

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

OR 00-27, #63; re. dept ltr 12/18/01

By dal, NARA, Date 2/13/02

PARTICIPANTS: President Ford
The Cabinet

DATE AND TIME: Friday, June 18, 1976
11:00 a.m.

PLACE: The Cabinet Room

President: Ron just announced we are evacuating Americans from Lebanon. We will leave essential people in the Embassy to keep operations going. We began announcements on VOA and BBC because communications in Beirut are so poor. There are about 1400 people in Lebanon but we have no idea how many will want to leave, because it is voluntary. Henry, why don't you describe the situation in Lebanon?

Kissinger: First, the situation about the Meloy killing. He was on his way to meet with the new President Sarkis, to discuss the situation and possible U.S. evacuation.

[He describes the assassination.]

To the best of our information, the killing was done by a splinter group of the rejectionist front. To our best knowledge, it was done without PLO involvement. All the Arabs have condemned the act, unlike the Sudan killings.

We will evacuate tomorrow. We will not announce the route. We have been given adequate assurances and most of the route is through Syrian-held territory. We have made adequate contingency preparations but it is important not to comment on this.

We don't know how many will leave. Many have no other real home, but there is no security in Beirut. But none of the responsible groups has any real interest in killing Americans, because if there was, it could be done quite easily at any time. But there are, of course,

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totally irresponsible elements. But the overall situation in Lebanon is developing in a way that is not unhelpful to our interests. Lebanon is a tragedy. In U.S. equivalents, four million people have been killed.

In March, the Syrians said they were moving in in 48 hours. The Israelis said they would move in that case. If that happened, we would have united all the Arabs against it. If Israel didn't act and if Syria cleaned it up, we would be accused by Egypt of colluding with the Syrians. But if the Syrians didn't move, the radicals could dominate Lebanon and Syria would then be squeezed between a radical Lebanon and Iraq.

We maneuvered our way through this and governmental changes were made. [He describes the election, etc.] But there was no security so the political changes couldn't take place. So Syria decided to act. [Describes Syrian-held territory.]

It looks now like no one will gain an overwhelming victory. What is likely to emerge is an Arab solution with no one in predominance, with the PLO weakened, but with Egypt relatively content and Syria as well. The end result should be a strategic situation which is favorable to us, because Syria and Egypt probably will get back together. We must remember that we are the only ones who are really in touch with all the parties and the only useful force working with all of them. [Compares with the Soviets] It could blow up, of course, but if it goes on track, that is a likely outcome.

A spectacular Syrian defeat probably would overthrow Assad. With this probable moderate outcome, we are in a good position for peace. If we can keep all the radicals from uniting, or all the Arabs, it looks like a positive aspect to the tragedy of Lebanon.

Secretary Richardson: Why did the Syrians support the Christians and what kept them from a spectacular victory?

Kissinger: The Christians were about to be wiped out and that would have given Lebanon to the radicals who would have squeezed the Syrians. A spectacular Syrian victory in March could have given them a need to prove their Arab nature and turn on the Christians; this would have radicalized Jordan and put pressure on the Saudis and isolated Egypt. They didn't win spectacularly, first because it is an agony for them to be attacking the PLO, and second they underestimated the strength they faced.

[The next item was a campaign update.]

[The next item was our line on busing.]



Cabinet Mtg
18 Jun 76

P Ron just announced our evacuating Arabs
from Lebanon. We will leave essential
people in & unless to be reported. We
began comments on UPA & BSC because
Committee in Beirut as to how many
^{about} 1400 people in Lebanon but we
had no idea how many will want
to leave, because it is voluntary. R,
why don't you describe it in Lebanon

K First, a bit about a killing. He was
on his way to meet w/ Sarkis & discuss
it & possible US vac.
(Describes a assassination)

To best of our info a killing was done by a splinter
group of a Lebanese part. To our best knowledge
it was done w/o PLO involvement. All Arabs
have embraced the act, unlike Sudan killing.
We will vac tomorrow. We will not
announce a quote, we have been given
adequate assurances & most of waste is from
Syria held territory. We have made adequate
evacuation preparations but it is not
to comment on this.

We don't know how many will leave. Many have
no other real home, but there is no security
in Beirut. But none of ^{us} groups has any real
interest in killing Arabs, because if there was
it could be done quite easily at any time. But
there are of course totally real elements.

But a small set in Lebanon is acting in
a way not helpful to our interests.
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BY WA NARA, DATE 5/17/09



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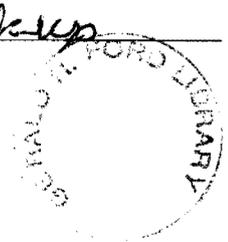
We maneuvered our way thru this & general changes were made (describe election, etc). But there was no security so political changes wouldn't take place. So Syria decided to act.

(Describe Syrian held territory)

It looks now like we are well past an overwhelming victory. What likely to emerge is an Arab solution w/ us one in predominant, w/ E weakened, but w/E relatively content & Syria as well. The end result should be a strategic set which is favorable to us, because Syria & E prob will get back together. We must remember that we are only out really in touch w/ all parties and only work full working w/ all. (Compare w/ Iraq)

It could blow up, of course, but if it gets on track, that is likely outcome.

A spectacular Syrian victory would indeed have put heavy pressure on Saudis. A spectacular Syrian defeat prob would overthrow Assad. If w/ this prob. moderate outcome, we in a good position for peace. If we can keep



Richardson
all radicals from writing or all Arabs, it looks like a positive aspect to the tragedy of Lebanon. Why did Christians support Christians & what kept them from spec. writing.

K The Christians were about to be wiped out & that would have given Lebanon to radicals who would have squashed Syria.

Q spec. Syrian writing in March could have given them a need to prove their Arab nature & turn on Christians, radicalize Jordan & put pressure on Saudi & Egypt.

They didn't write spectacularly 1st because it is an agony for them to be attacking PKO & 2nd they underestimated strength they faced.

(Next item a campaign update)

(Next item him on busing)

