

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

General Aoun becomes prime minister

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

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

Michel Aoun: a personal profile

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Michel Aoun