, and we lose our high spirits, and even the weather is depressing — clouds cover the sky and the cold wind freezes our bones in the watchtowers, and the mornings are grey.

And suddenly we think we found a way out of the depression. With an enormous outburst of energy we begin spending whole days in consumption: one long week we spend all our free time in the nearby townlets, in the shops, exchange pieces of information about merchants who sell quartz watches cheap, or transistors, or stereos, or special phones. No one thinks about the border control. People return from their vacation at home, with lots of money and spend it in this feverish shopping. Small treasures are accumulated in the tents. But even this passes as well. Someone tells us that the same things can be bought cheaper in Tel Aviv, and without the tension of the border control. People begin to make the calculation and the enthusiasm dies out.

On the second week they take some of us off the watchtowers and order us to guard the road-blocks on the road to Nabatiyeh. Someone suddenly remembered that one can see the camps from that road. Tents are set up on both ends of the road, six soldiers guard each road-block, to stop the locals from looking at the camps. At first we are pleased — to get out of the camp, to get away from the disturbing stinking mass of the 'brought ins', not to hear the constant screaming of the interrogated. But we soon find out that the road-blocks are no piece of cake, either. Cars appear. People, women, children, they want to pass, to go to Nabatiyeh, to go from Nabatiyeh to Sidon. And you know that if you don't let them pass they have to take a longer way that will take them another 1½ hours. But what can we do: those are the orders.

Then there are some people who appear to have pass permits. They carry pieces of paper written in Hebrew: 'This man cooperates with our forces. Please allow him unlimited movement day and night.' We let them pass. Then there are the exceptions: wounded people, women about to give birth, taken to the Nabatiyeh Hospital. The soldiers at the road-block phone the camp and ask, and usually receive the same reply: Let them pass. After a few days they don't even bother to phone. If the person arriving at the road-block does not



seem suspicious — they let him pass. But there always happens something to spoil it all — after several days a group of women arrived. They let them pass. What could we do. What can you do with a group of women who cry and kiss your hands and beg and show you a picture of a young man all dressed up, and ask you whether you have seen him in the camp. They haven't seen him for three months. He disappeared. The military authorities at Sidon know nothing about him. The Red Cross knows nothing. Maybe he is in the camp? She wants to pass nearby and have a look. Maybe she will see him. And maybe, maybe, you can identify him? And once again the picture is pushed under your nose with a trembling hand. Do you know him? This is my husband. Have you seen him, there at the camp? How can you explain to her that you only see them from a distance, and smell them from a distance, and guard them from a distance, and that for you they are not people with a moustache and dressed up and with a wife and children at home, but a mass of 7,000 ants in blue uniform at day and white uniform at night. So someone let them get close to the fence and there was some shouting and the 'brought ins' approached the fence and the soldiers on the watchtowers were on alert, and someone picked up a stone and threw it at the soldiers, and the one stone was followed by many more, and the soldiers directed their weapons at the crowd that was moving in the direction of the fence, and someone fired into the air, and a scream was heard, and the women by the fence cried, and the 'brought ins' shouted and were now running to the fence, pulling at it.

And the soldiers didn't know what to do. And then a military police officer appeared, one of those who, not like us, sit around the camp, are all the time inside the camp, afraid because they know that if anything serious happens we shall be forced to fire and they shall be hurt then. So one of the MP officers appeared, aimed his rifle and began shooting into them, and we, standing outside the fences, watched how the bullets cut into the flesh of those who were hit, and the wounded begin to hold on to the wound and the blood streams through their fingers staining the blue uniform and the wounded fall to the ground crying, and someone seems to be dead, another is twisting in pain, and their friends bend down next to them, shouting, and there is more shooting in the air and the loudspeakers call on all the men to get into the tents, and they obey, leaving the crying wounded on the ground, and it is quiet except for the wounded, and the military vehicles come to remove them and the smell of gunpowder mixes for a minute with the permanent stink and then dissolves into the air.

After this we get strict orders not to be kind at the road-blocks, no one shall pass without a permit. And standing at the road-block, you have to send back a car with a woman about to give birth, and an old man in terrible pain while his son begs us to let them through to get to the hospital. And you have no choice: you call the camp and they tell you not to let them through and you tell them to turn round and take the long way.

And now you hear everyday about a hand-grenade that was thrown at a road-block, about a car that drove past and from it fire was opened at the soldiers, and you are frightened by every sound, by every car approaching, and you hold tight to your gun and are on alert and gradually get harsh to the women who come to you with the pictures and you drive them away, fearing they will throw a hand-grenade at you. Then you return to the camp, get into the tent, lie miserably on your bed and the depression is at you again, and you chew it with

the tasteless food, and you take it with you to sleep, and it bothers you in your gloomy dreams, and it sticks to your body when you take a shower in the muddy showers. And each day drags on slowly, stretching slowly over its full twenty-four hours, and you want time to pass faster, and time seems to pass slowly, as if trying to make sure you are filled with this heavy depression, with these smells and feelings. And the soldiers move like shadows with their sad expressions. They don't feel like joking, as is the custom in any regular reserve service. Not this time. As if they are surrounded by some sadness coming out of the earth: the prisoner and his guard.

If someone were to have told me that someone had committed suicide I would not have been surprised at all, but nevertheless, when on the last day of our service, while we were packing and cleaning and waiting for the buses to take us away from here, when in fact all this was over for us, when we were about to leave this terrible smell for ever, leave the sights and the bad feelings — it seemed to us unnecessary, wrong timed, useless. But the shot was fired. And the man lay there, blood streaming from the wound in his head, his eyes open, as if looking at the top of the tent.

On the last day, after all. And no one asked why. No one got excited and no one made a fuss. This may sound astonishing, but even this didn't take us out of our apathy, our depression. He committed suicide? OK, we know he had some troubles. Family troubles. Divorce, problems. It seemed so natural, it fitted into the whole background, that one day someone would shoot himself here, will send us home remembering his smashed head and his empty eyes, his outstretched hand, the silent body.

In such cases there is usually lots of talking after the doctors finish their job, he did it because of this and because of that. No, he did it because of this and because of that. But this time — nothing. As if we all accepted it. A few whispers and the body was taken away by the ambulance on its way to the Safad Hospital — the first soldier released from reserve service.

And we sit around silently, waiting for the buses, the 'brought ins' are moving about down below. I look at them and I tremble, I feel fear, I feel as if there is some curse there coming up to us through the smell, planting a dark seed in each of us, that shall grow gradually within us, and that had ripened too fast with our suicider.

And all the way, after the buses had at last taken us away, I sit closed eyed, so that I won't see this damned landscape, I sit there cursing the prisoners' camp and myself. I curse and I am being cursed until the smells disappear and the landscape changes and something within my mind clears and only the memory of the suicider still harbours in my mind and I think about him and his clothed body which shall carry the smell and the depression to his grave.

## References

- 1 As quoted by *ACCOUNT for the prisoners and missing in Lebanon*. ACCOUNT is a non-affiliated ad hoc committee working to safeguard the rights of Lebanese and Palestinians currently missing or detained. Their brochure is available from: ACCOUNT, PO Box 1358, Cathedral Station, New York, New York, 10025.
- 2 American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, 'On the Conditions of Lebanese and Palestinian Prisoners'. Available from: ADC, 1731 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20009.
- 3 More information is also available from the National Emergency Committee on Lebanon, PO Box 1757, New York, New York, 10027.



# Book reviews

## *The Longest War*

By JACOBO TIMERMAN (London, Chatto and Windus, 1982). 160 pages. £7.95 (Picador paperback, £2.50)

Jacobo Timerman locates the roots of anti-Semitism in 'the silence of Jews in the face of the anti-Semites'.<sup>1</sup> As an Argentine newspaper publisher and an international human rights advocate, Timerman has raised his voice against the silence which all too often accompanies human transgressions. He believes that publicity is the best cure for a society's ills, since it leads to debate and public knowledge which sometimes restricts tyranny. The horrors he experienced at the hands of his Argentine military torturers, and the solace he received from the international campaign launched on his behalf, has convinced him of the importance of international opinion in influencing moral and political alternatives.

For Timerman, the press and individual reporters have major roles to play: the press 'must go beyond answering the question of how many lives have been lost and ask the question: How many lives can be saved?'<sup>2</sup> The journalist should report, comment and prevent atrocities from occurring by revealing and condemning past transgressions and the imminence of new ones.

In *The Longest War* he has applied this yardstick to his adopted country, Israel. He feels that its 'relations with the world are being ruined', and decides to do his 'best to prevent the boat from sinking'.<sup>3</sup> The result is the first important anti-war book produced by an Israeli Zionist.

Since liberation and exile from Argentina in 1979, Timerman has lived in Israel. From there, and while travelling, he has criticised Argentine Jewish community leaders for their silence and complicity with their country's military junta, and the Reagan administration for lack of consistency in condemning human rights violations of regimes on the left, but remaining indifferent to similar violations in allied police states. His first book, *Prisoner without a Name, Cell without a Number*,<sup>4</sup> became an international best-seller and

catapulted him to fame. He has been harshly attacked by such conservative apologists for US policies as William F. Buckley Jr for unmasking US double standards and the fascism of some of its allies.<sup>5</sup>

In trying to discredit Timerman, Buckley appealed to Jewish opinion at a crucial moment during the presidential primaries in the summer of 1980. 'The state of Israel, after all,' Buckley wrote, 'conducts business with the state of Argentina, and sells it arms. The principal spokesman for Argentine Jews, Dr Nehemias Resnizky ... has said that Timerman's charges of anti-semitism as government policy are of course "groundless".'<sup>6</sup> Jewish intellectuals associated with the US journals *Commentary*, *Midstream*, *Public Interest* and *The New Republic*, and the British review *Encounter*, picked up on this theme. One of them summed up their consensus when he argued that 'while anti-semitism was undoubtedly endemic in Argentina, it was really no worse than in many other countries'.<sup>7</sup> In their campaign against Timerman they used the McCarthyite technique of guilt by association. An Argentine millionaire involved in illegal international deals also happened to have been one of the financial backers of Timerman's Argentine newspaper. They had to resort to this ploy in order to destroy the reputation of someone who had not criticised Israel, was a professed Zionist and had developed an intense Jewish consciousness.<sup>8</sup>

Ironically, they attacked him because his Argentine testimony revealed the real depths of the anti-semitism of an Israeli ally. Indirectly, *Prisoner without a Name* ... suggested that for the first time since the World War a police state had emerged in the Americas where anti-semitism was incorporated into official ideology: in the late 1970s Argentine Jews were kidnapped, tortured and killed just because they were Jewish. Other police states, such as Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, Haiti, Somoza's Nicaragua, had never been overtly anti-semitic. Timerman's critics understood the embarrassment his revelations caused since Israel supplied Argentina with hundreds of million dollars worth of weapons. In fact, its arms business with the military junta which seized power in 1976 had increased simultaneously with the emergence of officially sanctioned anti-semitism.<sup>9</sup>

Although Timerman explicitly accused the leaders of Argentine Jewry of the crime of silence, he stopped short of pointing out that during the same years that Argentina was ideologically and functionally anti-semitic, Israel had become one of its staunchest allies. The silence of Argentine Jewish leaders, and their distortion of the true condition of Jews under military rule, stemmed largely from the fact that they felt compromised by the Argentine-Israeli connection and opted not to embarrass Israel. But, in describing in stark detail the depths of anti-semitism of an Israeli ally, he not merely exposed the linkage between Israel and many neo-fascist states of the Third World, but, more importantly, he revealed Israeli leaders' proclivity to view the well-being of specific Jewish communities to be secondary to the interest of the Jewish state.

Timerman's second book has appeared at a time when the US Jewish community is divided, and large numbers of Democrats and Republicans are embarrassed by the Begin government. They view Labour as a more flexible and attractive ally. Although Timerman moves beyond the official US consensus in calling for a two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli crisis, his critique raises fundamental dilemmas for the Begin government, not least of all his support for the Labour-backed Peace Now movement in Israel. Because of his renown



and his record as a committed Zionist, he appeals to many US Jews who are dissatisfied with trends in Israel and especially with Prime Minister Menachem Begin's and Defence Minister Ariel Sharon's personalities. Until recently, many of them followed Israeli policies blindly.

The book especially appeals to the Diaspora Jews who Timerman hopes will pressure Israel to rectify its ways.

Only the world's Jewish people can now do something for us. The Diaspora Jews who have maintained the values of our moral and cultural traditions — those values now trampled on here by intolerance and Israeli nationalism — should establish a Jewish tribunal to pass judgment on Begin, Sharon, Eitan, and the entire general staff of the Israeli armed forces ... I don't believe we Israelis can be cured without the help of others.

The deep alienation implicit in this statement and the sense of failure in Zionism's avowed mission for Israel are astounding. But even though his conclusions may threaten some Jewish people steeped in Zionist and Israeli mythology, Timerman's international celebrity status and his *New Yorker* cachet make the book acceptable. It threatens, but it is digestible.

At the heart of *The Longest War* is Timerman's dual theme that the Israelis have wronged the Palestinians and must rectify their errors, and that, as a result of 'exploiting, oppressing and victimising the Palestinians', the Jewish people have lost their 'moral tradition, their proper place in history'. At the base of this belief is Timerman's firm attachment to the notion that early Labour Zionism had a significant moral strain.

Like many liberal Israelis, Timerman views 1967 and the occupation of the West Bank territories as a watershed which brought Israel untold grief. Since the Israelis have reduced the West Bank Palestinians to 'second-class status', their presence threatens the entire democratic structure of Israel. Evoking the ghost of Alexis de Tocqueville, he complains that, even in Israel, 'little by little we are advancing towards a dictatorship of the majority with a democratic electoral system'.<sup>10</sup> With poignant examples, he draws parallels between Israel under Begin and Peron's system in Argentina.

When asked in an interview why he compared Israel to South Africa and Prussia, he summarised the essence of his latest work: 'My book is a diary of feelings, reactions and comments, not a sociological analysis.'<sup>11</sup> As he watched Arab workers being trucked into Tel Aviv from their villages, it occurred to him that South Africa did the same 'with the black workers it brings from its colonies, its satellite cities',<sup>12</sup> and is driven to the conclusion that Israel 'is South Africa'. In similar vein, he sees that 'becoming the Prussia of the Middle East is now our manifest destiny'. The process of 'repressing the Palestinian people until we destroy their will to live and liquidate their national identity' will destroy Israeli society and lead to a condition of permanent war. Any 'state that bases both its foreign policy and its internal life on military power' becomes a Prussia.<sup>13</sup>

Part of this Prussification process involves the creation of imaginary threats to Israel's security. For although 'the Israeli knows that he is unbeatable in the Middle East' and 'doesn't fear for his security', Prime Minister Begin and Defence Minister Sharon need to evoke fear 'to make us obey orders and ask no questions. They have never told us of our real power, of our military capacity,

of our battlefield superiority. They have terrorised us.'

Timerman's vision for the future under Begin and Sharon is bleak: Lebanon and Jordan are to become Israeli protectorates; the West Bank is to be annexed, allowing Israel to absorb more land and to have in reserve a large pool of cheap labour. Despairingly, he anticipates that if not stopped over the next ten years, the state will encourage Jews to settle the entire West Bank.

What are Timerman's antidotes to these dire predictions? First, replace the Likud bloc, headed by Prime Minister Begin, with a Labour coalition; second, recognise the rights of the Palestinians to their own state alongside Israel, which, hopefully would solve the Palestinians 'most imperative problem' — survival; and third, 'The Palestinians will have to organise politically. They must do it on their own.' He believes that armed struggle and the use of guerrilla tactics have backfired, and will backfire more in the future, so Palestinians must change their tactics.

When he states 'I believe that today we need the Palestinians as much as they need us. Each can serve as the democratic spark to the other', he evokes the possibility of establishing a new organic relationship. Israelis like Timerman have recognised genocidal impulses within the country's leadership. If these minority views are not to dominate, breakthroughs are needed in the peace process.

Palestinians recognise that few of their old allies aided them in Lebanon. Hundreds of thousands demonstrating in Tel Aviv against the war raise the possibility that some of them — people like Timerman — may become allies. The Israeli government understands this and must abhor the consequences. Such an alliance, if ever realised on a large scale, would threaten the imperial ambitions of Israeli leaders. Timerman is under attack because he brings the hope of peace which the empire builders in power in Israel want only on their terms: domination without equality.

Timerman's courage in taking a stand on one of the central issues of our day has earned him the wrath of Israeli war-mongers and the frightened people whom they manipulate. He now thinks that 'there is a government-organised campaign against him', and reports that people on Tel Aviv streets have hurled insults at him and his wife, making it more desirable to stay at home than venture out among their neighbours.<sup>14</sup>

Despite the hostility generated by *The Longest War*, Timerman expects to continue monitoring and exposing contradictions and injustices in Israeli society, as he did in Argentina until the military regime expelled him. In a recent interview he asserted:

My experience here, in my country, Israel, is that the government demands full surrender from the Jews of the Diaspora, and it demands full surrender from the Jews of Israel. Well, I didn't surrender in Argentina. And I am not going to surrender my feelings, my ideas, and my principles here in Israel. I am going to live with my principles. I am going to struggle for them. And I am going to do it here, in this country, in Israel.<sup>15</sup>

Timerman's courageous writings are evidence of the ideological dualism that has characterised Zionism. Those people, like Timerman, who consider themselves humanists and socialist Zionists must come to terms with the fact that in some very fundamental ways a messianic, religiously based, ethnocentric



ideology cannot ultimately project a socialist vision. The right-wing in Israel has understood this for some time: Meir Kahane, in a recent review of Timerman's book, proclaimed:

Let us reject that entire Hellenistic brand of 'Socialist-Zionism' ... that combines the sanctity of Jewishness with the profanity of a gentile ideology. That takes two *contradictory* concepts and attempts to delude us by saying they are compatible. They are not.

Jewishness and Zionism represent a distinct, unique, different, separate people. They represent an inward and isolationist call for a special, Chosen people and state, set apart to create a separate and distinct and unintegrated society. Socialism is the internationalism and amalgamation of nations and peoples...'16

For Kahane, the two have always been and always will be incompatible. Yet, because Kahane professes these ideas, it would be a mistake to equate Zionism with fascism, because fascism never would have produced a man like Timerman or others like him who are able to live and speak out in Israeli society.

We also must recognise that many people — including myself — grew up believing in Israel, without confronting its basic contradictions and without examining closely the ideological roots of the state. If I had not been poor, I would have spent time on a kibbutz, as did many of my childhood friends. For us, as for Timerman, the kibbutz represented the best in Judaism and socialism. But I would have found, as I did later on in my life, that the kibbutz in reality was a form of apartheid: on it I would not have shared my existence with Christian or Muslim Palestinians.

Herein lies the crux of the problem: from its early years Zionism intended to stand apart. Even the early socialist Zionists who arrived in Palestine in the second Aliya (migration), after initial hesitations, placed stress on buying up land for exclusive, albeit collective, Jewish use. In fact, many of the early Arab outbreaks of violence in Palestine before the First World War were in reaction to the removal of Arab labour from newly purchased Jewish lands. The Arabs and their Turkish rulers watched as Jewish socialist settlers excluded themselves entirely from the Arabs, using their own language, establishing separate schools and attempting to set up an independent and self-sufficient economic system. The appeals of this separatist, exclusionary ideology were limited and, worldwide, few Jews were attracted to it before the Second World War.

It was the anguish of the times caused by the Holocaust and the Second World War which impelled humanists throughout the world to jettison analysis and support an ethnocentric ideology. Now, thirty-eight years after that war, the humanistic overlay provided by socialist Jews and the Holocaust has worn off, and Zionists have to face the reality of what they have created in Palestine. They now have rulers who never believed in any form of socialism, but who know instinctively how to manipulate nationalism. Begin's personal following in Israel is no accident, 'for he epitomises the deep roots of primordial Zionism which is ethnocentric and theocratic; and which envisaged setting up a Jewish State composed predominantly of immigrants to a land populated and lived in for more than a millenium by another people, the Palestinians.'

Timerman's book, and the virulence of the attacks mounted against him, indicate that the Zionist consensus has developed major cracks. He himself has

made the first leap as a Zionist in criticising Israel as it is. Will he be capable of moving on to the bigger challenge of addressing himself to the issue of what Israel should be? Will he be capable of joining those of us who are also interested in a humane world, and envisage a secular and democratic society in which non-Jews shall be the equal of Jews in a bi-national state?

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- 3 Ari Dayan, 'Interview: Citizen Jacobo Timerman against the State of Israel', *Koteret Rashit* (8 December 1982), tr. in *Jerusalem Palestine Weekly* (17 December 1982) (henceforth cited as *Dayan*.)
- 4 New York and Toronto, Random House, 1981.
- 5 William F. Buckley Jr, 'On the Right', *National Review* (10 July 1980). See also, 12 June 1981 and 21 August 1981.
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- 9 See Penny Lernoux, "'Who's Who of Dictators' obtain arms from Israel', *National Catholic Reporter* (25 December 1981).
- 10 Dayan, *op. cit.*
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- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 Timothy McNutley, 'An adopted son of Israel airs some war-torn linen', *Chicago Tribune* (11 January 1983). See also, Yorem Kessel, 'Jacobco Timerman, newcomer to Israel, draws countrymen's ire with new book', *Wall Street Journal* (28 December 1982), and Patrick Seale, 'Anguish of the most reviled man in Israel', *Observer* (19 December 1982).
- 15 Wasserman, *op. cit.*
- 16 Meir Kahane, 'Timerman', *Jewish Press* (24 December 1982).



*The Battle of Beirut: why Israel invaded Lebanon.*

By MARTIN JANSEN (London, Zed Press, 1982). 142 pages. £4.50.

'Lebanon Eyewitness',

By MARTIN PERETZ in *The New Republic* (2 August 1982).

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By NORMAN PODHORETZ in *Commentary* (September 1982).

'Lebanon: the case for the war'

By ROBERT W. TUCKER in *Commentary* (October 1982).

The images witnessed nightly on their TV screens by the US public, of Israel's invasion of the Lebanon, of homes burnt and razed to the ground, of children's deaths, shocked and distressed large numbers of them. Nor is it difficult to understand why many Americans who were disturbed by what they saw felt a relation to events which differed from what they could have experienced about the massacres inflicted on the people of Hama, Syria, by the regime of Hafez al Assad, or by the deaths of so many in the Iraq-Iran war. After all, they knew that it was the most advanced aircraft produced by the US that were bombing Lebanon, and that their own tax dollars had purchased the phosphorous bombs whose effects were visible to anyone who opted to look.

To say that the media coverage of the invasion made its mark on public consciousness in the US\* is not to say that the media freed itself of a bias against Arabs, nor to say that it rendered the political issues behind the events comprehensible to a mass audience. The British press appears to have done better. Michael Jansen's book, *The Battle of Beirut: why Israel invaded Lebanon*, drawing heavily upon the work of British journalists, with generous amounts of quotation from Israeli and US papers, gives us a particularly coherent account of the invasion. It also provides the necessary corrective to some of the writing reviewed here, and, as such, is drawn upon in the course of my discussion.

The palpable public distress in the US about the invasion has provoked a spate of furious responses from proponents of the Israeli attack. Long articles in the summer and autumn by Martin Peretz in *The New Republic* and Norman Podhoretz and Robert Tucker in *Commentary*, all attempting to assert a moral authority and political wisdom for the invasion, became a significant element in the debate.

Two attitudes, as well as a number of substantial themes, link the efforts of these apologists for Israel. First, they are anxiously and rancorously defensive, each choosing to defend the invasion of Lebanon by attacking its critics. Second, they — especially Podhoretz and Tucker — view the invasion as a success, but fear that political change in the US may squander its gains. Robert Tucker is so taken by what he judges to be the victory of US weapons, in the hands of Israelis, against Soviet ones, borne by Syrians, that he tells us the results of the war

\*A *Washington Post*-ABC News poll taken after the revelations about the massacres in Sabra and Shatila found that 59 per cent of a national sample favoured suspension of US military and economic aid to Israel.<sup>1</sup>

must alter the calculations not only of the states of the region but of the superpowers as well. The triumph of Israeli forces dispelled the doubt and uncertainty that had lingered since the 1973 war. Both in the air and on the ground, the qualitative superiority of American and of Israeli weapons was striking.

... the implications of the battles fought in eastern Lebanon may prove quite as significant for the military balance in Europe as they are for the military balance in the Middle East.

Norman Podhoretz claims that 'Israel has now dramatically refuted' the 'lessons of Vietnam'. Both Tucker and Podhoretz are bedevilled by the prospect, however, that US policy towards the Middle East will be affected by the views of George Ball, and that the US administration will put pressure on Israel to accommodate Palestinian demands.

Martin Peretz adopts the persona of a foreign correspondent to construct his defence of the invasion — appropriate, since he identifies the media as the institutional culprit responsible for the perilous condition of public opinion.

'Much of what you have read in the newspapers and news-magazines about the war in Lebanon — and even more of what you have seen and heard on television — is simply not true', Peretz begins in a tone of bland reassurance. The material, he explains, has been distorted by contextual error and by the absence of a valid historical framework:

It's a war too complicated to tell about quickly, too taxing by way of historical understanding for correspondents armed with a peculiarly American mixture of ignorance, cynicism and brashness, who jet from crisis to crisis — looking for Vietnam and, if possible, Watergate too.

So Peretz sets off for Lebanon to bring back the Truth in its Proper Historical Context. Something apparently happened on the way, however, to cause him to lose sight of the historical framework which was to have distinguished his reporting from that of the ignorant, cynical and brash. Of the terrible socio-economic-sectarian conflicts which have riven Lebanon, we have only Peretz' approving quotation of a remark that 'there was no civil war', only the struggle of Syrians and Palestinians. This, of course, relieves him of the need to discuss the events which led up to the de facto partition of Lebanon by 1976. His fable of the wicked tyrants of the PLO ruling over the miserable masses of Lebanese is not much complicated by other actors — we needn't hear of Amal or the Lebanese progressive forces. He omits any discussion of Israeli intrusion into Lebanese political affairs, so we needn't hear of Haddad. He also passes over any mention of how Palestinians came to be in southern Lebanon. Peretz either chooses not to tell us what he saw in the flattened Palestinian camps of Ain el-Hilweh and Rashidiyeh, or did not visit them at all, perhaps by his own choice, perhaps because he visited Lebanon while the Palestinian camps in the south were still kept strictly off limits to the press by the Israeli authorities.

Instead of the historical understanding we were told was missing from journalism on the invasion, Peretz gives us a context of national character; perhaps what he had really found lacking in the coverage was the Good Israeli/Bad Arab dichotomy. Most of the Israelis to whom he introduces us have advanced academic degrees and claims to left politics: all have sterling characters. One, a therapist in training, is in the armoured corps, tormented by the ethical



problem of what to do when 12- and 13-year-olds hurl grenades at the tanks. His friend fought hand to hand in the refugee camps:

Even in pursuit of terrorists, however, he wouldn't throw grenades into rooms where they might be hiding. He wouldn't understand a phrase like 'generate no prisoners.' Why, after all, does Israel now hold between 5,000 to 6,000 PLO prisoners from this Lebanon operation?

Thus, based on the ethics of this paragon, Peretz transforms the question of the prisoners — for human rights advocates an example of Israeli abuses — into a testimony of the humanity of the Israeli army. Peretz ignores the fact that thousands of prisoners were taken not in battle but in indiscriminate sweeps conducted after Israeli troops had seized territory; or on the word of hooded informers. Many of the prisoners, probably most, had not borne arms.<sup>2</sup>

This humane army, Podhoretz assures us, needs 'no home-front jingoism to support it'. A lieutenant told him that, aside from some 'blatherings from the Prime Minister', the army had been spared expressions of chauvinism. Perhaps the lieutenant had not received the leaflet from the Military Rabbinate Brigade issued to troops in Lebanon depicting Lebanon and sections of western Syria, with the Biblical versions of its place names, and the comment: 'The one who looks at this map will see that the shore cities of Lebanon, the central plateau and a significant part of the Bekaa are the possession of the Tribe of Asher.'<sup>3</sup> 'The implication is clear,' Jansen comments, 'if this area belonged and still belongs to Asher, one of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, it belongs to the state of Israel today.'

The Israelis to whom Peretz introduces us spend the time not devoted to sparing the lives of Arabs in explaining to us their strange and terrible customs, particularly their tendency to massacre each other when left to their own devices. An Israeli Orientalist attached to the army confides: 'You can't casually ask a Lebanese doctor to treat a Palestinian patient.' A civilised Israeli information officer is sickened when his work requires him to listen to the lurid ravings of Maronite militia commanders. Peretz warns: 'It won't be easy. When — and if — the foreigners leave, the local militias, manned by lithe young toughs, smiling and polite and probably trigger-happy, will still be around, armed with the hate-filled memories of old men.' What Peretz does not allow of is what actually happened, most horribly at Sabra and Shatila: rather than restraining the right-wing militias, the Israeli command used them to 'purge' the Palestinian camps.

Arabs appear in Peretz' report chiefly as celebrants of the Israeli invasion. 'Lebanese of all persuasions have expressed — I heard it myself dozens of times — gratification at their liberation from the PLO.' Any favourable remark about the advent of Israeli troops is accepted by Peretz at face value, without any element of that caution necessary when views are expressed by conquered people in the presence of a representative of the occupying army.

Just as any praise of the Israeli invasion is credible to Peretz, so too is any derogation of the PLO: 'Confiscations, harassment, young people forced into militias, schools closed, rapes, molestations, commandeering of licences, passports, services, offices: this was the stuff of everyday life in the web of the PLO's "state-within-a-state".' Yet Peretz does not document for us just how the PLO made rape a mundane matter in southern Lebanon, and his concern

about conscription seems a bit odd, coming as it does so quickly after the glory he has heaped upon universal mobilisation for the Israeli military.

It would be foolish to deny the existence of social and political discontent in southern Lebanon prior to the Israeli invasion. The context in which the PLO and their Lebanese allies had to operate was one of massive social and economic dislocation caused by years of Israeli invasion and bombing; the installation of Haddad in his enclave, and his possession of Israeli artillery with which to lob shells at will into Sidon, Tyre and the camps and villages; and since 1976, the aftermath of the civil war which left those who had favoured secular democratic reform confined more or less to the predominantly Muslim sections of the country, unable to break down the confessional system.

Norman Podhoretz adopts the role of literary critic, analysing the writings of opponents of the invasion in an attempt to demonstrate that their rhetoric is so overblown and disproportionate that it can only be the result of an ulterior motive – and concludes:

In the broadside from which I have borrowed the title of this essay, Emile Zola charged that the persecutors of Dreyfus were using anti-semitism as a screen for their reactionary political designs. I charge here that the anti-semitic attacks on Israel which have erupted in recent weeks are also a cover. They are a cover for loss of American nerve. They are a cover for acquiescence in terrorism. They are a cover for the appeasement of totalitarianism. And I accuse all of those who have joined in these attacks not merely of anti-semitism but of the broader sin of faithlessness to the interests of the United States and indeed to the values of western civilisation as a whole.

Podhoretz is alerting us to the operations of a cabal involving Anthony Lewis of the *New York Times* and Mary McGrory of the *Washington Post* who criticise Israel immoderately – not because they are truly so outraged by Israeli conduct, but in order to generate smokescreens of anti-semitism, behind which their real agenda of craven submission to the Kremlin can be accomplished and centuries of western culture abandoned for inferior eastern values.

It is difficult to take such verbiage seriously. It should be noted, however, that the journal in which it appeared, and of which Podhoretz is the editor, *Commentary*, is an influential one. This is true in Israeli affairs – Menachem Milson found his job as Civilian Administrator of the West Bank when his strategy for dealing with the population in the occupied areas appeared in *Commentary*<sup>4</sup> and attracted the favourable attention of Israeli Defence Minister Sharon. Its role in US politics has also been significant – its pages have served as an ideological laboratory for the trend towards neo-conservatism in US foreign and domestic policy over the last decade.

Robert W. Tucker, in his apologia for the invasion, adopts the role of moral philosopher – this for a man who urged the US to prepare for military intervention in the Middle East in order to advance US economic and geopolitical interests. His foray into ethics is an effort to discredit critics of the invasion who argue that the harm inflicted by the means of the Israeli military was disproportionate to the end it sought to achieve. And his failure, like that of Peretz and Podhoretz, to find a rationale for the invasion is in itself indicative of certain problems related to the conjuncture between Israeli and US policy in the region.



None of these prominent apologists appear distressed by the rapid collapse of Begin's first pretext: retaliation for the attempted assassination of the Israeli Ambassador in London, a shooting for which the PLO promptly and plausibly disclaimed any responsibility. The Israeli government dropped the retaliation concept rather quickly, presumably because the mounting casualties amongst Lebanese and Palestinians — now on the order of magnitude of 20,000 dead<sup>5</sup> — rendered retaliation an obscene claim.

Nor are the three apologists discomfited by the fact that Begin's second pretext — that the Israeli army would advance only 40 kilometres into Lebanon, in order to seize a zone wide enough to ensure that Israeli settlements in the Galilee would be out of range of Palestinian artillery — disappeared in the dust of advancing Israeli armoured columns. 'Peace for the Galilee' had already been secured for nearly a year by a cease-fire until Israeli attacks on Lebanon loosed the PLO's artillery again. The issue of the 40-kilometre limit was a crucial one for the Israeli opposition: its violation embarrassed the Labour party and caused debate among the troops in Lebanon. Peretz, however, dismisses the 40-kilometre limit as a 'silly fetish'. It would hardly have been so had Begin not lied in saying that the invasion was motivated by the need to preserve northern Israel from Palestinian shells and Katushyas.

Begin's falsehood was cast in an even more unfavourable light recently in the internal Israeli debate over the war, when comments made by Israeli Minister of Tourism Avraham Sharir were published. 'There was another reason for the Lebanon war besides safeguarding our northern border, which we don't talk much about but which I will reveal to you', Sharir told Israel Bonds fund-raisers in Paris. The PLO, he said, had proposed to the Begin government through US diplomatic channels that a non-aggression pact be concluded, and the Israeli government launched the war to sabotage such a possibility. Benny Shalita, a Likud member of the Knesset's Affairs and Security Committee, confirmed to the press that a senior army officer told the committee two months before the war that the PLO was seeking a pact — Shalita added that he had agreed with the government's decision to turn down the proposal.<sup>6</sup>

Tucker attempts to convince his readers that the Israeli advance to Beirut was not the result of planning or prior intention, but rather was undertaken almost spontaneously: 'It was the lightning character of the Israeli move northward, in turn made possible by the virtual absence of any effective opposition, that created a momentum which brought — one might almost say pulled — the Israeli forces to Beirut.' The PLO itself, then, is in Tucker's view perversely and paradoxically responsible for the Israeli advance to Beirut, despite Sharon's remarks in the months beforehand that the intention of the coming attack would be 'the destruction of the terrorist organisation and their infrastructure' — infrastructure which was, of course, centred in Beirut.

After seeking to diminish the degree of intentionality in the scope of the attack, Tucker concedes that the invasion was in fact intended to destroy the PLO. He is at pains, however, to distinguish such a goal from the destruction of 'Palestinian nationalism', which he says would have been an 'odious' aim. But how can one differentiate between an attempt to destroy the organisation, leadership and structure through which a people express their nationalism and an attempt to destroy that nationalism itself?

Peretz avers that to charge that the invasion was aimed at Palestinian

nationalism is 'an outlandish misrepresentation':

For the *maximum* objective of the Begin government is to establish Israeli sovereignty in the West Bank while allowing the Palestinians living there a degree of control over their own civil and political affairs far greater — once more the point must be stressed — than they ever enjoyed in the past, or than Arabs enjoy in any country under Arab sovereignty. This is 'to exterminate Palestinian nationalism'?

The concept that Palestinian nationalism is not inconsistent with foreign sovereignty in the West Bank is obviously flawed. Beyond this, however, Podhoretz appears to fix a new standard for peoples' rights based upon his assessment of the level of rights they enjoyed in the past or which neighbouring peoples enjoy today. If Iraqi Arabs are oppressed under Saddam Hussein or the Syrian Arabs under the regime of Hafez al Assad, is the Begin government therefore licensed to abuse the rights of the Palestinians? It is difficult to escape the conclusion that Podhoretz' formula is a racist one: would he — or indeed should anyone — agree that because Jews have historically been persecuted, Israeli Jews today deserve a scaled-down set of rights?

The premise of each of the three apologists is that Israel went to war in Lebanon to eradicate the threat posed to its security by the PLO, which refused to recognise its right to exist. This concept of location of threat differs only in degree — intellectually more abstract and perhaps socio-economically upscale — from the logic of the two-inch headlines in the right-wing paper, the *Jewish Press*, shortly before the invasion: 'PLO troops mass for attack on Israel'.<sup>7</sup> Robert Tucker comments:

Even if the people of the West Bank and Gaza are as one with the proclaimed objective of their alleged representatives — which remains the dismemberment of the state of Israel — this would not endow that objective with moral sanctity and thereby condemn Israel for opposing *its armed expression* with force. There is nothing in reason or morality that enjoins a government to refrain from taking action against a threat to the state's security simply because that threat enjoys popular support.

None of these defenders of the invasion attempts anything more than the most superficial of analyses of the PLO's actual position on the state of Israel, preserving their arguments intact from any examination of the PLO's transitional programme of 1974 (which evolved into a strategy for the establishment of a sovereign state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip) or statements by Yasser Arafat and others envisioning the existence of both an Israeli and a Palestinian state in historic Palestine.<sup>8</sup>

But then, Tucker also expresses the fear that the Israeli government might be stymied by any such recognition of Israel:

The famous 'card' — recognition of the legitimacy of Israel that Arafat presumably could never play in preceding years, since to play it (he and his apologists argued) would have left him without any further cards — was never played at all. This, despite the strong possibility that had it been played at any time prior to the war, it would have placed the Israeli government in the position of having to respond. *The well-known fear of successive Israeli governments that this card might one day be played is testimony enough to its strength (emphasis added).*



Tucker's argument is a circular one: the Begin government decided to invade Lebanon and destroy the PLO for fear of that organisation's refusal to recognise the state of Israel; on the other hand, Begin's government and earlier ones feared that the PLO might offer recognition of the state of Israel.

Peretz, Podhoretz and Tucker each suggest that the military success of the Israeli attack on Lebanon creates the possibility, if not the likelihood, of a new Israeli flexibility and accommodation of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. As Podhoretz writes:

... many (or as I read Israeli public opinion) most Israelis would favour a withdrawal from the West Bank provided they were reasonably confident that the successor regime would be willing to live in peace with a neighboring Jewish state (and provided also, probably, that Jews who wished to go on living in Judea and Samaria would have the same right to do so as Arabs in Israel). Elimination of the radical rejectionist Palestinians — whether or not they call themselves the PLO — is a precondition for any such resolution of the Palestinian problem. Consequently, if Begin and Sharon succeed in their objective of destroying the PLO, they may well make it impossibly difficult to annex or absorb the West Bank — not because of pressures coming from Washington, but because of pressures coming from within Israel itself.

This approach, common to all three of these pro-Israeli ideologues, drastically understates the degree of control of Begin and Sharon over Israeli policy, just as they sought earlier to obscure as much as possible the degree of intentionality involved in the invasion.

In fact, they not only understate the force of Sharon's policy in particular, but also fail to explain his notions which relate the invasion to a strategy for the West Bank. Jansen quotes a succinct analysis from a commentator in the *Jerusalem Post*:

Ariel Sharon, after all, has never sought to keep secret his grand strategy, his three-pronged programme, Lebanon should be cleared of all foreign forces, the PLO and the Syrians, and re-established as a Christian dominated state. The PLO should be effectively destroyed; the occupied territories (the West Bank and Gaza) annexed to Israel; the Arab population there granted a highly limited form of internal autonomy; and Jewish settlements vastly expanded. Finally, the Palestinians should be encouraged to overthrow the Hashemite Kingdom and convert Jordan into their own national state.<sup>9</sup>

Sharon's ideas have been widely reported in the western press: an initial formula appeared several years ago in *Playboy*; a specific discussion of Sharon's plans for the invasion in the context of his plans for a Palestinian state in Jordan was printed in *Time* magazine several months before the invasion, and, in the interim, a plethora of reports had appeared in a whole range of periodicals.<sup>10</sup> *Commentary* itself had published a parallel suggestion by Menachem Milson that Palestinian refugees in Lebanon should be 'resettled' in the East Bank.<sup>11</sup> Similar ideas, particularly those concerning the possible expulsion of a large part of the Palestinian population, have been expressed in the Israeli media generally. It is difficult to believe that Peretz, Podhoretz and Tucker are unfamiliar with Sharon's notions, and still more difficult to believe that they believe they are not germane to an exposition of Israeli war aims.

Sharon and Begin are digging in on the West Bank, expanding old settlements and initiating new ones — and they are not alone. At a recent meeting of the Labour party's political bureau, in which Peres and Rabin sat silent, approval was voted overwhelmingly for the Labour-controlled Histadrut construction industries to continue building settlements in occupied areas. A dissident Labour Knesset member Yossi Sarid declared:

The Likud must be very happy indeed to see us implementing their policies. There is a total contradiction between what this party preaches and what it does. We advocate territorial compromise, but with our own hands we are destroying any chance of such a policy.<sup>12</sup>

The Begin government is currently engaged in a programme to bring the settler population of the West Bank to 100,000 in the very near future.<sup>13</sup> The economic incentive of cheaper and better housing has been added to the appeal of the religious fanaticism of the Gush Emunim to bring new Israeli colonists to the occupied areas. The Israeli Deputy Minister of Agriculture Michael Dekel, an official who is deeply involving in leasing land on the West Bank to settlers, explained:

What this government is promising is that all this area will remain under the jurisdiction of the State of Israel. We tell people that if they're afraid to take the risk, they shouldn't go there. The fact is that they've been going, and in droves.<sup>14</sup>

The Israeli government is thus creating a constituency for annexation. It is a highly ideological constituency with an economic interest to protect; furthermore, it is armed and organised militarily into local units in a 'regional defence' strategy implemented by Israeli Chief of Staff Rafael Eitan. It is not strange, then, that Israelis have begun to equate withdrawal from the West Bank with the possibility of civil war.

Why are Tucker, Podhoretz and Peretz unable to face these realities which can scarcely be unknown to them? Why do they persist in treating the Israeli invasion of Lebanon as a step towards territorial compromise for the occupied areas rather than as an integral aspect of a policy of annexation?

The problem may be rooted in the bizarre ideological dimensions of the conjuncture of US and Israeli policies. The decision-makers in the US and Israel have tied Israeli expansionism to US geo-political goals. The alliance itself is functioning thus far with a lethal efficacy, but it can be difficult for the participants to find a common language of discussion. Pentagon officials were not supplying sophisticated materiel, for example, for a re-creation of Joshua's Biblical battles in Lebanon, however much that analog was an inspiration to fanatical Israelis: instead, the US was trying out the efficiency of its weapons in a gruesome dry-run. Although Sharon has proven a master at adapting anti-Soviet rhetoric to his purposes, with elaborate projections of the huge area in which he will deploy his troops in the western interest,<sup>15</sup> a deep vein of anxiety runs through the Israeli political consensus that a US administration which cannot speak in its lexicon of *eretz Yisrael* may sacrifice Israeli interests for broader US concerns.

Tucker, Peretz and Podhoretz are afflicted with aspects of this confusion. Good cold warriors all, neo-conservative supporters of Israel rather than



religious fanatics, protagonists of the titanic struggle against the Kremlin and for western values, they find the language of religious mysticism under which the colonisation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip has been conducted, especially since the advent of Begin in 1977, alien to their ears, and simply turn away from it and the policies it enfolds.

SHEILA RYAN

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- 1 *Washington Post* (29 September 1982).
- 2 The plight of the prisoners was well described by several journalists: see *Sunday Times* (18 July 1982), *Washington Post* (28 July 1982), and *Jerusalem Post* (16 June 1982).
- 3 *Ha'aretz* (8 August 1982), quoted in Jansen, p. 126.
- 4 Menachem Milson, 'How to make peace with the Palestinians', *Commentary* (May 1981).
- 5 From a survey published in the Beirut daily, *An Nahar*, *Washington Post* (3 September 1982).
- 6 *Jerusalem Post* (16 January 1983), *Washington Post* (15 January 1983), *Los Angeles Times* (15 January 1983).
- 7 *The Jewish Press* (14 May 1982).
- 8 An interview of Yasser Arafat by Uri Avneri during the Israeli invasion specifically mentioned the possibility of a future of 'two states', see *New York Times* (13 July 1982).
- 9 Jonathan Frankel in the *Jerusalem Post* (27 June 1982), quoted in Jansen, p. 122.
- 10 Ranan B. Lurie, 'Israel's Gen. Sharon: as tough as ever', *Playboy* (March 1978); Sidney Zion and Uri Dan, 'Israel's peace strategy', *New York Times Magazine* (21 January 1979), *Economist* (8 August 1981), *Time* (5 October 1981), and *Time* (1 March 1982).
- 11 Milson, op. cit.
- 12 *Jerusalem Post* (14 January 1983); see also, *Jerusalem Post* (10 January 1983).
- 13 *Ha'aretz* (12 December 1982); see also, *Jerusalem Palestinian Weekly* (17 December 1982).
- 14 *Jerusalem Post* (14 January 1983).
- 15 *Al Hamishmar* (24 December 1981).

## *Sabra et Chatila: enquête sur un massacre*

By AMNON KAPELIOUK (Paris, Editions de Seuil, December 1982). 116 pp.

The bloody massacre in Bangladesh quickly covered over the memory of the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia, the assassination of Allende drowned out the groans of Bangladesh, the war in the Sinai Desert made people forget Allende, the Cambodian massacre made people forget Sinai, and so on and so forth until ultimately everyone lets everything be forgotten.

Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*

Amnon Kapeliouk, in *Sabra et Chatila: enquête sur un massacre*, sets out to chronicle the events surrounding the massacre. After the Israeli Judicial Commission of Inquiry was established, he was persuaded to publish his findings before the disclosure of the commission's report, as a way of preventing a possible whitewash obscuring Israel's direct responsibility. Kapeliouk, an Israeli and

a highly regarded reporter for the French daily *Le Monde*, does not rely on simple assertions, but provides us with a vast array of solid evidence based on:

- (a) dozens of testimonies of Israelis, both civilians and military personnel;
- (b) testimonies of Palestinians and Lebanese and interviews with foreign correspondents;
- (c) accounts printed in Israeli, Lebanese and international newspapers and magazines;
- (d) material presented before the Israeli Judicial Commission of Inquiry and the record of Knesset debates;
- (e) reports of various radio stations and wire services.

After gathering all this information, he discarded any data which could not be cross-checked or confirmed with certainty.

On 17 July 1982, his account runs, at a public rally in Tel Aviv, Prime Minister Begin had announced, 'Before the end of this year we will have signed a peace treaty with Lebanon.' Bashir Gemayel's election to the Lebanese presidency, a selection made by the Lebanese parliament under the barrels of Israeli guns, was viewed as the first political victory of Begin and General Ariel Sharon in the war. After all, Bashir Gemayel had been collaborating with the Israelis since 1976; he was, furthermore, openly committed to ridding Lebanon of its Palestinian residents. In June he told *Le Nouvel Observateur* unhesitatingly that in the Middle East 'There is one people too many: the Palestinian people.'

The Phalangist party, which had acceded to power in Lebanon after Israel's invasion, was now in a position to reach a peace agreement, or that was the official Israeli expectation. However, differences between these allies emerged rapidly. The Israeli troika — Begin, Sharon and Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir — insisted on an official peace treaty, and tried, in effect, to dictate its terms to Bashir. More used to dealing with mere puppets, like the Lebanese army defector Saad Haddad or Mustapha Doudin, their chief collaborator on the West Bank, the Israelis obviously miscalculated the collaborationist limit of the Phalangist leader, who harboured his own ambitions. At a secret meeting with the Israeli troika on 1 September in Nahariya, the president-elect expressed his known reluctance to implement the Israeli demand for a treaty. He reportedly told Begin, 'Be reminded that you are speaking to the President of Lebanon, and not one of Israel's vassals. We have our own reasons.' Given his ambition, Bashir as president could no longer act as a militia chieftain. He had to secure cooperation from traditional Sunni leaders — for example, from Saab Salem, the former prime minister — as well as from others. Moreover, he had to establish his authority in all of Lebanon, and not only in the Maronite enclave over which he had previously lorded. Finally, he had to contend with Arab regional constraints. Collectively, these factors made his Lebanese-Arab agenda more important to him than Israeli dictates.\*

The potential chaos arising from Gemayel's assassination provided the Israelis with the pretext for entering West Beirut. 'Prevention of bloodshed'

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\* Bashir Gemayel personally called the editor of the Lebanese daily *L'Orient-Le Jour* to inform him of the encounter at Nahariya, and to urge that the editor help persuade the Israelis that the consequence of a peace treaty with Lebanon now would most certainly be the disintegration of Lebanon.



was actually the rationale for this violation of the agreement under which the PLO fighters had withdrawn from Beirut. In any event, the US commitment to prevent Israeli troops from entering Beirut and to secure the lives of Palestinian civilians proved worthless.

General Moshe Levy announced on Israeli radio that Israel's other objective in entering the western sector of the city was to 'verify if all the terrorists had departed from Beirut'. This would require combing civilian, especially Palestinian, quarters.

It is clear, however, from the evidence that Kapeliouk has assembled that the Israelis did not require such 'verification', clearer still that they knew the claims proffered by the Israeli government of '2,000 terrorists' still holed up in Beirut were unfounded. Shortly before the assassination of Bashir, *Ha'aretz* (15 September 1982) reported, General Eitan had told the Knesset Foreign and Defence Affairs Committee: 'In West Beirut there remain but a few terrorists and a small PLO office.'

It is inconceivable that the Israelis did not foresee the consequences of the Phalangists entering the camps, for:

(a) Israelis were quite cognisant of the Phalangists' deep hatred for the Palestinians.

(b) It was common knowledge that the Phalangists had carried out massacres against the Lebanese and Palestinians in Karantina and Maslakh in 1975 and in Tel al-Zaatar in 1976. In fact, Sharon has since disclosed that under the Israeli government, liaison officers of the Israeli Defence Forces were with the Phalangists in the course of the Tel al-Zaatar massacres.

(c) The Phalangists had strongly intimated their intentions to carry out new massacres against the Palestinians at an appropriate time. For example, Kapeliouk cites Amnon Rubenstein who, in the Knesset debates, quoted one Phalangist leader as saying, 'One dead Palestinian is pollution; the death of all the Palestinians is the final solution.'

The Israelis were deeply involved in planning for the entry of the right wing militias into the camps, and in fact led them there. In the early morning of 14 September, just hours before the final Israeli assault on West Beirut, Israeli Generals Eitan and Drori met with Phalangist leaders Fadi Ephram and Elias Hobeika at the headquarters of the militia officers. On the agenda of this meeting, Sharon later disclosed to the Knesset, was the matter of Phalangist entry into the Palestinian camps in West Beirut. At the conclusion of the discussion, Sharon revealed, one of the Phalangists said, 'For years we have been waiting for this moment.'

At noon on 16 September, General Drori met Fadi Ephram and asked if the Lebanese forces were ready to enter the camps; 'Yes, immediately', Ephram responded. About 1,500 militiamen were assembled under Hobeika and Ephram's command and marched towards West Beirut. General Amos Yaron, Israeli Commander of Beirut, assured them that their forces would be provided with all assistance necessary in 'cleaning the camps of all terrorists'. Later, the Israelis in fact furnished logistical support as the massacre unfolded, including lighting the area with flares at night. General Drori called Sharon and informed him, 'Our friends are entering the camps', to which Sharon responded, 'Congratulations, our friends' operation is approved.'

Under international law, the Israelis, as the occupying power, are responsible for all transgressions within their area of military control, even if they had no

foreknowledge of, nor involvement in these violations. In this case, however, the Israelis had prior knowledge of what was to happen, and indeed were deeply implicated in preparations for the massacre. Furthermore, the Israeli military took no measures to stop the killings until after the passage of more than forty hours of carnage.

I visited the locations of Israeli checkpoints around the camps, and can verify what Kapeliouk and others have written: it would have been impossible for Israeli soldiers stationed there not to have had a clear view of the massacre. From interviews with soldiers cited by Kapeliouk, it is clear that the Israeli command took no action on reports, including those from their own men, that a massacre was in progress in Sabra and Shatila. For example, two Israeli parachutists told *Ha'aretz* reporters, Michael Garti and Ouzi Keren, on 16 September, 'We could have stopped the massacre if our officers took into account our reports.' Israeli soldiers on the outskirts of the camps encountered Palestinian women and children who told them of the ongoing massacre. One soldier reported this to his commanding officer, only to be told, 'Don't worry: all is well!'

On Thursday night at 11.00, General Yaron transmitted a report to Tel Aviv that at least '300 civilians and terrorists' had already been killed. At least twenty senior officers saw the report; it was also sent to the office of Defence Minister Sharon. Hirsh Goodman, military correspondent of the *Jerusalem Post*, confirms this, saying that he also saw the message.

On an ABC News Close-up documentary, 'Oh, tell the world what happened', Bill Redeker concludes, 'Based on interviews in Lebanon and Israel, ABC News has determined that at least 45 Israelis, officers and civilians, knew by Friday afternoon [17 September] that innocent civilians were being killed.' The massacre continued until Saturday, 18 September. ABC news says that 800 people were slain during the course of the massacre in Sabra and Shatila; Kapeliouk estimates that out of a population of 20,000 people in the two camps, 3,000 to 3,500 were killed in the forty-hour period.

It is clear, however, that the intent of the massacre extended far beyond the two camps. Its aim was to provoke a massive exodus of Palestinians from Beirut and from Lebanon as a whole. Kapeliouk cites elaborations on this thesis by Zeev Schiff of *Ha'aretz* and Ehud Yari, specialist on Arab affairs for Israeli television. In this context, the conduct of Israel's war in Lebanon takes on coherence. First, the Israelis overran and destroyed the Palestinian camps in the south: five of the six camps were nearly totally destroyed by shells, dynamite and bulldozers. The intention was to induce the Palestinians to evacuate southern Lebanon. This logic culminated in Beirut, where first the Israelis themselves and then their Lebanese allies, the Phalangists, used organised terror against the Palestinians.

The news of the massacres in Sabra and Shatila caused an uproar in Israel. Kapeliouk documents how a massive demonstration of 400,000 Israelis on 25 September and other expressions of outrage pressured the Begin government to appoint a Judicial Commission of Inquiry. When the Commission's report is published, whatever its merits, it should not be allowed to reduce Israeli guilt in Lebanon to the excesses of a few individuals. The massacre was an outcome of Israel's invasion of West Beirut, which was an extension of the entire war it launched against the Lebanese and Palestinian people in the summer of 1982. Israelis are still fighting this war in the occupied Palestinian territories through



the official policies of annexation: expropriation of land, diversion of water resources, expulsion of leadership and domination of the economy and labour market.

In September 1982 I visited several camps in southern Lebanon, a region which was then, and still is, under direct Israeli occupation. I saw evidence of the fact that the massacres of Sabra and Shatila were part of a continuous Israeli policy to instill fear and despair among the Palestinians in an effort to force them to forego their right to self-determination. I walked through the camps of Rashidiyeh, Ain el-Hilweh and Mieh Mieh. The level of destruction was greater than any television screen could have shown. All the camps were surrounded by Israeli occupation troops and/or right-wing Christian militiamen, Phalangist MPs, members of Saad Haddad's forces or thugs from the private militia of the Al Khalil feudal family. There was no electricity or running water. Food and shelter were scarce and medical services were non-existent. Nor were there many young men: most had been taken off to prison camps or had fled to avoid detention.

I asked many of the people what they needed most. Without exception, they said they needed some guarantee of security for their lives. Indeed, no one walked alone and most chose to remain within the confines of the camp. Rumours circulated about plans to relocate the Palestinians, (see *L'Orient-Le Jour*, September 1982) but those with whom I spoke said that if they had to leave, then they would leave only to Palestine, their homeland.

I also walked through Sabra and Shatila. Though most of the physical traces of the massacre had been removed, the stench of death remained. I spoke with eyewitnesses and survivors, some of them people whom Kapeliouk had interviewed. Despite their anxiety and fear, they did not act like victims, but like people with a cause who cling to the dream of a homeland. One woman, who had lost several members of her family, told me, 'Tell the world that our boys and men from 9 to 90 are fighters, and all our womenfolk will also be fedayeen.'

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# Bibliography: basic readings

*Following is a brief selection of readable books, from different viewpoints, on Lebanon and the Middle East conflict.*

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**Magazines, periodicals, etc.**

*Israeleft* (PO Box 9013, Jerusalem, Israel; subscriptions: \$20/6 months), bi-weekly news service of translations from Israeli press, features statements and activities of Israeli opposition to war in Lebanon.

*Journal of Palestine Studies* (PO Box 19449, Washington, DC 20036), quarterly journal on Palestine question; Summer/Fall 1982 issue is on The War in Lebanon.

*MERIP* (Middle East Research and Information Project, PO Box 1247, New York, New York 10027). *MERIP* magazine features analysis of contemporary Middle East. Back issues of interest (available from address above): No. 44 Lebanon Explodes; No. 61 Lebanese National Movement; No. 66 South Lebanon; No. 73 Crisis of Lebanese Capitalism; and on the U.S. Role in the Middle East; No. 90 The Carter Doctrine; No. 106 Reagan Targets the Middle East; Nos. 108/109 War in Lebanon.

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