

The Lebanese Invasion

Writer argues many benefited from "Operation Peace"

Persuasio is Latin for persuasion and through this column Excalibur hopes to encourage thought and discussion about current issues. As often as possible, the first article on a subject will be followed the week after by an article expressing the opposite point of view. We invite you to bring letters and suggestions for topics to 111 Central Square.

This week's column was written by D. Eisen, a member of the Israel Action Committee, which is affiliated with the Jewish Student Federation.

From its origins in the 16th century, Lebanon has always been a patchwork of religious communities, and as such was subject at times to inter-factional clashes. Yet in recent times that country has served as a rare example in the Middle East, of prosperity, progress, and de facto peace with its neighbours, including Israel. In the 1970's, Lebanon was transformed into a battlezone which claimed the lives of at least 60,000 people, while also becoming the centre for international terrorism and a base for attacks upon the urban population of Israel.

The founders of the Lebanese republic created a carefully-balanced political system, whose effectiveness was dependent not on the small 18,000-man army, but on the skills of compromise and concession which allowed the maintenance of the delicate ethnic/religious balance. The corrosive developments which resulted in the last years of bloodshed may be traced to one catalytic agent—the P.L.O. terrorists.

Israel launched Operation Peace for the Galilee in its own defense: to protect its northern borders from terrorist attack, and to curb the terror machine whose base and nerve centre for years was in Beirut. But in doing so it rendered a valuable service to Lebanon and the world. A thorough analysis of the beneficial prospects for the post-Invasion era lies beyond the limited scope of this column, yet certain salient points are worthy of mention.

Lost their lives

In the 15-year period between June 1967 and the present, some 9,400 P.L.O. attacks were carried out by the P.L.O. terrorists at home and abroad in which approximately 1,000 people lost their lives and

5,200 were injured. Between 1967 and 1979, 354 were among the victims of this programme of murder, as were 1,813 of the injured. There has never been a recorded P.L.O. attack on a Israeli military installation. In any attempt to evaluate the P.L.O., Kadoumi's statement of July 30, 1981 in *Stern* must be remembered: "...we will never allow Israel to live in peace....Every Israeli will feel that behind every wall a terrorist may be concealed...."

Crucial agreements

One must be particularly careful to note that Israel did not attack a sovereign state, but a country under occupation by Syria and the P.L.O. terrorists. P.L.O. units became entrenched in southern Lebanon, when, under pressure from other Arab states, Lebanon signed the Cairo Agreement in 1969 and the Melkart Agreement in 1973 giving the P.L.O. extra-territorial rights within Lebanon. The agreements were crucial to the P.L.O. after its expulsion from Jordan in 1971. In 1975 Pierre Gemayel was murdered, initiating a cycle of violence in which some 60,000 people were killed. In January 1980 Syria transferred the coastal strip between Beirut and Sidon to the control of the P.L.O.

Refugee camps

The P.L.O. had thus succeeded in creating a "state-within-a-state" maintaining a 15-20,000-man army, a radio station in Beirut, and a network of P.L.O. courts and training camps for international terrorists, throughout the region. In October 1976, Edouard Ghorra, the Lebanese Ambassador to the U.N., protested the P.L.O.'s decision to transform "...most-if not all--of the refugee camps into military bastions....They committed all sorts of crimes in Lebanon and also escaped justice in protection of the camps...." The U.N. had long proven itself ineffective in dealing with the terrorist threat. According to U.N. Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim about 30 armed terrorist squads were intercepted each month by UNIFIL guards in 1980, but were simply escorted out of the UNIFIL zone and released. Johan I. Holm, a lecturer at the College of Bryne in

Norway, wrote in the *Jerusalem Post* (July 18, 1982), "I myself visited the UNRWA schools on July 5...I inspected the rooms of the pupils and found that they were filled with hand grenades, weapons, uniforms, military manuals, P.L.O. propaganda, and posters showing the final solution of the Palestinian problem--the abolition of Israel."

A P.L.O. document captured in Sidon explicitly states (May 28, 1981), "The built-up areas in Sidon and villages surrounding the city are excellent cover zones....We must locate in the built-up areas of Sidon, the refugee camps, and the villages."

Lebanon had ceased to exist as a state, in all but a formal sense when it was partitioned de facto by the P.L.O. This explains the reaction to Israeli troops as seen by people like

U.S. Congressman Charles Wilson of Texas who stated on Israel Radio on June 26, 1982 that "the biggest surprise that I had was the enthusiasm with which the Lebanese welcomed the Israeli army...The unanimity of opinion was overwhelming...I expected this somewhat from the Christian population but I didn't expect it from the Muslim population."

democracies. Muhammad ash-Sha'er, the P.L.O. representative in Moscow, elaborated on the Soviet-P.L.O. connection on Radio Monte Carlo (Feb. 17, 1981): "...Hundreds of Palestinian officers...have already been accredited by Soviet military academies...The P.L.O. enjoys special diplomatic status in the Soviet Union...unlike other diplomatic representatives."

Distant dream

In the new circumstances created by Operation Peace for the Galilee, peace between Israel and Lebanon has changed from a distant dream to a distinct possibility. The Good Fence which has operated between Israel and southern Lebanon since 1976 could become a model for other countries. With the restoration of Lebanese sovereignty, the calm that prevailed along the common border from 1949 to the late sixties, could be restored.

In a wider context, the removal of the P.L.O. may prove to be a critical factor in the pursuit of peace in the region.

Palestinian state

The fate of the West Bank is as yet unknown. But as long as the only alternative to Israeli occupation is a Palestinian state ruled by a radical regime committed to the destruction of Israel as outlined in the Palestinian National Covenant and constantly reaffirmed by P.L.O. spokesmen, a solution to the Palestinian issue under any Israeli government is unlikely. As long as the P.L.O. murder of moderates like Hamdi Kadi in 1977 is justified by the P.L.O. observer at the U.N. who told NBC news that "the collaborators with the forces of occupation are executed. They are not assassinated...", a solution will not be quickly forthcoming. Freed of this intimidation, Palestinian Arabs may conclude that the chosen path of the self-appointed P.L.O. can only bring bitter tragedy as it has done so consistently in the past. Such a realization may create the openings for negotiations aimed at resolving the problems which remain obstacles to a just and lasting peace.

Persuasio

This policy of locating military bases in civilian areas facilitated the disintegration of the Shi'ite--the P.L.O. alliance in Lebanon. During the seventies some 300,000 Shi'ites were forced to flee their homes.

Muhammad Ghaddar, a leader of Al-Amal, stated in July, 1980 in Sidon that "we asked the Palestinians not to open fire from residential areas. A command post's place is in the wilderness...We cannot agree to having the Palestinians take our land and our country....We will fight to liberate our nation." By May 1982, Shi'ite disillusionment was complete and Amal forces had made contact with Christian forces as reported in the Jordanian daily *Ar-Rai* on April 20, 1982. Arab displeasure was not limited to the Lebanese Shi'ites. Far more P.L.O. terrorists and Palestinian civilians were killed by Jordan in 1970 and by Syria in 1976 than by Israelis in 1982. Arafat's deputy Abu Iyad conceded in an August 17, 1981 interview in *Ar-Rai al-A'm* (Kuwait) that "many Arab countries consider armed Palestinians dangerous to their own regimes or criminal. Some of them are willing to arm the Palestinians if the latter leave their countries."

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