

SECRET

Prime Minutes

MR. COLES ✓

A.S.C. 16/7

CC: BELIZE: Dispute with Guatemala
Pt 3

JIC 15 SEPTEMBER 1983

We had an interesting morning with more than usually lively discussion.

LEBANON

The Committee approved a factual report of the situation on the ground. There was a second, more analytical paper trying to look to the future. I challenged some of its basic concepts and it was eventually withdrawn for further consideration. I spoke on the lines of paras 4-7 of the attached note which I had prepared in advance of the meeting in order to clear my own mind. The paper will reflect these views.

BELIZE

This paper has been prepared in advance of next week's OD meeting. The argumentation points inexorably to the conclusion that we cannot at present afford to announce a date for the withdrawal of the garrison. All the parties would oppose such a move and the new Guatemalan Government is as yet untested. The Americans in particular would regard our withdrawal as an unfriendly act in the present phase of their tackling of the Central American crisis.

I accept this with reluctance. I do not think that we should resign ourselves to an indefinite stay in Belize simply for the sake of the Americans and the other parties concerned. I remain of the view that an announcement of withdrawal of the British garrison would have what I call the "Gulf effect". That is to say, it would concentrate the minds of all concerned on the necessity to make adequate arrangements for Belizean security and integrity without the British. For example, Price would be more disposed to make the territorial concessions necessary to secure a settlement of the dispute. The Americans would realise that they would have to exercise irresistible pressure on the Guatemalans to do nothing stupid after our withdrawal, and to make provision to shore up Belizean political and economic security. The Mexicans and other Central Americans would realise that they would have themselves to make an effort with the Guatemalans to restrain them, also with Price to persuade him to accommodate minimal Guatemalan requirements. I realise that the time is not ripe for so dramatic a move, but we

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must not lose sight of the possibility and, whenever the garrison is due to be renewed, we must look very carefully at the situation in the area to see whether or not the time has come.

HONG KONG

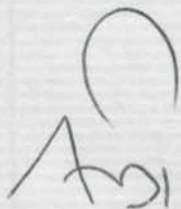
There is a useful piece, bringing us up to date on Chinese attitudes. It tells us nothing that we do not know already, but it is evident that the JIC continues to concentrate on this issue.

THE PHILIPPINES

The paper on the Philippines points a finger at Mrs. Marcos for responsibility for the assassination of Aquino and also to the likelihood that she will eventually succeed her husband. I am glad that I am not a Philippino. /

CENTRAL AMERICA

Two papers are in preparation in advance of the Prime Minister's visit to Washington. One deals with US options in Central America, the other with Warsaw Pact arms supplies to the region. They would have come forward today but there was considerable argument about the first paper which was sent back for further consideration.



A.D. PARSONS
15 September 1983

SECRET

LEBANON

1. It looks as though a military stalemate may be developing. The Druze are in virtual control of their heartland in the Chouf, but they have been unable to break the Lebanese Army position at Suq el Gharb or to occupy the surrounded Christian town of Deir el Qamar. The Lebanese Armed Forces and the Phalange are equally unable to relieve the situation on the Beirut/Damascus Road or to enter the Chouf.
2. The Druze have more or less gained their objective of autonomy in their own region. The danger is that they are being pushed by the Syrians to secure wider objectives. In the words of David Hirst, The Guardian Middle East correspondent, "the Syrians are now imposing Palestinians on the Druze for their own reasons". He adds that "the Palestinians want to come back to Beirut, and Syria wants to come back too, with a powerful backstage influence exerted through them". The Syrians are able to blackmail the Druze with the threat of cutting off military supplies if they do not pursue Syrian objectives which are beyond what the Druze themselves require.
3. On the other side, Gemayel is unable to free himself from the taint of identification of the Government with the Phalange. Externally he leans almost exclusively on the Americans. The more the Americans support Gemayel by escalating their rules of engagement, the less likely the latter is to make concessions in the interests of "national reconciliation".
4. We are talking about "national reconciliation" within a very limited geographical area. Seventy-five percent of the Lebanon is now occupied either by the Syrians or by the Israelis. Neither has any intention of withdrawing. Hence, the most the Government can expect to achieve is some kind of accommodation which would enable them to control Beirut and its environs plus the area immediately to the South and South East as well as the Christian enclave to the North (see map).
5. To achieve this, Gemayel must detach the Druze, and the Shi'ite Militia in and around West Beirut, from their Syrian/Libyan/Iranian backers by appealing to their Lebanese interests. This would mean conceding virtual autonomy to the Druze with no Lebanese Armed

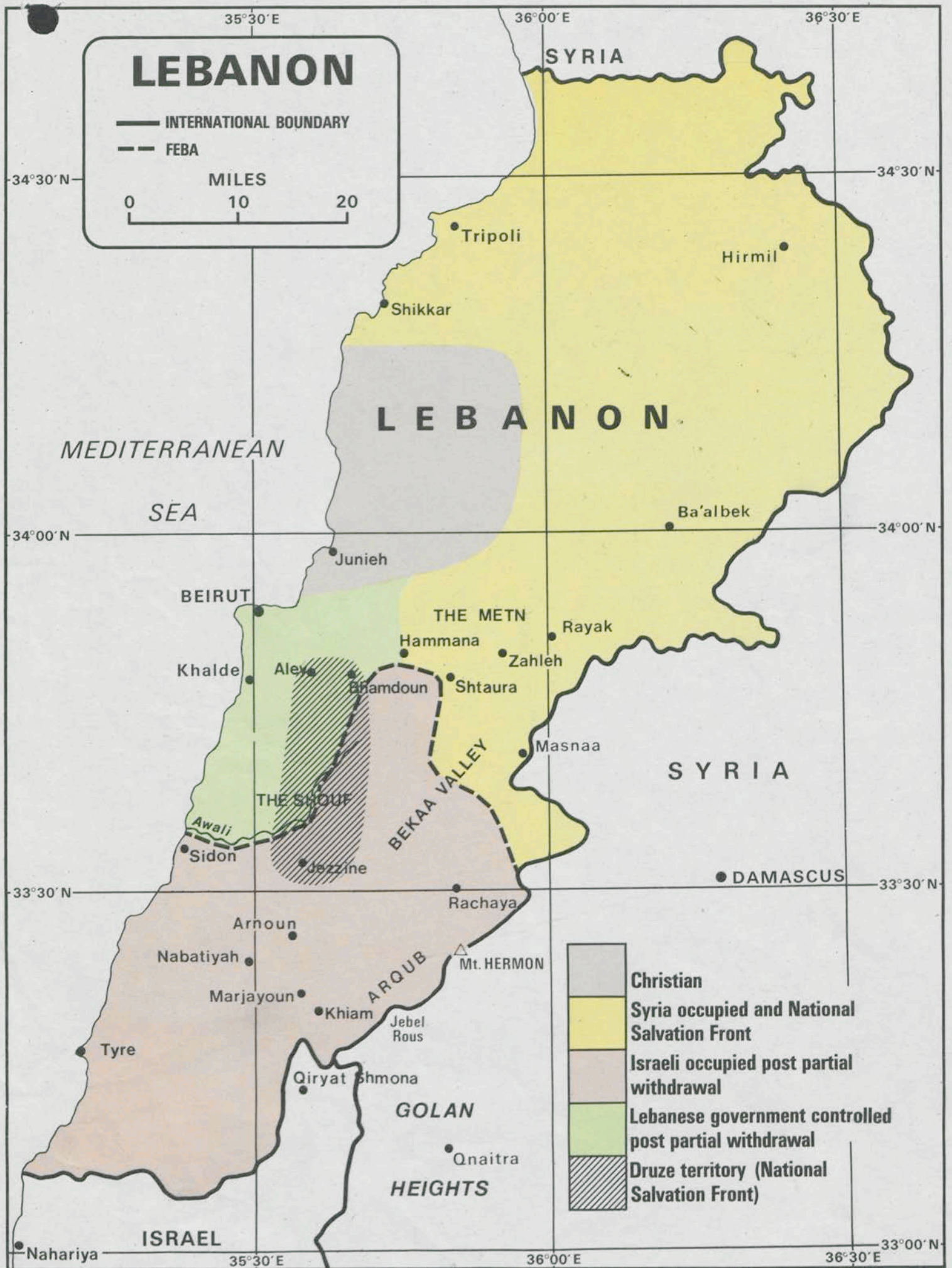
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Forces presence in the Chouf plus a larger share of the Governmental cake. He would also have to give the Shia a far larger share of government than they have had hitherto. Gemayel's Maronite backers, ferociously parochial as always, would resist such concessions. But, apart from the Phalange Gemayel has no support and nowhere to turn: thus, the Americans could screw him if they really set their minds to it.

6. I see no other alternative to a continuation and dangerous escalation of the present conflict. The more the Druzes allow themselves to be driven by the Syrians and Palestinians, the more the Americans will be obliged to back Gemayel in his present stand; and so on.

7. If a very limited national reconciliation could be achieved on the lines set out above - and I recognise all the difficulties involved - the immediate crisis would pass and the world could get down to the protracted task of trying to extend Lebanese Government authority to the areas now occupied by Syria and Israel - this will take years, possibly decades, not months.

14 September 1983



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